

## ***New Models in Work-based Learning***

### **REPORT**

#### ***SWOT analysis of Slovenian WBL system***

**Work package:** 2, Collecting evidence from industry  
**Deliverable:** D2.1 - Summarizing all information in SWOT analysis  
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**Date:** 04. 05. 2016

Version	Modification	Date	Author

### Explanation of structure of this report:

The activities for conducting the SWOT analysis can be divided in two parts: The first part is the collection of more theoretical information (economic situation, literature review and past projects review), the second part is meant to collect information from people active and involved in WBL. Both parts, will be presented and summarized in the SWOT report.

These are the single steps to be carried out:

- A. Short economic background information (max. one page)
- B. Desk research on WBL in BG, SI and LV (literature and past project review)

*Summarise the above information in a report (about 5 pages) to be included in the SWOT report.*

- C. Collecting feedback and information in Stakeholder conferences (D.2.3)
- D. Summarizing all information in SWOT analysis (D2.2)

### CONTENT OF THIS REPORT

Report summarises answers to all questions from the Guidelines. Below you can see which question is included in which chapter.

#### SLOVENIAN ECONOMIC BACKGROUND INFORMATION

##### SLOVENIAN VET SYSTEM AND THE PLACE OF WBL IN IT

- How is WBL positioned in the national VET system? Are you referring to the school-based system or to apprenticeship or both? (including some data – if existent – on the proportion of students participating in WBL?)
- Regulation of WBL in the current legal framework
- What are plans for the future (foreseen reforms / changes)? Please refer only to plans, that are quite sure to be implemented (in preparation at governmental level)

##### MAIN FEATURES OF WBL

- How WBL is organized (for example: duration of company-based learning and/or practical training at school; responsibilities of company and school for implementation; assessment plan for WBL; etc.)?
- How is the training for WBL teachers and/or mentors organized/planned (for example: prescribed qualifications at national level; organization of initial and continues training)? How the training content/program of WBL is defined?
- How is the assessment of achieved learning outcomes organized? How schools and companies are involved, cooperate? How fair, valid, and authentic assessment is assured?
- How is ensured quality assurance in WBL (definition of standards, assessment of knowledge, responsible bodies)? Do you have some national quality assurance indicators?

##### KEY STAKEHOLDERS OF WBL

- Who are the active and inactive (potential) key stakeholders and what are their roles? Why aren't inactive stakeholders not (yet) involved?
- How is the cooperation among the stakeholders functioning? Please give a special focus on cooperation between school and company?

##### FINANCIG AND NON-FINANCIAL SUPPORT MEASURES

- Financing WBL: what public support is regularly available (to train mentors, promote WBL, career guidance, ...) to whom?
- Besides financing, are there any other measures (non-financial support measures) for supporting companies to train the students (for example: administrative support; finding balance between skill needs of training companies and the employability of students; promoting WBL among companies; etc. )?

Every chapter has at the end feedback from stakeholders conference prepared with methodology of SWOT analyses.

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# 1. TERMINOLOGY

## **Work-based learning** (as defined in the project New WBL)

As a part of VET programmes leading to formal qualification there are 3 main models:

- apprenticeship: as combination of training in companies and education in VET schools;
- on-the-job training in companies: as work placements, internships, traineeships which are a compulsory or optional element of VET programmes;
- training in school workshops: as integrative part of school-based VET programmes, performed in laboratories, workshops, kitchens, restaurants, junior or practice firms, simulations, real business/industry projects/ assignments.

## **Apprenticeship** (distinguishing features defined by CEDEFOP)

- systematic long-term training alternating periods at the workplace and in an education/training institution;
- an apprentice is contractually linked to the employer and receives remuneration (wage or allowance);
- an employer assumes the responsibility for the company-based part of the programme leading to a qualification.

## **Training company**

A company that enables students work-based learning in real work environments; formally approved of training by respective responsible instance (chamber, trade committee, VET-college etc.).

## **Mentor**

It indicates the person in the company, responsible for the students' training during the work-based learning in the company. Typically a skilled worker with part-time responsibility for the training; formally qualified trainer or not.

## **Teacher**

Teachers in VET schools.

## 2. SLOVENIAN ECONOMIC BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### Main business / economic sectors

As you can see from the table below, in 2014, 186433 enterprises were registered in Slovenia employing 826447 persons. Most people (22.89% of all persons in employment in Slovenia) work in 'Manufacturing', followed by 'Wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles' (13.62%) and "education" (8.24%). The fewest people (0.31% of all persons in employment) work in mining (Statistical office RS, 2016).

Table 1: Economic sectors – date form 2014

	Number of enterprises	Number of employees	% of employees
Total	186433	826447	100,00%
A Agriculture, hunting, forestry, fishing	2979	6295	0,76%
B Mining and quarrying	104	2586	0,31%
C Manufacturing	19136	189137	22,89%
D Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	1595	9091	1,10%
E Water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities	473	9958	1,20%
F Construction	20133	63008	7,62%
G Wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	26893	112580	13,62%
H Transport and storage	8738	47100	5,70%
I Hotels and restaurants	10992	34698	4,20%
J ICT services	8173	25934	3,14%
K Financial and insurance activities	2159	22250	2,69%
L Real estate activities	2575	4648	0,56%
M Professional, scientific and technical activities	29986	56221	6,80%
N Administrative and support service activities	6786	33077	4,00%
O Public administration and defence, compulsory social security	2197	53259	6,44%
P Education	5606	68082	8,24%
Q Human health and social work activities	4798	57697	6,98%
R Arts, entertainment and recreation	12679	16414	1,99%
S Other service activities	20431	14411	1,74%

Source: Statistical office RS, 2016

### Structure of companies

The majority (99.8%) of enterprises in Slovenia were SMEs (less than 250 persons employed), with 90.4% being micro enterprises (Statistical office RS, 2014; European Commission, 2014).

Most of the SMEs were registered in professional, scientific and technical activities (15.7%), followed by wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles (14.8%), construction (11.2%) and other service activities (10.9%). Most of the large enterprises were registered in manufacturing (32.4%), followed by wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles and public administration and defense, compulsory social security (10.6%) (Statistical office RS, 2013).

