

Effectiveness of Career Counselling

Statements and Comments

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1. Introduction

In December 2002 the European Commission set up an expert group on "Lifelong Guidance" which had to develop a common understanding of basic concepts and principles for guidance and to reflect on the European dimension of guidance for education, training and employment systems. Contracted by European Training Foundation and based on OECD questionnaire analysis of career guidance/counselling policies was carried out in 2002 including 11 acceding and candidate countries at that time. Among them were also Latvia and Slovakia (experts: Latvia: Zinta Daija, Slovakia: Štefan Grajčár)¹. SWOT analyses from the report are showing more similarities than differences. Major differences are existence of specialised legislation and institution (PCCC) in Latvia.

Situation of structures of career counselling in Slovakia is exactly, but briefly described in reports² of Mr. Štefan Grajčár, who is the leading expert in this field in Slovakia. There are very few other resources about counselling in Slovakia. Actually there is not any specialised study of the counselling subject even it existed before. Author of this paper is not informed about any recent Slovak monography entirely devoted to career counselling.

Analysing the discussion paper³ we used mostly resources available on the internet, statistics and other related documents but many of our conclusions are based on our own experience with training of trainers in the project "Career counselling on secondary schools"⁴ and day-to-day experience from Institute of Life-long Learning. Some statements are representing solely view of author, even though we have consulted major Slovak experts of the international conference "Career Guidance Policies in Accessing and Candidate Countries"⁵ and we would like to acknowledge special help of Juraj Vantuch and Dušan Driensky.

¹ Sultana, R. G. et al. *Review of Career Guidance Policies in 11 Acceding and Candidate Countries: Synthesis Report*. Torino : European Training Foundation, 2003. Available online [cit 2005-11-04]
<[http://www.etf.eu.int/website.nsf/pages/c63b14262a11c92cc1256db100455c70/\\$file/enl-career+guidance-0703_en.pdf](http://www.etf.eu.int/website.nsf/pages/c63b14262a11c92cc1256db100455c70/$file/enl-career+guidance-0703_en.pdf)>

² Grajčár, Š. *Služby kariérového poradenstva v Slovenskej republike*. Available online [cit 2005-11-04]
<<http://www.leonardodavinci.at/filemanager/download/478/3%20Grajcar%20-%20Sluzby%20karieroveho.pdf>>

³ Karnite R. *Supporting lifelong learning through development of lifelong guidance*. Discussion paper

⁴ Career Counselling at Secondary Schools, ESF project NUTSII Bratislava, Slovakia managed by Transfer Slovakia

⁵ Career Guidance Policies in Acceding and Candidate Countries : List of participants, Bratislava, 5-6 December 2003 Available online [cit 2005-11-04]

2. Career Counselling in Slovakia

Slovakia has adopted European values in the national employment policy⁶. But policies and day-to-day life are in Slovakia sometimes far away from each other. According to author's view the situation of career counselling Slovakia is as follows: career counselling (karierové poradenstvo) is an unknown word not only to general public. In this year we have registered web site www.karieroveporadenstvo.sk without any problems, which means not only that there is still doubt on the correct translation, but also that there is little interest in the subject. "Career counselling" is not explicitly mentioned in any legislation and career counsellor is not a registered full time job⁷. There is not any specialised institution devoted entirely to the career counselling. All this does not mean that career counselling is not provided. According to our opinion it just plays a minor role while there is very intensive "informal/nonformal" counselling based on social networks. The situation is not tragic: Slovaks are more focused on practical aspects and therefore different projects are developing practical tools rather than to focus on counselling by itself⁸.

2.1 Providers

Services related to career counselling are defined in several pieces of different legislation. All regulations have a common characteristic: career counselling is provided for free by state. (It is interesting that also life-long (further) education is proclaimed as the right of every person, but it may be charged.) The responsibility for "state career counselling" is shared by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour and it is provided by:

- educational counsellors at elementary and secondary schools (výchovní poradcovia na základných a stredných školách),
- school psychologists (školskí psychológovia),
- school special pedagogues (školskí špeciálni pedagógovia),
- pedagogical-psychological consultation offices (pedagogicko-psychologické poradne),
- special pedagogical consultation offices (špeciálnopedagogické poradne),

<[http://www.etf.eu.int/website.nsf/Pages/21D17730BF23D0B4C1256E36004C7DF4/\\$FILE/ENL_BRAT_listofparticipants_03_EN.pdf](http://www.etf.eu.int/website.nsf/Pages/21D17730BF23D0B4C1256E36004C7DF4/$FILE/ENL_BRAT_listofparticipants_03_EN.pdf)>

