

OBRAZOVANJE
ZA PRAKTIČNO
ZNAÑJE



HAND IN HAND
SERBIA: COOPERATION BETWEEN
COMPANIES AND VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS



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Note: the cover page slogan, *Obrazovanje za praktično znanje*, was selected by vote of different vocational education stakeholders as the slogan that best describes the focus of the “Reform of Vocational Education and Training in Serbia” project. Translated, it means: *Education for Practical Knowledge*.

LEFT TO RIGHT

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DEAR READERS,

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia has been cooperating with *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH* since 2002. On behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), GIZ has been supporting Serbia in modernising the vocational education and training system. In doing so, we are focusing on the current demands of the labour market in Serbia and Europe.

The youth unemployment rate remains high. For this reason, we have introduced new educational profiles in the fields of economics, law and administration in recent years. These profiles enable young people to find interesting jobs right after completing their vocational studies.

Many companies, however, also require well-trained technical staff – a career that is not exactly in the spotlight for young people. This is why we are now concentrating on three-year practice-oriented training in technical profiles. This is where students receive everything they need to be able to begin working in their field immediately.

This education model is oriented towards the needs of the economy and ensures a decrease in youth unemployment. With our joint efforts we wish to return the vocational education and training system back to the high level that existed in the past, and to position ourselves in the European market.

Zoran Kostić Ph.D

Assistant Minister

Sector for Schools Administration, School Supervision and Secondary Education and Upbringing at the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia

Belgrade, September 2013

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DEAR READERS,

With the aim of helping young people find jobs in their chosen occupations, the Serbian-German projects in vocational education and training offer coordinated services in one place.

The focus of the German approach to counselling is intensive cooperation of vocational secondary schools and businesses. Schools and the private sector have been jointly introducing elements of German dual education. More practical training in teaching has been increasingly motivating students¹ to opt for the classic technical vocational occupations.

The “Professional Orientation” project informs students about the opportunities and options in the labour market as early as in primary school.

This is why I am particularly pleased to have the opportunity, together with the Sector for School Administration, School Supervision and Secondary Education and Upbringing at the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia, to introduce you to some of the good examples of partnerships between schools and businesses.

We hope that these success stories will equally encourage schools, education policy makers and businesses to take the new path of cooperation. These examples show that in the end everybody wins – students, businesses and municipalities.

Enjoy reading the pages that follow!
 Sincerely,

Heinz-Dieter Harbers
 Project Leader of the “Reform of Vocational Education and Training in Serbia”

¹ Please note that the Serbian original uses the third person plural of verbs and the masculine gender of nouns to indicate both sexes – male and female, which is in line with the standard Serbian language. Also, in the line with the Serbian “Gender-sensitive Language Standardization Manual” (Savić S. 2004), the authors may emphasize occasionally the presence of both sexes, to ensure female and male visibility. In the English translation, however, the use of third person plural will be the norm, while occasionally, the “he” or “he/she” constructions may be used to indicate both sexes. Where there is a special emphasis on sex/gender in the Serbian text, the English may follow accordingly (where applicable).

CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY

SCHOOLS AND BUSINESSES GETTING CLOSER

A lot of theoretical teaching, far from reality, unmotivated students – this is how Slavko Đokić, the headmaster of Technical School Požega, describes the situation in his school as it was ten years ago. This dedicated man did not want to settle for such a situation, so he pulled out all the stops: with the support of GIZ he sent 60 teachers on professional development courses. The programme included: modern teaching, new didactic methods and more practical training. The interviews with companies in the region showed that they urgently need well-qualified moulders, CNC-machines experts, locksmiths, plumbing and heating technicians. Đokić reached an agreement with the companies: “We, together with GIZ, have tailored education to the needs of companies, employers had the opportunity to say how. In return, our students visit the companies two to three days a week to be trained by a qualified expert.”