Table 2: Structure of companies<sup>1</sup>

	Number of enterprises			Number of employees		
	Slovenia		EU28	Slovenia		EU28
	N	%	%	N	%	%
Micro	109.050	94.2%	92.4%	188.174	33.7%	29.1%
Small	5.470	4.7%	6.4%	105.763	19.0%	20.6%
Medium	1.078	0.9%	1.0%	111.821	20.0%	17.2%
SMEs	115.598	99.8%	99.8%	405.758	72.7%	66.9%
Large	211	0.2%	0.2%	152.280	27.3%	33.1%
Total	115.809	100.0%	100.0%	558.038	100.0%	100.0%

Source: European Commission, 2014

### Unemployment rate with focus on young people (15 – 24 years old)

According to the Slovenian macroeconomic forecast, a key challenge is tackling the problem of the ‘lost generation’ of young people currently unemployed, whose job prospects may be reduced as younger cohorts enter the labour market. (Cedefop country forecast, 2015). Youth unemployment (increased from 10.4% in 2008 to 20.2% in 2014) and increasing shortage of skilled labour are issues of growing concern. (Eurostat).

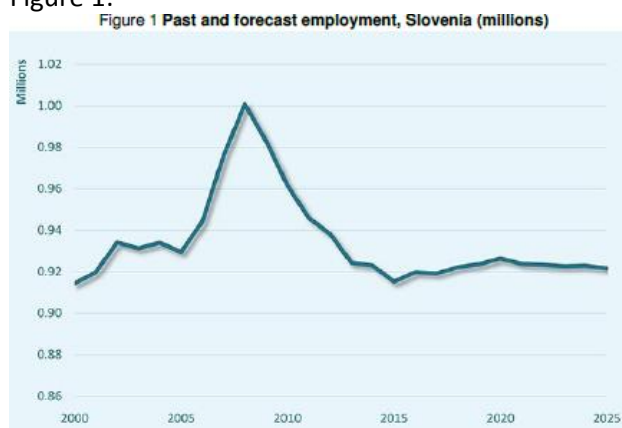
Table 1: Unemployment rate in Slovenia – young people (15-24 years old)

Country/EU	Year						
	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
SI	10.4%	13.6%	14.7%	15.7%	20.6%	21.6%	20.2%
EU-28	15.6%	19.9%	21%	21.5%	23.1%	23.5%	21.9%

Source: Eurostat

For decreasing the percentage of youth unemployment the state prepared many measures and strategies (for example Active Employment Policy Measures, Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan, Youth and the Labour Force), but they are not very successful. According to Cedefop’s skill supply and demand forecasts, economic growth will have only limited effects on job growth in Slovenia and employment is not expected to reach its 2008 pre-crisis level by 2025 (see figure 1).

Figure 1:



Source: Cedefop country forecast, 2015

<sup>1</sup> Micro (0-10 employees), small (11-50 employees), medium (51-250 employees) and large (more than 250 employees).

### 3. SLOVENIAN VET SYSTEM AND THE PLACE OF WBL IN IT

The Slovenian education system includes pre-school education, compulsory primary education (a single structure of primary and lower-secondary education), upper secondary education, higher vocational education, and higher education. Although, Slovenia has VET programs in upper-secondary and tertiary education, this paper focuses only on VET in upper-secondary education (see figure 3 in Appendix 1).

VET programmes in Slovenia are generally provided by public schools. Together with private providers, public schools also offer continuing VET for adults. At upper secondary level the programs are provided by 71 public schools and 26 public school centers, of which 53 schools and 20 school centers provide vocational programs also for adults. For adults these programs are also provided by 28 People's Universities and 17 other private institutions (ReferNet Slovenia, Hergan 2014).

The main responsible body for Slovenian VET is Ministry for Education; it prepares legislation, adopts educational programmes, and finances VET providers. The latest VET reform has increased the autonomy of schools, by transferring significant decision-making powers regarding curricula and management from national to school level. Although, social partners are involved in VET at different stages:

- preparing vocational standards as a base for formal VET programmes;
- participating in the council of experts for VET (consulting body for the Ministry);
- cooperating at local level in preparing 'open curricula' (employers);
- helping organize practical training for students.

#### VET programs

The basis for preparation VET programs are occupational standards. VET programs are usually based on a more than one occupational standards. Occupational standards are the basis for designing vocational modules, which are educational program units leading to vocational qualifications. The design of occupational standards, programmes and qualifications is funded by the ministries and prepared in cooperation with social partners. The Ministry of Labour, established 10 sector committees for occupational standards, composed of experts and representatives of chambers, ministries and trade unions (see figure 2 in appendix 1). An occupational standard is a statutory document, which has a number of prescribed elements: name and code of profession, level of education, vocational/professional competences and description of areas of work derived from the vocational profile. Occupational standards are also the basic documents for examinations and for verification of vocational qualifications acquired through recognition of non-formal learning (ReferNet - Country Report 2014).

After completing compulsory basic education, pupils can enroll in the following upper secondary VET programmes (see figure 3 in Appendix 1):

- technical programmes (ISCED-P 354): four-year programmes that lead to a vocational matura (two general and two vocational – theoretical and practical – exams). These programmes consist of at least 40% of general subjects and 4 to 12 weeks of practical training at a workplace. After passing vocational matura, students can enroll in higher post-secondary, non-tertiary vocational education (ISCED-P 554, two years) or in first-cycle tertiary professional education (ISCED-P 655, three to four years). Graduates also have an opportunity to access most academic tertiary programmes if they pass one additional general matura exam;
- vocational programmes (ISCED-P 353): three-year labour-market-oriented programmes that lead to a final examination consisting of a practical assignment and Slovenian language exam. Programmes include at least 24 weeks of workplace training. After completion of the final

examination students can enter the labour market or access two-year vocational technical education programmes at ISCED-P 354 that lead to vocational matura;

- short VET programmes (ISCED-P 353): two-year programmes that include work-based learning that prepare and qualify learners for less demanding occupations, for example at assistant level. Alternatively, they can choose to continue their education in upper secondary VET programmes.

Proportion of youth enrolled in vocational upper secondary programs has been declining in the last decade. In the last three years this proportion remains about the same, but there is a slight reduction in number of enrolled due to the smaller generations. 21,7 % of pupils finishing primary school enrolled in these programs in the school year 2013/14 - 4379 out of 20,201 (ReferNet Slovenia, Hergan 2014).