⁶ Related documents available in English: Joint Assessment of Employment priorities
http://www.employment.gov.sk/mpsvrsr/internet/home/page_pdf.php?id=667

Act on employment services (pdf)

http://www.employment.gov.sk/mpsvrsr/internet/home/page_pdf.php?id=817

Act on employment services and on amending and supplementing certain acts - full wording

http://www.employment.gov.sk/mpsvrsr/internet/home/page_pdf.php?id=1125

National action plan for employment for 2004 - 2006

http://www.employment.gov.sk/mpsvrsr/internet/home/page_pdf.php?id=1184

⁷ Also due to not finished national vocational qualification scheme/framework <http://www.istp.sk>

⁸ Examples: Occupations <http://www.povolania.sk>, DYCS - Developing Young Career Services <http://www.careercenteronline.org/>, Handbooks: The World of Work (LOGOS, Bratislava 2000), <http://www.svetprace.sk/>

- children integration centres (detské integračné centrá),
- universities
- **Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (Ústredie práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny) and their local offices (úradý práce,...)**
- youth information centres (informačné centrá mladých (www.icm.sk))
- Euroguidance Center
- supporting state institutions, research institutions
- private providers: personal agencies, consultations, head hunters...
- internet providers of job offers and related services

The first 7 institution types are controlled by the Ministry of Education. They provide a wide range of counselling, but they are not primarily focused on employment issues. Since we focus on employment services represented mostly by Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (COLSAF) we will not discuss other providers now. The other reason is that COLSAF is the only reliable source of publicly available data about career counselling in Slovakia.

Public employment services are under management of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family. From beginning of 2004 they came through transformation from 3 level structure to 2 level Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family and its 46 offices of labour, social affairs and family and 75 detached affiliated offices (79 district labour offices and 8 regional labour offices plus one General Directorate of the National Labour Office in before).

2.2 Customers

According to the web site of the COLSAF <http://www.upsvar.sk/> labour offices offer consultation services (for free) for:

- (registered) job seekers (unemployed or working less then 16 hours/week and earning less than 800 Sk (20 EUR) /week)
- job interested (special term used by COLSAF for a person interested in job change or a pensioner seeking a job. These persons after registering will be entitled for training)
- employers
- educational counsellors

The law on employment services no 5/2004 Col. specifies that employment services additionally have to cover active measures on the labour market. The law is at the same time enabling outsourcing of the counselling services to the private (physical or legal bodies) or specialised agencies. The law is distinguishing between guidance and counselling, stipulating that counselling should be provided by counsellor with university degree.

2.3 Services

Information and counselling services (provided by labour offices and their partners) are not a part of ALP of itself. The most important role of offices is to register job seekers and job interested and then they will receive services for free. Services provided to registered job-seekers:

- finding appropriate job, or to change a job
- interview travel assistance up to 250 Sk (app 6 Eur)
- education and training for labour market
- other ALP measures

Special counselling related (called information and counselling and vocational counselling by COLSAF):

- **information and vocational counselling** about different occupations, prerequisite and requirements
- **evaluation of personal competencies**, abilities, vocational skills and information about qualification and health requirements related to job choice
- **information about:** job offers, job interviews, free places on labour market (burza práce), education and training, employment possibilities in Slovakia and abroad, participation in ALP, unemployment benefits.

The registered "job interested" has right to free information, counselling and vocational counselling services but practically he is offered only information services. Special advantage of registering is a benefit of 5000 Sk (app 130 Eur) for taking an education/course from courses listed by the labour office, after closing a special agreement with the Office.

2.4 Outcomes

Data showed as tables and charts in the appendix about activities of labour offices are difficult to interpret. Independent expert group within HESO project⁹ evaluated positively the rise of the activation wage subsidy and wage subsidy for unemployed graduates. Data from COLSAF (App. Tab. 2, Chart 2) about financial resources show that 53% of the resources were used for so called activation policy which supported creation of 219 876 temporary public jobs. Career counselling is not reported in the financial tables. It is because counselling is not an explicit part of the active measures on the labour market. Counselling at labour offices is considered as a part of treating customers. Focus is on proper distribution of subsidies (by registering). Main part of this treatment consists of creation of action plans. COLSAF data from internet (App. Tab1) show that not every customer has received counselling. The educated guess is that actually very few got counselling because the ratio of customers/consultations is $383\ 335/475\ 356 = 80\%$. Most of customers were job seekers - 84% of all (Chart 6). Moreover, most consultations were just entry consultations also 84% of all (Chart 7).

