

Slovakia

Practising business and having fun

Business education does not need to be bone-dry. A mix of non-traditional learning environments and different activities and approaches has proved successful in Slovakia's vocational schools and retraining courses for the unemployed. The annually organised training firm fairs have become highly popular.

"Working hard and having fun, this is what counts for us", said Gabriela Horecká, Head of the Slovak Centre for Training Firms (SCCF), "and our District Labour Office recognises this. On 9 June 2003 we signed another contract to retrain unemployed people".

Training firms complement two other "learning by doing" activities, which aim at understanding economics and have officially been introduced into the education system. Economic Week, a management game, based on Swiss experience in the early nineties, forms part of the curricula in upper secondary business courses (*obchodná akadémia*), while economic education programmes for young people are based on the Junior Achievement philosophy of partnerships between schools and business, which originated in the USA. The idea is to explain the fundamentals of a market driven economy and to foster entrepreneurship. Junior Achievement Slovakia was awarded with the Quality Certificate in April 2003.

As in 36 other countries under the umbrella of the Worldwide Practice Firm Network (EUROPEN), SCCF supports the training firms. It simulates all state administrations that enterprises normally have to deal with (trade register, tax office, health, social and unemployment insurance, bank services etc.) and serves 61 schools and a total of 186 training firms, including two for unemployed adults.

SCCF considers that working in a training firm should be a voluntary activity rather than part of a mandatory programme. With the exception of the post-secondary programme at the *obchodná akadémia*, which specialises in the field of taxation, training firms are part of the optional curriculum. This approach works, even at the last grade of the 9 years of combined elementary and lower secondary education (*základná škola*). The support of dedicated parents and, in particular those with their own entrepreneurial experience, is fundamental at this level. Drawing on the experience in Germany and with the important support of the Austrian *KulturKontakt* (see also [Cedefop Info 2/2002](#)), SCCF has gradually developed into an important Central European player. The PHARE cross-border project and the International Visegrad Fund projects brought together training firms from central Europe, with special value added - having fun, at the International Training Firms Trade Fair, organised annually within the VET schools exhibition JUVYR (acronym for "JUnior a VYRoba" - "junior and production") in Bratislava.

More information from:

Gabriela Horecká at sccf@netax.sk or Juraj Vantuch at sno@netax.sk.

Štátny inštitút odborného vzdelávania

(ŠIOV - State Institute of Vocational Education and Training)

Bellova 54/a, 837 64 Bratislava

Tel. (421) 2 5477 6774

Fax (421) 2 5477 6774

Website: http://www.education.gov.sk/pro/siov_index.htm

Slovenské centrum cvicných firiem (SCCF - Slovak Centre for Training Firms)

<http://www.education.gov.sk/pro/siov/dokhtm/5sccf/sccfuv.html>

Cernyševského 27

851 01 Bratislava

Tel. (421) 2 6241 1554 - Fax (421) 2 6241 1554

Junior Achievement International

<http://www.jasr.sk> (in Slovak language only)

<http://www.jaintl.org/>

EUROPEN

<http://www.europen.info/englisch/index.html>