Adults can enroll in the same formal VET programmes as the young (see above). Organisation and means of assessing learning are adjusted to suit adult learner needs, for instance by using modules and allowing exemptions. In addition to VET programmes, the national vocational qualifications (NVQ) system governed by the Ministry of Labour, has been in place since 2000. It is based on assessment processes that enable adults over 18 to obtain formal recognition of their vocational competences, acquired outside the formal education system.

#### Position of WBL in the system

In accordance with the Vocational Education Act (2006) work-based learning is an obligatory part of educational programs in all types of VET programs. This means that work-based learning in companies is obligatory for all participants enrolled in VET programs. Practical training in VET programs consist of practical lessons in school and of work-based learning in companies. Work-based learning takes place as a real work process and is carried out in companies or partially in Intercompany Training Centers<sup>2</sup>. Work-based learning was set as the maintenance of good characteristic and correction of 1996 legislation, in which there were two parallel paths to vocational education: school path and apprenticeship. Two parallel, equivalent ways of VET were introduced by law in 1996. They differed in implementation and jurisdictions of practical training: in the dual form the provider of VET programme is company which, together with the school provides an educational program. Enrolled person had the status of apprentice that had some features of the employment (eg, the 50% of the time for practical training is included in length of service). (ReferNet Slovenia, Hergan 2014).

#### National regulations

Work-based learning is a part of formal education program, which is defined by the Organisation and Financing of Education Act (ZOFVI), Vocational Education Act and several other acts and regulations that regulate different areas related to WBL (Adult Education Act; Collective agreement for Crafts and Entrepreneurship; Employment Relationship Act; Instruction of the Adjustment of Part-Time Education; National Professional Qualifications Act; Occupational Health and Safety Act ; Regulations on the Final Examination; Rules on the Assessment in Secondary Education; Rules on the Verification and on the Keeping of Register of Learning Workplaces, and on the Removal from the Register;

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<sup>2</sup>An Intercompany Training center (MIC) is part of a school or school center. Currently there are 20 such centers of different sectors in Slovenia. Most of them were established between 2010 and 2013, when they were partly funded by the EU Regional Development Fund and Ministry of Education, but there were also other sources of financing, e.g. local businesses, municipalities etc.. The inter-company training center represent good connection between education, training, economy and development in local area and have various target groups: (a) students: practical lessons and work-based learning; (b) teachers of vocational modules: practical upskilling; (c) unemployed: upskilling and requalification for increased employment opportunities (in cooperation with the local Employment Service of Slovenia); (d) employees in SMEs: practical training and upskilling; (e) adults: organization of activities in the scope of lifelong learning; (f) pupils: vocational orientation in primary schools. Inter-company training centers have good premises with modern equipment for practical training.



Scholarship Act; Small Business Act). *The Guidelines for preparation of educational programs in VET upper secondary education (2001, 2016<sup>3</sup>)* represent an expert basis for preparation of legislation. (ReferNet Slovenia, Hergan 2014)

The most important is Vocational Education Act (2006), which regulates:

- Preparation of VET programs (article 9-14),
- Quality assurance of VET schools (article 15-17),
- The role of Chambers in VET system (article 18),
- The role of Chambers with the WBL implementation (article 19),
- The role of Trade unions (article 21),
- VET education entry conditions (article 22–27),
- WBL in companies and intercompany training centres (article 31-32),
- Learning agreement (article 33-45)
- Midterm exam (article 40).

More information about the content of this Act and other related legislations can be seen in further chapters of this report.

The ‘apprenticeship law’ is preparing right now in Slovenia. Current debate on apprenticeship system takes place at a high policy level and involves social partners: in the council of experts that coordinates the preparation of legislation and VET programmes; and in the working group representing ministries, VET providers and social partners who meet regularly to discuss issues relevant to VET development in Slovenia. The need for apprenticeship and internship is included in the social pact 2015-16 signed by representatives of the government, trade unions and employers; collective agreements in some sectors envisage the reintroduction of apprenticeships, especially where labour shortage is observed.

The team of people from different institutions (ministries, chambers ...), with the leadership of Ministry for Education is preparing the Act on Apprenticeship.

Also, at this moment, the Cedefop’s thematic review on apprenticeship systems is preparing. This review can be useful in helping define the place of apprenticeship in the VET system; clarify roles and responsibilities of all relevant stakeholders; and motivate and stimulate implementation. The overall expectation is that the review can help develop a good evidence base for policy decisions and suggest possible scenarios for developing apprenticeship in Slovenia and strengthening the role of WBL.

#### **Feedback from stakeholders conference about Slovenian vet system and the place of WBL in it:**

##### Strengths:

- Work-based learning is an integral part of every post-secondary vocational curricula (regulated with the law). The work-based component of VET programmes has been strengthened in recent reforms, as it is considered an important connection between education and the world of work. It varies in different VET programmes and qualification levels.

##### Weaknesses

- For young people (15 years when they finish compulsory education) most popular are general education (gymnasias) or 4-years technical programmes (with only 4-8 weeks of WBL).
- Number of 3-years vocational programmes is low (42 programs in the school year

<sup>3</sup> The revised Guidelines was adopted in 2016.

2015/2016) and there are no students in some of them.

- VET programs for some occupations or job positions are not connected to the real need of labour market. In some sectors there are no educational programs (for example: paper industry, welder ...).

#### Opportunities

- The 'apprenticeship law' is preparing right now. The new law has to be flexible enough to fit in apprenticeship system for different sectors and different structures/sizes of companies.
- Apprenticeship system (for people already in working life) could be established. Companies purpose that apprenticeship system has to be also for adults.

#### Treats

- Vocational education is considered as a transition school to higher levels of education, and not as a real entering point to employment. Companies are concerned that they would invest a lot of money and time into WBL, but after finishing school, students would not like to employ themselves in their company.