3. Effectiveness and quality

The only facts what we have about effectiveness and quality of counselling services provided by labour offices are that mean number of consultations was 2 716 per month and there were 17 consultations per one staff member. From this data even knowing the total number of consultations it is not possible to calculate number of staff members. Cost-effectiveness of

⁹ Zachar D. (Ed) *Reformy na Slovensku 2004 – 2005 : Hodnotenie ekonomických a sociálnych opatrení*. Bratislava: INEKO, 2005. ISBN 80-89026-19-2

different ALP measures show that most used were the cheapest measures (activation - see Tab. 2, Charts 4, 5) and three most expensive measures were used only for less than 300 places/people.

In Karnite's discussion paper in part "Assessment of the quality of services" following questions concerning quality of services are given in form of "is there a need of":

- (1) any quality standards
- (2) legal responsibility about guidance measures and given advises
- (3) any qualification testing (or certification) for service providers
- (4) any supervision institution, if number of service providers increase

and it is finished with a statement: "It is likely that the clarity of the system, quality assurance principles and financing mechanisms are the weakest points of the policy under consideration." We strongly agree with the first proposal: there must be quality standard (at least quality measures) to compare and evaluate counselling services. We will elaborate this in more depth in following text.

3.1 Effectiveness of career interventions

There are general methods for evaluating effectiveness of any services: comparative, attributional, behavioural, output oriented, 360 deg. feedback, qualitative approach. Usually only comparative method is being used. Trying to evaluate effectiveness of career interventions the main problem is in defining desired outputs, but other problem is different existing systems. For example Kerka¹⁰ suggested an interactive model for career counselling which includes evaluation and modification as parts of the system. To evaluate the effectiveness, Kerka referring to Fretz recommends that three dimensions are to be considered: clients, treatments and outcomes. Let us combine Fretz's suggestions into just two categories of simple parameters:

on input (quantitative parameters, usually not taking into account results):

- number and type of customers
- type and content of treatment (consultation, session, program) and its relation to active labour policies/programmes (ALP)
- number of treatment, duration, length, frequency, dropout rate
- ratio of customers/consultations per one counsellor
- cost per one customers/consultations
- consultants education, training (quality), accreditation
- proclaimed goals

¹⁰ Kerka, S., Adult Career Counseling: An Interactive Model. Overview. ERIC Digest No. 65. In *ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult Career and Vocational Education Columbus OH*. 1987-00-00 Available online [cit 2005-11-08] <<http://www.ericdigests.org/pre-927/adult.htm>>

on output (evaluating results, impacts):

personal impact:

- customer satisfaction
- acceptance of personal responsibility for career planning, development of related skills
- number of those who were helped (in a broader sense)
- achieving satisfying, gainful employment (in employment counselling)
- post-program earnings and/or employment performance.

societal impact:

- rise of competitiveness of companies (sector, industry)
- number of unemployed benefited from counselling and job search assistance
- more targeted (smaller) employment subsidies
- negative factors like “dead-weight factor”, creaming, displacement and substitution effects should be studied too.

Up to now COLSAF (and discussion paper too) is reporting just input parameters. To compare output to input does not necessarily mean a threat for the provider. How to achieve higher effectiveness without the loss of the quality is the hard issue when there are no standards and very low feedback.

Even when we have defined input/output parameters there is still a problem how to rate them against each other. We have found just one article of (US) National Career Development Association with arguments related to vocational/career counselling effectiveness¹³.

3.2 Dead weight and other factors influencing effectiveness

Let consider these effects:

creaming - practice where programme operators select the best participants, as opposed to those who may benefit most from the programme,

displacement - participants gain reemployment at the expense of other qualified workers who might have taken the job anyway, so there is no net gain

substitution - money received by a company to expand employment, simply reduces spending which otherwise would have been made anyway.

All these effects are influenced by the **dead-weight** factor - a measure of something that would have gone ahead anyway without the inducement of any special investment (taxes, grants, etc.). Patric Honohan in his article¹¹ about key issues of cost-benefit methodology for Irish industrial policy isolated three main issues in cost-benefit impacts of Irish industrial development grants. Honohan suggests dead-weight of 80%. Dead-weight factor in career counselling means that there is a little chance to verify that if a person found successful and fulfilling job what percentage of this success should be attributed to career counselling. (Dead-weight factor may be that the owner of the employer of the person is his uncle). We do not want to diminish the social role of career counselling, we just suggest to take into account also informal counselling in the form of social networks, day-to-day activities and internet and other factors. Dead-weight factor is already

¹¹ Honohan P. *Key Issues Of Cost-Benefit Methodology For Irish Industrial Policy*. General Research Series, September 1998. Available online [cit 2005-11-08] <<http://homepage.eircom.net/~phonohan/costbenefit.pdf>>

known and reported. For example Nelson¹² is stating that in the USA 90% of free job offers are not advertised. This is especially true for high-end jobs.

