



## Work-based learning in the Serbian VET system

The initial vocational education and training (VET) system offers three- and four-year upper secondary programmes. In recent years there has been a significant shift towards the latter. On completion of secondary education, there are also options for additional training for a period of one to two years.

In Serbian VET a considerable number of specialist profiles (201) exist, grouped into 15 sectors. Each profile has three components: general subjects, vocational theory and vocational practice. Vocational practice is a mandatory part of VET curricula and is implemented in different modalities. In dual profiles, vocational practice is exclusively implemented in companies and is called work-based learning.

At the end of 2017, the Serbian parliament adopted the Law on Dual Education. From the academic year 2019/20, dual education has been offered as an optional track within the formal secondary vocational education system. Dual profiles allocate at least 20% and at most 80% of the total number of hours for vocational subjects to work-based learning.

Each curriculum defines in detail the outcomes of the vocational practice, but there is some flexibility to adapt this to the needs of employers.

### The role of the social partners and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry

The involvement of employers in the development of qualification standards is regulated by the new Law on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

Along with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry has a key role in the dual track that commenced in the academic year 2019/20.

Representatives of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry are also members of the 12 Sector Councils and of the NQF Council.

### How does cooperation between learning venues work?

Cooperation between learning venues is facilitated in most VET schools by a coordinator for professional practice in companies, a function that exists in most schools in addition to the coordinator for practical learning in school workshops.

Contracts in dual education are signed between vocational schools and companies and also between learners/parents and companies. The learners will have the status of student, rather than employee, but will receive financial compensation of at least 70% of the minimum wage.

## KEY FIGURES

- **In the academic year 2019/20 there were 183 000 students enrolled in vocational upper secondary schools, 46% of whom were female.**
- **VET students represent nearly 73% of the total enrolment in upper secondary education.**
- **VET programmes are offered in 311 upper secondary schools; 104 schools offer dual profiles.**
- **Around 7 000 students follow one of the 37 dual profiles.**
- **95 out of 201 profiles have recently been modernised and are based on new qualification standards.**

Students are monitored mainly by the teacher (coordinator) in school to whom they hand in their practice diary.

Students most often have practice in enterprises as part of block training and there is no systematic monitoring or quality assurance in place.

In dual education, the school coordinator and the in-company instructor jointly develop a plan for the implementation of work-based learning and monitor and evaluate students' progress.

## The latest developments

In May 2019 a Master Plan for the implementation of the Law on Dual Education was adopted by the Commission for the Development and Implementation of Dual Education.

The academic year 2019/20 was the first year in which dual education was fully operational. According to the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, 2 533 students enrolled in the first grade of dual programmes and 84% of the available places were filled. The Chamber of Commerce and Industry manages a register of employers and dual education contracts. The Chamber is also responsible for checking the suitability of companies for learning in the workplace.

Companies are supposed to have a licensed trainer. The Chamber of Commerce and Industry is in charge of issuing trainers' licences and of keeping a register of licensed companies.

A campaign to promote the National Model of Dual Education was launched by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development

in 2019. Several workshops were held in secondary schools in 2019 and 2020, in close cooperation with national and international companies.

## The main challenges

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development plans to set up a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system for dual education and to revise financial instruments for companies based on a cost-benefit analysis.

The training of a sufficient number of in-company trainers and the accreditation of a sufficient number of companies within tight timescales remain major challenges.

The number of profiles that offer a dual education track is still limited. Therefore, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development plans to develop another eight new profiles and to modernise ten existing dual education profiles.

Young women are still greatly underrepresented in dual education profiles.

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## JOINT EFFORTS TO MAKE DUAL EDUCATION SUCCESSFUL

Following the adoption of the Law on Dual Education, the Government of Serbia established a Commission for the Development and Implementation of Dual Education.

The Commission consists of representatives from the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities, vocational schools and training companies.

The main purpose of the Commission is to implement and improve the new system of dual education and to evaluate the achieved results.