## 4. MAIN FEATURES OF WBL

### Duration of WBL

The overall length of practical training (practical lessons in schools and work-based learning) is defined by an educational program and varies according to the type of educational program (ReferNet Slovenia, Hergan 2014):

- Short vocational upper secondary education (2 years): 35-40% of educational program is intended for practical training, of which 4 weeks (152 hours) for work-based learning in companies.
- Vocational upper secondary education (3 years): 40% of educational program is intended for practical training, of which at least 24 weeks<sup>4</sup> (912 hours) and not more than 53 weeks for work-based learning in companies. All programs have a prescribed minimum length, (24 weeks) of practical training in companies. A student may have an individual agreement with a company that the minimum length of practical training be extended but it must not exceed the limit (53 weeks).
- Technical upper secondary education (4 years): 15% of the educational program is intended for practical training, of which 4 - 8 weeks (152 - 304 hours) for work-based learning in companies.
- Vocational technical education (2 years, after vocational upper secondary program): 10% of the educational program is intended for practical training, of which 2 weeks (76 hours) for work-based learning in companies.

### Learning contract

For the implementation of work-based learning a contract has to be signed. In vocational upper secondary programs there are two types of learning contract:

- Individual learning contract, between the employer and student (or parents/his legal guardian),
- Collective learning contract, which is more common, between the employer, school and student (or his parents).

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<sup>4</sup> The extent of work-based learning varies in some programmes (eg. in the program gastronom-hotelier there are 29 weeks of WBL instead of 24 to begin with. (1102 hours).

Individual learning contract allows for increasing the amount of work-based learning in the company, thereby decreasing the amount of practical training in the school. If the individual learning contract is signed, in the second year pupil will have to pass a midterm test of practical skills.

A learning contract contains the responsibilities and obligations of parties, duration and program of work-based learning. The latter defines competences the student shall develop and acquire in each year and this is prepared by school. If the company can implement only a part of the program due to the narrow area of expertise, the rest shall be carried out in some other company or in the intercompany training centre. It should be pointed out that learning contract are not contracts of employment (ReferNet Slovenia, Hergan 2014).

#### Terms and conditions of companies to implement WBL

The terms and conditions for companies to be able to sign a learning contract are defined in Vocational Education Act. Verification of a training workplace is provided by the Chambers. After the company submits an application, it is visited by a three-member commission that checks personnel and material conditions. Commissions for every occupation are named by the appropriate Chamber. By personnel conditions we refer to the trainers for who appropriate education, appropriate work experience and pedagogical-andragogical training is a requirement (see below – *‘Training of mentors’*). By material conditions we refer to the material used on the workplace itself as well as equipment, depending on the occupation. If the conditions are satisfied, competent Chamber shall issue a certificate and the company shall be entered in the register of training workplaces.

6 months before the start of the school year Chambers publish offer or announcement of training workplaces for the next year for vocational upper secondary programs. Announcement of training workplaces is information for young people and their parents about the needs of the labour market. It is included into the Call for application for enrolment in upper secondary programs for each school year (ReferNet Slovenia, Hergan 2014).

#### Training of mentors

The member of personnel who is suitably qualified for implementation of WBL in a company is a mentor, who has:

- (a) passed the Master craftsman/foreman/shop manager examination or
- (b) vocational upper secondary education (ISCED 353) and has at least five years of relevant work experience as well as pedagogical/andragogical training for mentors.

The law stipulates that a master craftsman/foreman/shop manager examination may be undertaken by any individual who has obtained: A) vocational upper secondary education and has at least three years' experience in the field in which he or she wishes to sit for the examination; B) technical upper secondary education and has at least two years' experience in the field in which he or she wishes to sit for the examination; C) higher vocational or first cycle professional education and has at least one-years' experience in the field in which he or she wishes to sit for the examination.

The Master craftsman's examination consists of four parts:

- (a) a practical part,
- (b) a technical/theoretical part,
- (c) a business/economics part, and
- (d) a teaching part. This part of the exam covers the following fields: psychological bases of learning, planning and implementation of the learning process, methodology of practical training, monitoring and verifying learning outcomes, and the education system.

So mentors who have passed a master craftsman/foreman/shop manager examinations have acquired teaching-related knowledge as an integral part of their training.

Where a mentor did not take a master craftsman/foreman/shop manager examination, he or she must get a separate pedagogical/andragogical training for mentors (known as training of student mentors for WBL). The training programme is open to anyone who has: (a) a Vocational or Technical Upper Secondary Education and at least five years' relevant work experience or (b) a Higher Vocational Education and at least two years' relevant work experience.

The aim of this training is to provide future mentors with the basic knowledge and skills important to plan, implement and evaluate mentoring of students in WBL. The programme includes familiarisation with the fundamental features of development during adolescence, with the basic psychological and pedagogical characteristics of learning and teaching, with the importance of communication skills and conflict-resolving skills in work with students, with education and occupational safety legislation, with the importance of a good organisational culture for successful work, with methods of including students in teamwork and project work and with the preparation of the necessary documentation for effective guidance, monitoring and evaluation of work placement students. The programme consists of 24 contact hours and 26 hours of independent work, i.e a total commitment from a candidate amounts to 50 hours.

In 2012, a project called 'Training mentors for the implementation of WBL' was implemented with the help of ESF funding, as an organised form of teacher training for mentors. The project was implemented by the Business Training Centre (CPU) of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia, the Chamber of Craft and Small Business of Slovenia, and numerous education centres. The aim of the project was to train mentors in companies for high-quality work with students in practical training via WBL. At the training sessions mentors learned about the characteristics of the young people they would be encountering, how to talk to them, how to motivate them and get them to cooperate, how to approach teaching or, rather, how to gain experience, how to read education programmes and, last but not least, how to change or adapt the work process to the learning process. A total of 113 training sessions were held for mentors and 129 instructors participated. More than 1 800 mentors from all over Slovenia took part in the training.

#### Quality assurance

The Vocational Education Act has strengthened the autonomy and the developmental role of VET schools, at the same time it reinforced the importance of quality assessment and assurance. According to the Act schools are requested to establish a Quality Committee, consisting of a minimum of 5 members: representatives of professional school employees, employers, students and parents. Quality Committee consisting of 5 lecturers and 2 students is also requested by Post-Secondary Vocational Education Act. Quality Committee is obliged to publish a quality report on the school website every school year.

For the Quality Committee's work CPI published *Recommendations to schools for the implementation of self-evaluation* that includes scope of work-based learning. From the published quality reports on the school's websites it is evident that the work of Quality Committees include work-based learning in companies. A questionnaire for companies and students on various aspects of the implementation of work-based learning is a common practice.