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Students have the opportunity to experience real working practice in real-life companies. Nevertheless, school does not stop there. In its workshops and CNC simulators provided by GIZ, the school prepares young people for their time in the company. For Goran Janković, the owner of the tools, moulds and spills production company Inmold d.o.o, this development has been a blessing: “Our main market is the international automotive industry, and they are known for demanding high quality. For this, I need well-trained workers, in order to be able to satisfy my clients.” Therefore, this entrepreneur has been providing scholarships for 33 students in their first year of studies, offering them practical training in the company and employment after they successfully complete their education. This determined man has donated two new CNC machines to the school, so that young people could get acquainted with them from the very first



day. “As entrepreneurs we need to invest in the education of our young people, if we want to have good specialists. I have always thought so and it was worth it!”

What Janković meant by saying this could be seen during the tour of his company. At one of the numerous CNC machines, student Aleksandar Joković critically observes the milling machine as it slowly makes a mould out of steel. In his fourth year of studies, this young man already has a permanent job at Inmold. He earns a wage, and he learns the theoretical part through private lessons paid by Janković. Joković is delighted: “At this point I already have a real job that I really love doing. I would like to stay with Inmold forever and later to train young people myself.” Other students plan to go on to university first, after graduating, like Danijel Mihailović: “I wish to write programmes for CNC machines myself later on and be one of the engineers working at Inmold.”

FROM ZERO TO A HUNDRED

Until a few years ago, Požega Foundry had to train their workers from scratch. Only

after months of becoming accustomed to the work were they able to perform a single step in the production – this decreased business productivity. In the meantime, the situation has changed, since the foundry has established close cooperation with headmaster Đokić. Like Inmold, the foundry awards scholarships to 33 students and a guaranteed job after graduation. Every week future moulders go for practical training in the company for a period of two to three days. One of them is second year student Aleksandar Perović. When the rain of sparks from the grinders subsided, the student lifted his helmet and said, beaming: “The thing I would like the most is to be in the company every day, because I think that the work here is very interesting. I would love to stay here forever and build my career, because this company has enabled me to have a professional future.” Slobodan Lukić is the technical director and has been the training leader for several years: “Young people are really motivated and want to be trained for this occupation. After graduation they will be able to perform all tasks in our company.”

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INVESTMENT IN THE FUTURE

ADDRESSING THE SKILLED LABOUR SHORTAGE

The German company Falke KGaA set aside a huge amount of money and built a stocking factory in the small town of Leskovac in southern Serbia. Since early 2012, a myriad of knitting needles have been scurrying back and forth, spools of thread unwinding at a fast pace and as if out of nowhere these technical marvels have been manufacturing the precursors for socks, panty hoses and silk stockings. Sewing, shaping, fixing, quality control, labelling and packaging – the socks have a long journey from the knitting machine to distribution. This German family-owned company has established itself in the idyllic town as a highly sought after employer. CEO Martin Nyland already employs 500 workers in the stocking factory and has over 1,000 other job applications piling up on his desk. However, the manager is not fully satisfied: “We have a great need for skilled workers.

“The education of young people will in future focus on the requirements of the textile company – with considerably more practical relevance provided in school.”

In particular, we are desperately seeking mechanics for the textile machines. However, I haven’t received any job applications from qualified job seekers. These people are in short supply in the Serbian market.”

The Leskovac region was famous for its textile industry until the 1990s. The local textile school used to train knitters, weavers, mechanics and pattern makers who know how to do their job. Mr Nyland hoped for this qualified workforce: “Unfortunately, well-educated people left this place long ago and there are no younger generations. We will have a continuous need for young professionals, because we will continue to grow here.” Falke will employ another 100 workers next year, to whom the company has on its own provided in-house training and continuous education. Mr Nyland was able to employ Dusica Grozdanovic, a staff member with 27 years of experience in the



textile industry, from the very beginning. After one year of training in Germany, Ms. Grozdanovic now manages with ease her machines and serves as a trainer for newcomers: “Knowing your materials is the alpha and omega. The young people need to know which yarn has which properties, how to set the machine for it and what they need to keep an eye on. Here we manufacture to a quality that previously I did not know even existed. I’m really proud of it.” By and large, 80 employees who have been with the company from the beginning are at the level of Grozdanovic and provide training to inexperienced staff. However, the German textile manufacturer cannot replace the vocational school with its in-house training.