3.3 Quality of career counselling

Quality of career counselling may be considered from academic viewpoint or from practical viewpoint of customer or from viewpoint of state. Without discussion is that outputs are highly dependent on the quality (training) of the staff. (US) National Career Development Association a division of the American Counseling Association prepared already in 1997 the list of (minimum) career counselling competencies (for details see¹³). Interesting is assuring of quality of training in Slovakia via accreditation of training institutions and programs by so called "small" accreditation commission of the Ministry of Education.

4. Comparison of the policies

Comparing trends of key indicators of labour market in Latvia and those in Tab.1. for Slovakia shows that despite the double population of Slovakia most indicators¹⁴ are the **same with tolerance of $\pm 50\%$** . The same similar characteristics of both countries also come out from the multi-country report *Policies in 11 Acceding and Candidate Countries*¹⁵. Only the percentage of upper secondary students (ISCED 3) in vocational education, early school leavers rate* (%) and percentage of the population aged 25–64 having attained at least upper secondary education are significantly different.

In Slovakia the number of customers and counselling sessions is given, in Latvia it is number of unemployed and job seekers. While in Slovakia number of customers is higher than the number of actions (consultations) 475356/383335, in Latvia it is opposite 77894/364650. The main problem is in a non-consistent description and missing common indicators, without them it is hard or impossible to compare. Even though there are many similarities there are also major differences:

¹² Nelson R. *How to find a good job*. Slovak translation *Ako si nájsť dobrý job*. Motýl 2004. ISBN 80-88978-99-8

¹³ National Career Development Association <http://www.ncda.org/index.html> The National Career Development Association (NCDA) is a division of the American Counseling Association (ACA) <http://www.counseling.org> Career Counseling Competencies, Revised Version, 1997 Available online [cit 2005-11-08] <<http://www.ncda.org/about/polccc.html> >

¹⁴ population of working age (15–64) as a % of total population, GDP per capita (PPS Euro), employment rate (% of population aged 15–64), least upper secondary education 85% employment rate of older workers (% of population aged 55–64), aged 25–64 in education unemployment rate (% of labour force aged 15+), total public expenditure on education (as a % of GDP), youth unemployment rate (% of labour force aged 15–24), participation rates in education (ISCED levels 1 to 6) of young people aged 15–24, participation rates of adults aged 25–64 in education and training (%)

¹⁵ Sultana, R. G. et al. *Review of Career Guidance Policies in 11 Acceding and Candidate Countries: Synthesis Report*. Torino : European Training Foundation, 2003. Available online [cit 2005-11-04] <[http://www.etf.eu.int/website.nsf/pages/c63b14262a11c92cc1256db100455c70/\\$file/enl-career+guidance-0703_en.pdf](http://www.etf.eu.int/website.nsf/pages/c63b14262a11c92cc1256db100455c70/$file/enl-career+guidance-0703_en.pdf)>

- in Slovakia lifelong guidance services are not introduced
- in Slovakia lifelong learning is not a part of the active measures on the labour market
- in Slovakia career counselling is not explicitly a part of the active measures on the labour market

5. Assessment of the potential transferability and conclusions

Ideas and policies from the discussion paper which may be considered useful for Slovakia:

- High priority of career counselling in Latvia
- Existing of special "career counselling" law and institute
- Existence of national ESF supported programmes (the main source of financing) and ERDF National Programme.

Conclusions:

- The discussion paper provided in deep overview of development of lifelong guidance services in Latvia
- The discussion paper in the part "The problems that the policy is intended to solve" is targeting three problems. Without more exact qualitative and quantitative parameters there are no measures to evaluate its achievements. Especially those regarding competitiveness. (Which says also author of the discussion paper in part B1.2 : ..it is almost impossible to extract the impact of the particular policy ..)
- Without adequate criteria it is hard to compare situation in our both countries
- Our two countries have different policy priorities. Slovakia is focused more on competitiveness, job creation (also by foreign investment) which is out of scope here and previous assessment of the potential transferability will be useful only after the basic change of priorities
- Lifelong Guidance EU strategy is widely unknown and should be more promoted in Slovakia
- European Employment Strategy was transformed into National Action Plan also with stressed role of guidance and counselling. Career counselling is among the priorities of ESF but in Slovakia there are very few action going on (we do not know about other career counselling related project then we are involved in). National projects are needed.
- Slovak labour offices are providing information and counselling services and their effectiveness is measured by parameters on input. Offices are focused on registration, effective use of subsidies and action plans. There is a need to implement LLL concept, creation of social network, key competencies
- World Bank study about effectiveness of ALP¹⁶ carried out in 4 European countries indicates that ALPs can have a significant positive impact on post-program employment and earnings for selected target groups. Poorly designed or incorrectly targeted programs, however, may have no impact and, in some cases a negative impact; they may also be costly, ineffective, and inefficient. Study includes exact measures of impact based on comparison groups and is very well documented on 65 pages so it may be used as the bases for evaluation of effectiveness of career counselling also in our countries.

¹⁶ Fretwell D. H. et al. Evaluating The Impact Of Active Labor Programs: Results Of Cross Country Studies In Europe And Central Asia World Bank June 1999

- In Slovakia's active labour market policy is oriented towards activation (publicly useful jobs) and career counselling and lifelong learning are not an official part of it.
- In Slovakia there is no special career counselling institution and therefore there is not any direct financing. Also Ministry of Education do not support directly career counsellor (education counselling is a duty for teacher specified by school director). So the Slovak career counselling system works on no costs (virtually). This may be an idea for Latvia, but also an idea for responsible Slovak officials to estimate hidden costs of counselling in Slovakia.
- From questions for debate from discussion paper most interested is the assessment of the quality (addressed above) and the idea formalising the policy into single document
- Efficiency of career counselling is often measure against employment data it is important to remind that any counselling has also a "side effect" in social and private sphere like improving well-being, fighting exclusion, diminishing aggressiveness etc.
- There is no direct link between counselling and life-long learning in Slovakia now. The main problems and recommendations of LLL in Slovakia are already summarised by Association of Institutions of Adult Education or may be found also in different studies.

6. Appendix

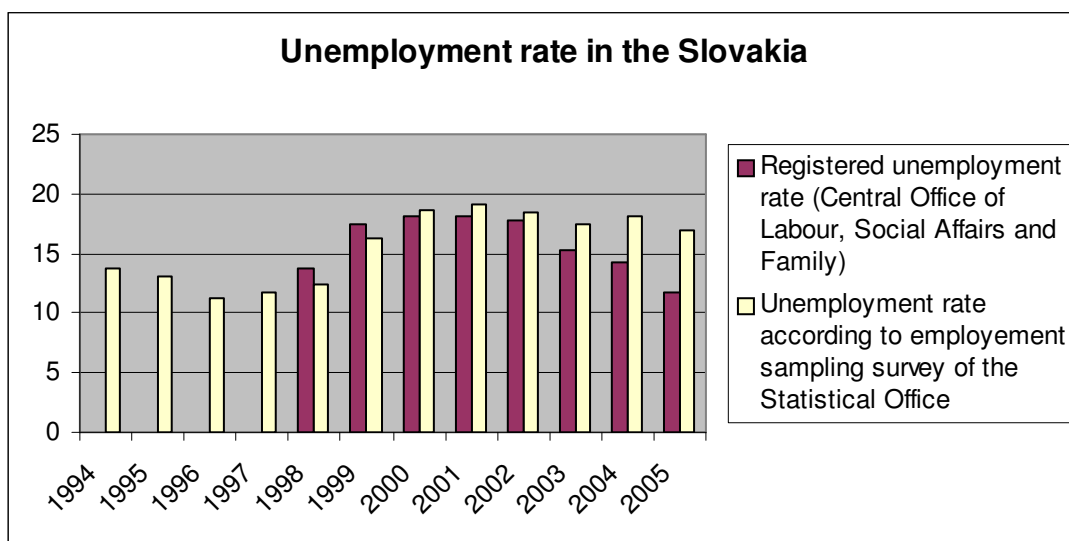


Chart 1.: Unemployment rate in the Slovakia. Source: Zachar D. (Ed) REFORMY NA SLOVENSKU 2004 – 2005 : Hodnotenie ekonomických a sociálnych opatrení. Bratislava: INEKO, 2005. ISBN 80-89026-19-2, http://www.ineko.sk/?s=file_download&id=31 and http://www.ineko.sk/reformy2003/menu_dochodky_fakty_nezamestnanost.htm Prime sources: Statistical Office of SR, Ministry of Finance of SR, ING Bank