In case of an individual learning contract, quality assurance for verified training workplaces in companies is carried out by the Chambers when midterm exams occur. For collective learning contracts quality of workplaces is monitored by organizers of work-based learning, meaning by schools, as described above. Cooperation with new companies is most often set up at the request of students who would like to do work-based learning in a particular company. Often organizers visit companies while the work-based learning is taking place.

During the work-based learning students fulfil required documentation, i.e. report of work-based learning or diary of work, which is supervised and confirmed by the mentor and reviewed by organiser at school when work-based learning ends. In the case of an individual learning contract, student must submit report of work before the midterm exam to expert supervisor for all the previous years.

#### Assessment

General rules that apply to assessment of the students' knowledge are specified by the Vocational and Technical Education Act, and Rules on the Assessment of Knowledge in Secondary Schools. Schools prepare their own assessment rules on the basis of the above mentioned regulations that are then approved by the head teacher upon prior review by the assembly of teachers.

VET programmes consist of general subjects, vocational modules (vocational theory + practical lessons), and work-based learning at company. Sometimes there are two teachers teaching one vocational module (teacher of theory and teacher of practical lessons), and in that case, they have to agree on the final grade. Teachers assess the students' oral exam and written products, papers, projects, as well as products and services. The compulsory assessment method is specified for each separate subject or technical module with the education programme. The knowledge assessment criteria are brought into line by the school's expert working groups on the basis of national prescribed catalogues of knowledge. The assessment grades are numerical: 1 (fail), 2 (pass), 3 (good), 4 (very good) and 5 (outstanding). Sometimes a part of practical lessons of vocational modules student gain in company. In that case the school teacher and in-company mentor assesses student together. In that case the criteria for grading are the same as for students who gain practical lessons at school (as it is described above).

Knowledge gain at WBL is assessed by employers and the results reported to the school. The assessment grades are descriptive: "pass" or a "fail". The knowledge assessment criteria for WBL are not specified at national level. There is no national prescribed catalogues of knowledge, as in the case of general subjects and vocational modules. Sometimes school prepare the work-based learning program or competences a student shall acquire in the company, but this is not obligatory.

At the end of every assessment period – except in the final year – the students receive a transcription of grades, conclusions, and requirements fulfilled. At the end of each school year, students receive the end-of-year report. If they fail to fulfil all requirements, they receive a notification of their success.

#### Final examination

Three-year vocational upper secondary programs are completed with a final exam. At the exam candidates have to demonstrate acquired theoretical and practical knowledge thus proving they are competent for the profession. The final exam board can have one additional member from companies as an observer. The list of additional members is published by National Commission following the proposal of representative Chambers and trade unions. The final exam is comprised of mother tongue exam and practical exam. After passing the final exam, candidates can be employed without further formal education or training (traineeships) or continue education.

After completing four-year (technical VET), students have vocational matura. Vocational matura consists of four exams: two obligatory: (1) *mother tongue – Slovene* and (2) *basic professional – theoretical subject depending on the programme* and two optional (3) *mathematics or a foreign language* and (4) *practical work* (product, service, project work with discussion or seminar) depending on the programme.

#### **Feedback from stakeholder's conference on main features of WBL:**

##### Strengths:

- The purposed duration for the new apprenticeship system that is preparing is suitable for companies (at least 50% of educational programme). The distribution of WBL time through the entire education (3 years) must be flexible, according to companies' opinion. In some sectors there could equal percentage in every year, in other sector the percentage can increase from year, to year (for example in 1. year of education is less WBL than in 3. year of education).
- Quality assurance is made by schools. An organiser of WBL from school is monitoring training in companies.
- VET schools have good premises with modern equipment for practical training (as school workshops or inter-company training centres).

##### Weaknesses

- At upper-secondary VET, most popular are 4-years technical programmes, but they have only 4-8 weeks of WBL.
- Terms and conditions for implementing WBL: The list of accredited companies is not suitable for every occupations and each region.
- Terms and conditions for implementing WBL: Mentors has basic pedagogical training, but the quality of it is not sufficient according to the stakeholder's opinion. They purpose extension and revision of existing training for mentors.
- Constant expert support for companies is poor. Companies propose to have same counselling body with experts who can help and support mentors through the whole process of WBL.
- Goals & standards for WBL and assessments: Learning outcomes and knowledge assessment criteria for WBL are not specified at national level. There is no national prescribed catalogues of knowledge, as in the case of general subjects and vocational modules. Companies express the opinion about the national prescribed catalogues for WBL: if they will exist, they have to be flexible enough to implement WBL in different types of companies (for example: catalogue have to be suitable for small and bigger companies).
- Goals & standards for WBL and assessments: Sometimes school prepare the work-based learning program or competences a student shall acquire in the company, but not always. Although, this learning programme is not always suitable with job tasks of the company where student is trained.
- Assessment: The assessment grades are descriptive: "pass" or a "fail". The "pass" or a "fail" grades are not sufficient. Mentors purpose grades 1-5. Some companies already prepare their own standards for grades 1-5, but they are valid just inside their company.
- International compatibility of educational/WBL standards is weak. Enterprises which are international corporations would like to have internationally comparable standard for their students.

#### Opportunities

- The required length of the practical training in companies in three-year VET programmes is 24 weeks, but it can be extended to up to 53 weeks. In practice, this extension is rarely observed as it requires individual learning agreements and needs more regulatory provisions and support to schools and companies. For the last two years The Ministry of Education is encouraging the use of individual agreement in the programs which has very low enrolment rate.
- Vocational curricula are very flexible and can be adapted to the labour market needs. The flexibility of curricula can be done on three levels: school organisation can be adopted to companies' needs; new modules based on local companies needs can be added (open curricula); WBL can be extended.
- There is a possibility to switch a company in case student can't obtain the competences for the whole qualification (shared responsibility between companies). Another possibility is also shared responsibility for implementing WBL between the company and inter-company training centre.

#### Treats

- Companies see WBL as a 'service to schools' and not as a real opportunity to get new staff. They think that some schools are not flexible enough to adapt to labour market needs. They would like to have the possibility for choosing schools and students to work with.
- In some sectors educational programs are not related to companies' job tasks. In some cases content of WBL is not linked to the qualification and there is a threat that company would train student to narrow (not for the whole qualification).