A HINT OF THE WORLD OF LABOUR

Mare Karanfilovic, the Head of the Vocational School for Textiles, sees the establishment of Falke as a huge opportunity for the youth of the region. She has reached an agreement with Mr Nyland: “The education of young people will in future focus on the requirements of the textile company – with considerably more

practical relevance provided in school.” In addition, the students visit the facilities of Falke each week to get a feel for the working world. Mr Nyland sees it very clearly: “The young people get to know the facilities and we can assess the graduates-to-be.”

The textile school is not holding back. A textile engineer, mediated by GIZ, supports the school in modernising the training content for textile machinery mechanics. The young people bring to light almost forgotten knitting and spinning machines, dismantle, clean and reassemble them. Falke donated two new machines for exercise and training purposes. Student Andreja Kostic was extremely pleased when he saw the old knitting machine resume its operation: “I find it really exciting to be able to take apart and reassemble such a complex technical structure. After I graduate next year I would like very much to start at Falke, to maintain and repair modern machines and to continue developing in this field more and more.” This is a wish that Andreja unreservedly shares with his potential employer.

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FROM THE START

TRAINING IN BANKING ACCORDING TO INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS

Nikola Ugarković, a secondary school of economics student, is curiously watching the administrative officer from NLB Bank in Subotica, Snežana Ivković, as she works. She is currently processing a loan application by a legal person, so he decided to be certain and hear some details from her once again. As a fourth year student, Ugarković already has very good banking knowledge. This is not simply due the practical training in the branch of this bank, but primarily due to the training in the virtual bank that was provided by GIZ. “We have our own bank at school, there we make loan contracts, open bank accounts and make savings contracts,” Ugarković proudly explains. With such preparation future bank clerks do not have problems finding their way in the world of work.

“We will provide the necessary theoretical background at school, and banks are required, in the third and fourth years of studies, to provide practical training and introduce the students to the everyday practice of banking.”

The headmaster of the Secondary School of Economics in Subotica, Igor Bem, could only dream of such well-qualified students when he took this position a decade ago. Like almost anywhere in the country, vocational education

was far from practical training, most graduates were not able to find a job. Without hesitation, Bem joined the GIZ project that brought together bank representatives in order to jointly create a modern profile based on practical skills. The basic content for the practical training of bank clerks was developed in the project, and Bem made an agreement with the banks: “We will provide the necessary theoretical background at school, and banks are required, in the third and fourth years of studies, to provide practical training and introduce the students to the everyday practice of banking.” The first class of bank clerks in Subotica started their studies in 2005. A team of teachers led by Bem was engaged to develop the teaching materials at the school. GIZ organised study visits to Germany for the teachers, and exchanges with German vocational schools and chambers of commerce. As a result, books and exercise materials in line with European standards are now available for students. Bem has nothing but praise for his team: “The teachers developed all the materials in their spare time with great



enthusiasm. I cannot even reward them for the effort as no funds were earmarked for that.”

THE CRAFT OF BANKING

Bem's important ally, from the first moment, has been the regional manager of NLB Bank in Subotica, Marija Bećak: “Previously, there was no special vocational training for bank clerks. Young people would come to us with zero knowledge.” For banks, this meant that they themselves needed to train their employees, which was a difficult job. Only after six months could they be entrusted with performing tasks independently, and these semiskilled employees were nothing like the people who could be entrusted with any job. Manager Bećak sees this new generation in a completely different way: “The students today fully know how to work in this software, know what is currently important in international monetary operations. They even know how to treat dissatisfied clients.” Extensive training enabled the students to have such self-confidence in business. In addition to virtual banks, they

have role-plays where they train to work with clients and train their temper for complaints and complex inquiries. Mina Bogdanović, a fourth year student, is another one who appreciates the similarity of the programme with the real-life situation: “We are incredibly lucky to be able to directly experience our future occupation. Everything we will need later at work we have now here in the classroom!”