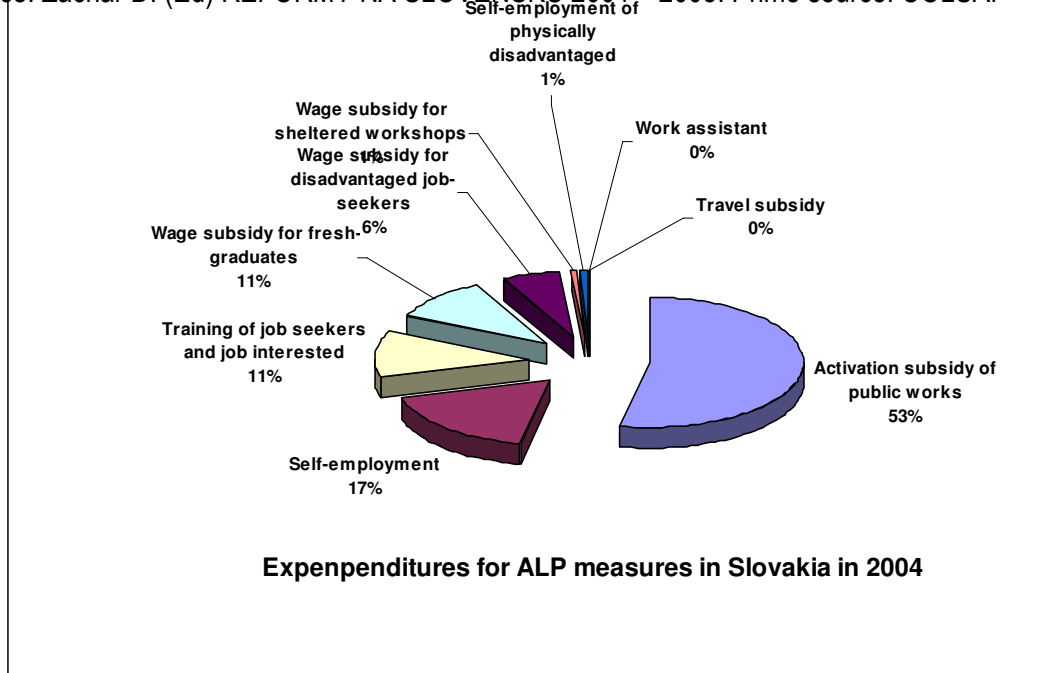
Year	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Registered unemployment rate (Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family)	13,8	17,5	18,2	18,2	17,8	15,2	14,3
Unemployment rate according to employment sampling survey of the Statistical Office	12,5	16,2	18,6	19,2	18,5	17,4	18,1
Number of unemployed according to employment sampling survey of the Statistical Office (in th.)	317	417	485	508	487	459	481
Number of employed (in th.)	2199	2139	2093	2092	2127	2165	2170
Yearly creation of new jobs (in %)	-0,3	-2,7	-2,1	-0,1	1,6	2	0
Real productivity growth (in %)	4,6	3,8	2,6	2,3	4,3	3,6	5,2
Nominal monthly salary (in Sk (app1/40 EUR)	10003	10728	11430	12365	13511	14365	15825
Growth of real income (in %)	2,7	-3,1	-4,9	1	5,8	-2	2,5
Number of clients of Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (COLSAF)							475 356
Number of consultations by COLSAF							383 335

Tab. 1.: Key indicators of labour market in Slovakia. Sources: INEKO, Statistical Office of SR, Ministry of Finance of SR, ING Bank

Type of ALP	Measure	Number of created placements	Number of supported persons	Amount in Slovak Crowns	Average EUR per created placements or supported person (higher)
Public works	Activation subsidy of public works	219 876	243 426	985 964 553	115
Self-employment	Self-employment	5 618	5 618	320 083 467	1465
Training	Training of job seekers and job interested		27 208	211 667 038	200
Wage subsidy	Wage subsidy for fresh-graduates		14 462	199 879 537	355
Wage subsidy	Wage subsidy for disadvantaged job-seekers	1 778	1 801	109 541 958	1584
Wage subsidy	Wage subsidy for sheltered workshops	138	127	13 929 496	2820
Self-employment	Self-employment of physically disadvantaged	108	108	10 748 968	2559
General employment services	Work assistant	18	52	2 089 198	2984
General employment services	Travel subsidy		51	458 589	231
	Total	227 536	292 853	1 854 362 804	

Tab. 2.: Active labour policy (ALP) measures in Slovakia in the year 2004. Source: Zachar D. (Ed) REFORMY NA SLOVENSKU 2004 – 2005 : Hodnotenie ekonomických a sociálnych opatrení. Bratislava: INEKO, 2005. ISBN 80-89026-19-2. Prime source: COLSAF. Recalculation of placements and persons and SK/EUR with rate 38,89 by author.