## 5. KEY STAKEHOLDERS OF WBL

The responsibility for VET education is divided among national authorities, local authorities and schools (see Figure 4). General administration of the VET system at the national level is provided by the Ministry of Education (prepares legislation, adopts educational programmes, and finances VET providers), which co-operate with Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities (occupational standards and catalogues of occupational standards; formulates the *Rules on the Verification and on the Keeping of Register of Learning Workplaces and on the Removal from the Register* and define the conditions to be met by the employers), the Ministry of Finance (general financial rules, budgets and payments) and other ministries.

Social partners are involved in VET at different segments (ReferNet Slovenia, Hergan 2014):

- Expert Council for Vocational Education and Training, established by the Government in 1996 to decide on professional issues in this area and for expert counselling in decision-making.
- Sectoral committees for designing vocational standards, designated by the Minister of Labour. They are composed of renowned experts, nominated by Chambers. Coordination of sectoral committees for designing occupational standards is carried out by CPI.
- Involvement of companies at the local level, in the preparation of so-called open curriculum of schools. Open curriculum is part of the educational program (approximately 20%), designed by school in cooperation with representatives of business, enterprises, institutions or other organizations of social partners in the local or regional environment<sup>5</sup>.
- For providing work-based learning Chambers carry out verification of learning workplaces, run and update registers of learning workplaces in companies, publish announcements of learning workplaces every school year, provide midterm exams/intermediate examination, provide pedagogical-andragogical training for mentors in companies and in cooperation with schools conduct the performance of practical parts of final examinations or vocational Matura.
- Schools are responsible for the implementation of work-based learning. As already mentioned there is an organizer of work-based learning in schools for these purposes. Schools must provide training workplaces in companies for all enrolled students, so they can complete an educational program.

Evaluations have shown (Skubic Ermenc (eds) 2012; Klarič 2012), that the Vocational Education Act in 2006 has largely transferred the responsibility for the practical education to the school, as the responsibility of the social partners and enterprises has decreased. Companies and branch associations insufficiently recognize their role and importance of cooperation in practical training of their future employees. Schools have taken over the quality assurance of training workplaces, because verification did not succeed in practice and is not systematically renewed in the case of collective learning contracts. The elements of the dual form, for example verification of the learning workplaces which were transferred to all types of VET programs are not successful, thereby the role of Chambers is more difficult. Verification didn't succeed from different reasons, and the investigation of this reasons was not part of these evaluations. Although, we can say that the placement of chambers in the system is not very clear regulated (for example: membership is not obligatory for companies any more). The major role in WBL quality assurance have now the organisers of WBL in schools who communicate with employers, inform and motivate them, prepare their own lists of reliable companies, visit students at their work places and oversee the whole process. Schools run their own lists of companies that accept students for WBL (these lists are

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<sup>5</sup> Evaluation prepared by CPI have shown that employers and employers' associations do not recognize the importance of their participation in a sufficient level (Skubic Ermenc (eds) 2012).

constantly updated) and monitor the quality of workplaces (visiting the companies during work-based learning, reviewing reports of work, questionnaires for students and mentors, etc.). Most of the schools organize annual meetings for mentors at the school to keep in touch with companies, as well as to attract new companies for cooperation. The work-based learning program or competences a student shall acquire in the company are also prescribed by schools and are a part of learning contracts (schools are also contract partners in most cases). Schools also provide final exam, to which one representative of employers can be invited as an additional member of exam commission, in the role of observer.

There are large differences among sectors in comprehension of their role and cooperation in vocational training of young people. In some service industries the concern about responsibility for practical training of future workers is very present (e.g. hairdressing, catering). In others, there is no such awareness, so at beginning of current arrangement schools had problems to provide training workplaces in companies for all enrolled students.

#### **Feedback from stakeholders conference on key stakeholders of WBL:**

##### Strengths:

- The existence of social partnership between companies and schools in planning VET programs. The involvement of companies at the local level, in the preparation of so-called open curriculum of schools. Open curriculum is part of the educational program (approximately 20%), designed by school in cooperation with representatives of business, enterprises, institutions or other organizations of social partners in the local or regional environment.
- Work-based learning is supported by schools (with the support of practical lessons teacher and WBL organiser). Schools communicate with employers, inform and motivate them, prepare their own lists of reliable companies, visit students at their work places and oversee the whole process.

##### Weaknesses

- The role of employers in decisions regarding VET is weak. Although there is a lot of possibilities in the system that allows companies to be an equal partner in designing VET, in reality this involvement is poor.
- Responsibilities of supporting institutions (chambers, trade unions ...) are not clearly defined.

##### Opportunities

- Companies that offer training places could be connected in networks for supporting each other and easier promotion.
- The inter-company training centre represent good connection between education, training, economy and development in local area and could cooperate with companies which can't offer student gaining competences for the whole qualification (especially in cases of small and specialized companies).

##### Treats

- The roles of chambers (with voluntary membership), employers' associations and trade unions is vague defined and is not very recognizable through the companies.
- Lack of trust between education (schools) and work (companies). There are examples of good cooperation between schools and companies but there are no mechanisms regulating such cooperation and distribution of responsibilities. Therefore, the need for some national provision is necessary for the quality of WBL.



## 6. FINANCIG AND NON-FINANCIAL SUPPORT MEASURES

As it was said above The Education Ministry is the main body responsible for VET and also finances VET providers. Financing of upper secondary VET schools is calculated per student on the basis of ZOFVI (Act on organisation and financing of education) and criteria and standards issued by the Education Ministry. Total funding is specified in a financing agreement signed by the Education Ministry and the school for each budget year.

Since 2008 a stimulation for companies to increase their involvement in practical training of students within the project »Co-financing incentives for employers to provide work-based learning in educational programs leading to a vocational qualification«, which is funded by the ESF and implemented by means of annual public tender exists. Funding is set for co-financing or reimbursement of the cost of mentor and student rewards. Fundings are intended for companies, but a part of it (€ 50) is for the school, in which students are enrolled in the final year (for guidance, information and coordination of mentors, administrative and technical support in preparing the documentation for the application to public tender). The amount of financial incentives for one training workplace depends on the amount of available funds in a given year and the number of applicants.