Some bank managers still prefer to hire staff with a university degree who are then paid the same as graduate students of vocational schools. An attitude that Mrs. Bećak cannot understand: “If someone wants to work in a bank, then they need to complete a secondary education in a school for banking clerks, not a university. Our job is like a craft, and it must be learned starting from the basics. A university degree alone does not transfer this knowledge!” This self-conscious regional manager certainly knows this, because it took her many painstaking years, after studies in finance, to get accustomed to banking, until she acquired the necessary skills for this job.

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UNIVERSITY NEED NOT ALWAYS BE AN OPTION VOCATIONAL ORIENTATION AND CAREER COUNSELLING FOR STUDENTS

Primary and secondary schools and youth offices, the Employment Service, businesses and municipal government representatives have been cooperating across Serbia to prepare final graders for their future career choice

Every child needs to study and finish university – this is what parents and the majority of students in Serbia believe. However, as anywhere else in the world, an academic career is not for everyone. Vocational education and training are still on the margins of the system. They have a bad reputation and the occupations studied there are considered unappealing. This is prejudice, because vocational schools are also developing and are meanwhile offering an interesting range of profiles, from economic to technical. Very often neither parents nor primary school teachers are aware of this possibility. With the “Vocational Orientation” project implemented by GIZ this situation is, however, gradually changing.

For the past two years, primary and secondary schools and youth offices, the Employment Service, businesses and municipal government representatives have been cooperating across Serbia to prepare final graders for their future career choice. They visit schools and youth offices and, with their knowledge and competencies, help each student understand their interests and abilities. In interactive workshops young people quickly find out what it is they can do, what their talents are, where their strengths are and reassess their own career decisions. Parents are also included. They are the ones who can and should support the interests and decisions of their children because the children then have the chance to make a satisfying career choice. The



programme was initially implemented as a pilot project, and from the end of 2013 all 1,100 primary schools in Serbia and all local youth offices will offer vocational orientation and information services to all interested students. Many students become genuinely inspired and get the opportunity to check that they have made the correct choice when they visit a company, ask around and see what it feels like to work in their future occupation. An example is Sunce Marinković d.o.o., a company from Kragujevac, which regularly receives students on the so-called try-out day. Young people with the help of experienced workers perform minor tasks during the construction of windows, doors or frames. Delta Group has organised visits to their factories where more than 100 young people received information on education possibilities and opportunities not only in that company but also in the sectors in which the Group's companies operate – agriculture and food processing.

In addition to young people from primary schools, peer counselling teams also deal with secondary school students, especially those from vocational schools. If a student's goal in almost every case is to go on to university after leaving secondary school, counsellors provide them with alternative options. Many companies are looking for skilled labour who are then provided with attractive development and career opportunities. Through this specific information many vocational school students recognise the value of their education and develop the self-confidence necessary for their occupation. Over 500 companies have in the meantime joined forces and opened their doors to students of all age groups every year. On the internet platform created specifically for promotion and realisation of real encounters of the youth with the world of work, companies submit their offers for visiting students. This way institutions and students alike find companies that match their interests.

Many students become genuinely inspired and get the opportunity to check that they have made the correct choice when they visit a company. More and more companies regularly receive students on the so-called try-out day.



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PUBLISHED BY:

Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale
Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH
Headquarters
Bonn and Eschborn
The Project “Reform of Vocational
Education and Training in Serbia, Phase V”
Kursulina 33, 11000 Belgrade

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DESIGN AND PREPRESS:

InDesigner, Beograd

PRINT:

InDesigner, Beograd

PRINT RUN:

100 copies

GIZ IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE
CONTENT OF THIS PUBLICATION.

ON BEHALF OF THE GERMAN
FEDERAL MINISTRY FOR
ECONOMIC COOPERATION
AND DEVELOPMENT (BMZ)



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