Chart 2.: Expenditures for active labour policy (ALP) measures in Slovakia in the year 2004. Source: Zachar D. (Ed) REFORMY NA SLOVENSKU 2004 – 2005. Prime source: COLSAF



SLOVAK REPUBLIC

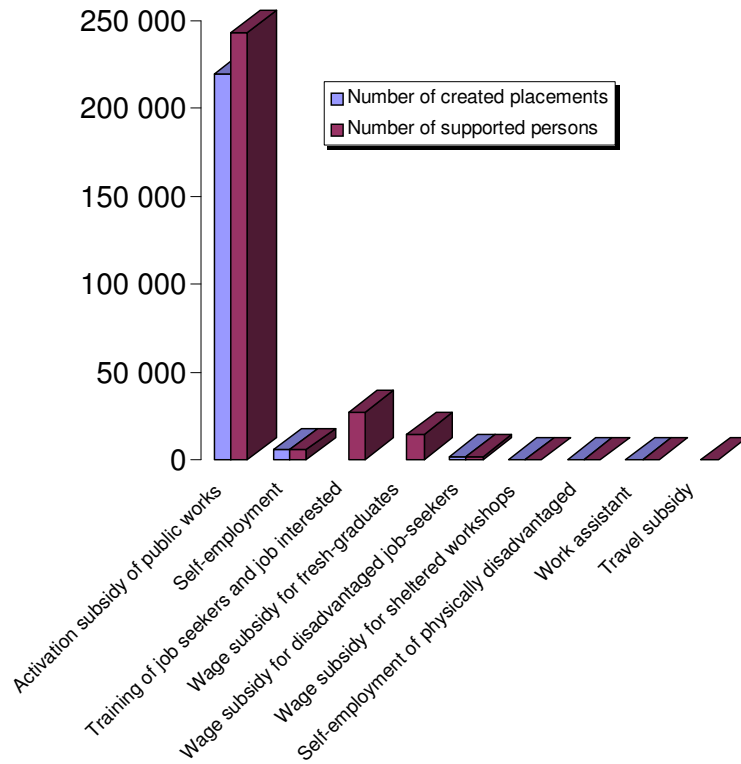


Chart 4.: Number of created/supported placements and supported persons by active labour policy (ALP) measures in Slovakia in the year 2004. Source: Zachar D. (Ed) REFORMY NA SLOVENSKU 2004 – 2005. Prime source: COLSAF

Average EUR per created placements or supported person (higher)

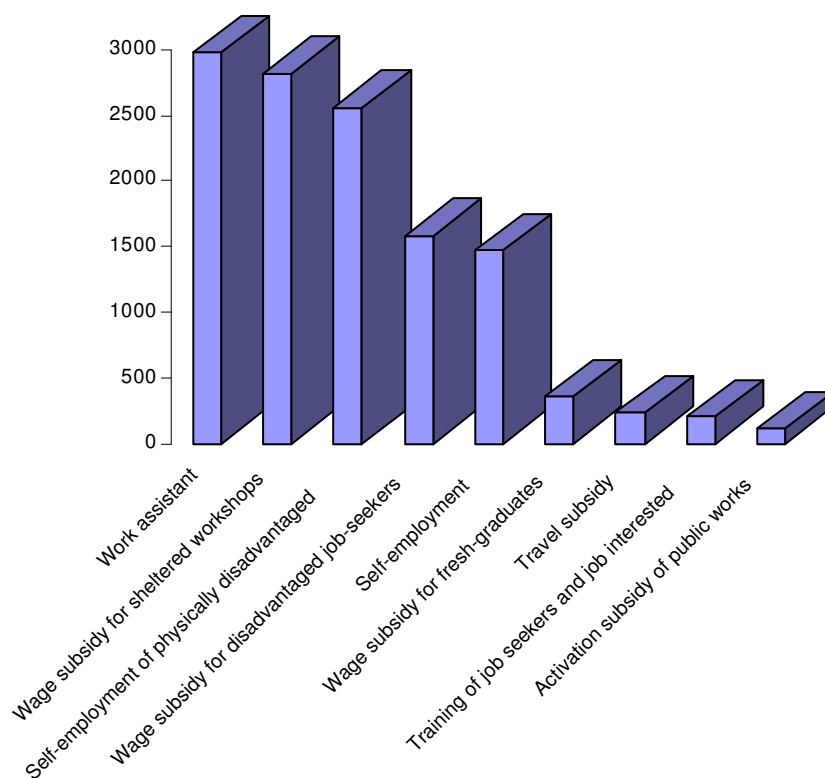


Chart 5.: Average cost of placements or supported person by active labour policy (ALP) measures in Euro in Slovakia in the year 2004. Source: Zachar D. (Ed) REFORMY NA SLOVENSKU 2004 – 2005. Prime source: COLSAF