In the school year 2010-2013 slightly less than 4,000 companies received incentives, in total of € 13.5 million for work-based learning of 19,631 students. The average value of incentives was € 688, but it differed by types of educational programs:

- - between € 550.00 and € 1,250.00 per student enrolled in vocational upper secondary education (for all 3 years),
- - between € 800.00 and € 1,250.00 per student in higher vocational education (for 2 years)

Pedagogical-andragogical training for mentors in companies was funded with the ESF resources as well. More than 1900 mentors were trained in the period 2012 to 2013 (project value was slightly less than € 360,000).

Employers who enter into individual learning contract receive financing for each year from the Ministry of Economy, funding is distributed by chambers. Funds are intended for material costs, student's work and protective equipment, transport and food costs during the work-based learning. In a given school year the amount of resources for each training workplace depends on the total number of registered individual learning contracts that are signed no later than on 30. September for each school year (Korunovski, 2011).

Companies are obligated to pay rewards to students. The amount of a reward may vary between sectors and is regulated differently either in sectoral agreements or internal acts of individual companies. If defined in a sectoral agreement, it is usually set at 15% of an average monthly salary in Slovenia for the previous month. Likewise, the payment of mentoring is regulated differently, either in sectoral agreements or in internal acts of companies.

Companies may opt for providing financial assistance to students during their education and training, ie. for company scholarship.<sup>6</sup> In this case students usually undergo work-based learning in that company. Company scholarships are on average of the highest and enable immediate employment after leaving school.

For the organisation of work-based learning Ministry of education, science and sport finances an organizer of practical training for 364 students of vocational upper secondary programs and one lecturer-organizer of practical training for 150 students of higher vocational programs. Chambers carry out tasks in the field of work-based learning under public authorization granted by the Ministry of education. For the participation of companies in work-based learning the system resources are not provided. Since 2008 this is being corrected with public tender described above.

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<sup>6</sup> Information about company scholarships are available on the websites of Slovene human resources development and scholarship fund (<http://www.sklad-kadri.si/>), regional development centres and companies.

### Non-financial support measures

Numerous projects are held at different levels for the promotion of VET schools, professions, career guidance for young people and adults, as well as projects that indirectly raise the attractiveness of the professions and vocational training (ReferNet Slovenia, Hergan 2014):

- Activities of Chambers: In addition to sectoral projects which promote specific occupations or occupational groups, the Chamber of Craft and Small Business of Slovenia is also carrying out events for the promotion of crafts and craft's occupations in trade fairs, children's bazaar... Within the project Crafts path are organised visits of craft's companies for the groups of primary school children, where children can get to know a particular occupation and industry They provide extracurricular activities at primary schools for children and their parents, in which local artists and craftsmen cooperates well
- Events for promotion of professions at schools, e.g. Open Door Days, Presentations of Professions, Info Days ...
- Schools participate in international projects that are increasing the attractiveness of vocational education and training (e.g. Euroskills, SloveniaSkills, international mobility programs for work-based learning ...).

The central role in the promotion of vocational schools, professions, career guidance, support for schools and linking the various stakeholders in this field is held by the CPI, which provides:

- Support for schools organizing different events (counselling, published *A brief guide of effective promotion of vocational education and training* etc.).
- [www.moja.izbira.si](http://www.moja.izbira.si), which was created in 2008 in partnership with actors, whose activity cover vocational training for young people and adults. It is aimed at young people, their parents, adults and counselling workers, so all the information on occupations, career guidance, schools providing vocational programs etc. are reachable at one place. With the central informing of primary school children have been ensured that the information center is reachable for every user.
- Promotion of professions among pupils (e.g., video games, printed brochures, occupations cards etc.).
- Training for teachers and school counsellors for the enforcement and promotion of vocational education and training.

### **Feedback from stakeholders conference on financing and non-financial support measures:**

#### Weaknesses

- Although there are some financial and nonfinancial support for companies, they don't recognize this supporting measures as strength. Huge problem of Slovenian financial support for companies is that, support is not constant. Financial support for companies is linked to the project money, mostly European Social Found budget.
- Promotion of some VET programs and apprenticeship system is not good at national level.

#### Treats

- There is no clear distinction at national level regarding the financial issues of new apprentice system. About the students/apprentice benefits the companies purpose to take responsibilities for: medical examination, transportation costs, costs of lunch at the work, and (not obligatory) scholarship.
- There is no clear idea for supporting (also nonfinancial) companies on national level.