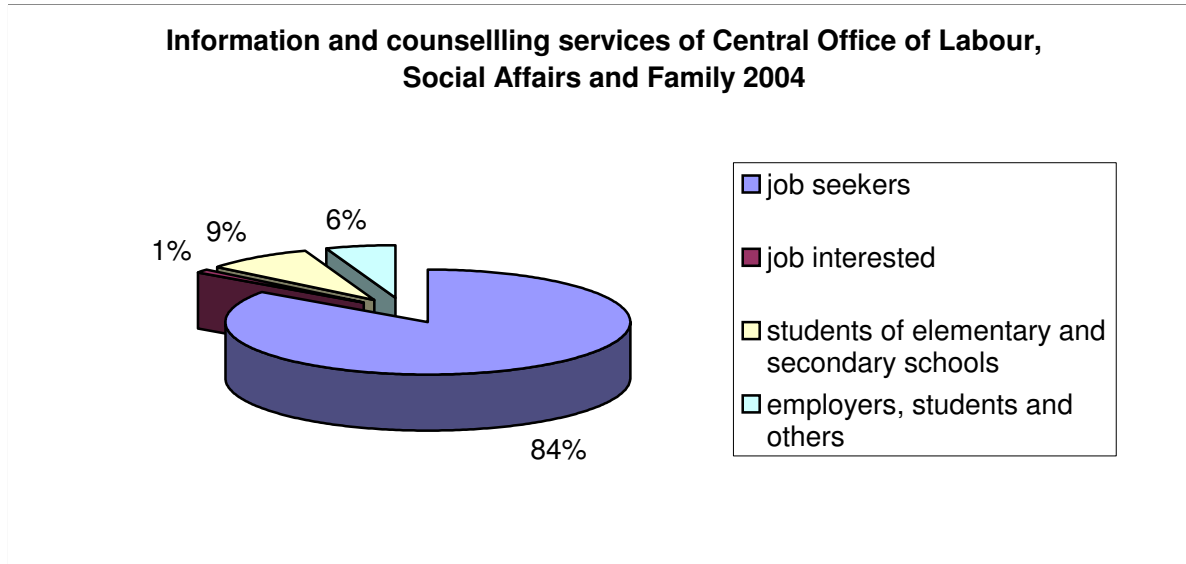


Chart 6.: Types of clients to whom information and counselling services of Offices of Labour, were provided in the year 2004. Source: Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family - Ústredie práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny <http://www.upsvar.sk/>

**Consultations provided by by Central Office of
Labour, Social Affairs and Family, year 2004**

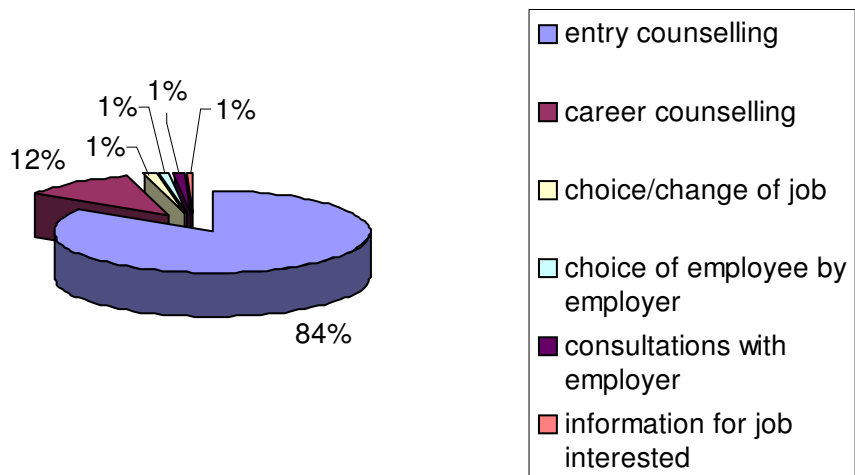


Chart 7.: Consultations provided by the Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, year 2004. Source: Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family - Ústredie práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny <http://www.upsvar.sk/>