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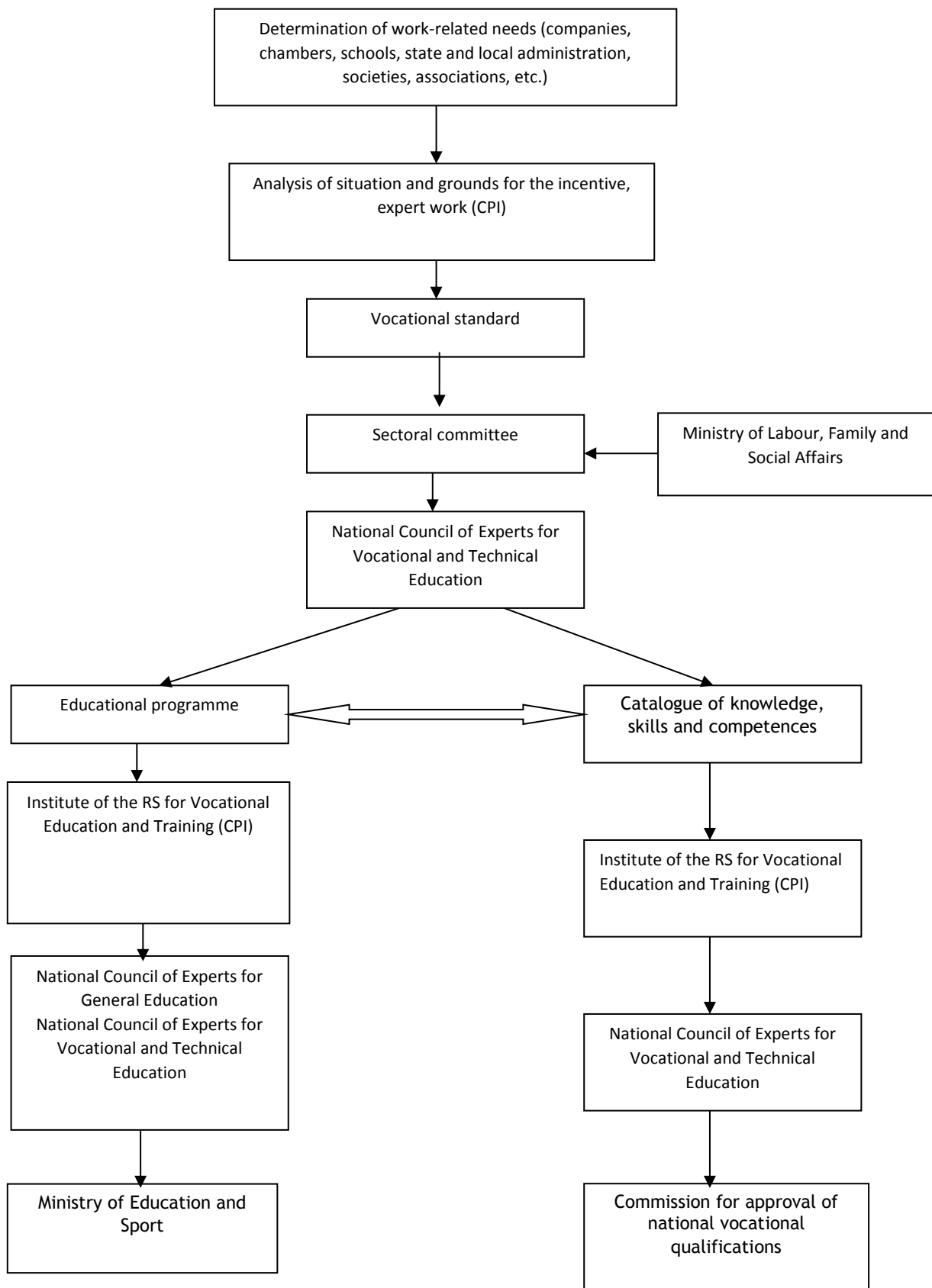
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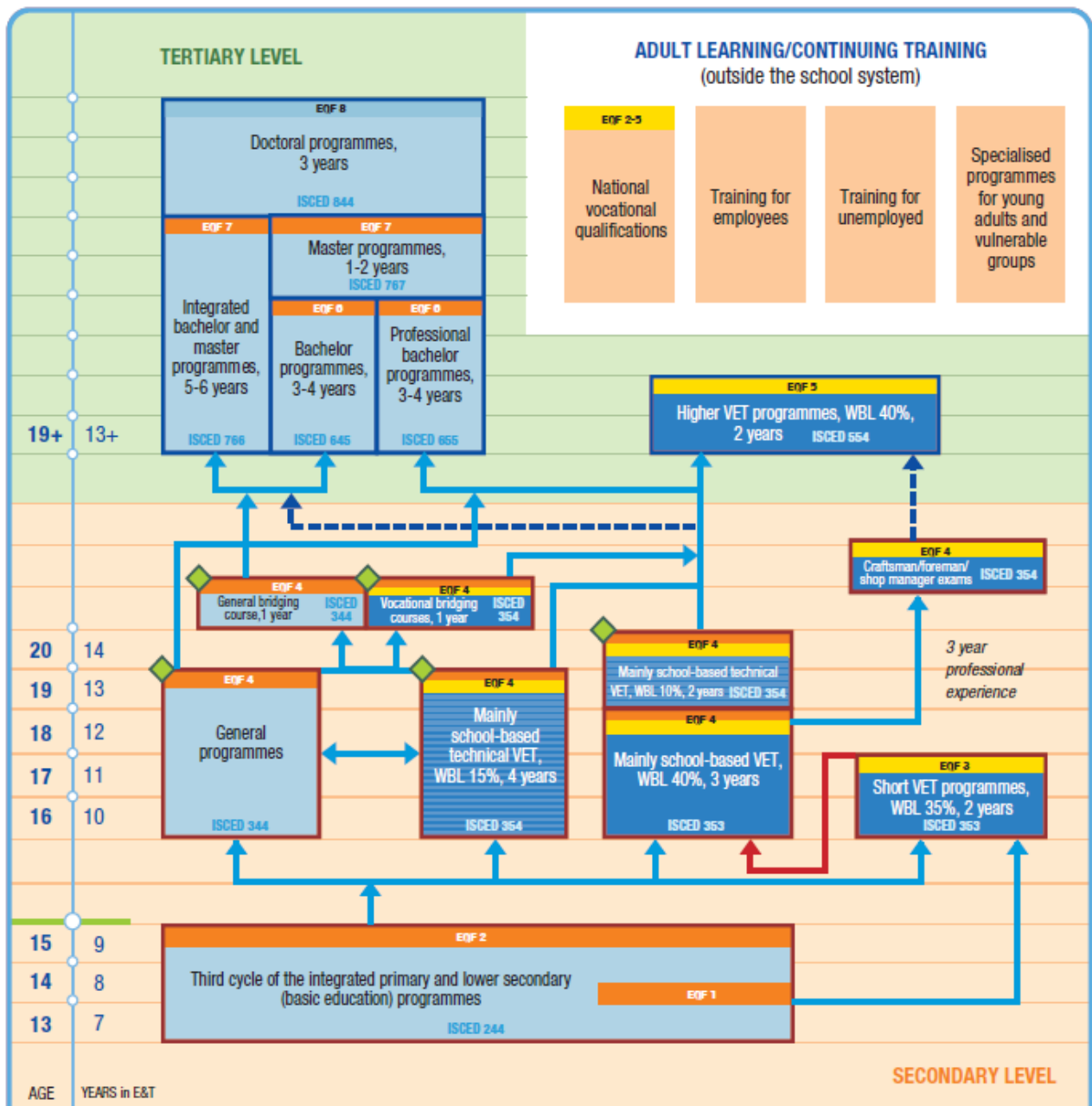
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Appendix1, Figure 2: Decision-making process for content of education in Slovenia Source: ReferNet, 2011



Appendix 2, Figure 3: VET in SLO education



Appendix 3, Figure 4: Administration of education and training in Slovenia Source: ReferNet, 2011

