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**COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT**

**Education and Training Monitor 2022**

*Accompanying the document*

**Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the  
European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions**

**on progress towards the achievement of the European Education Area**

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# **Education and Training Monitor 2022**

SLOVAKIA



The Education and Training Monitor's country reports present and assess the main recent and ongoing policy development at all education levels in EU Member States. They provide the reader with more in-depth insight of the performance of countries with regard to the EU level targets agreed within the EEA. They are based on the most up-to-date quantitative and qualitative evidence available.

Section 1 presents a statistical overview of the main education and training indicators. Section 2 focuses on how the Member State has addressed or is addressing one of its education challenges. Section 3 covers early childhood education and care. Section 4 deals with school education policies. Section 5 covers vocational education and training and adult learning. Finally, Section 6 discusses measures in higher education.

The Education and Training Monitor's country reports were prepared by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC), with contributions from the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL).

The document was completed on 30 September 2022

More background data at:

<https://op.europa.eu/webpub/eac/education-and-training-monitor-2022/en/>



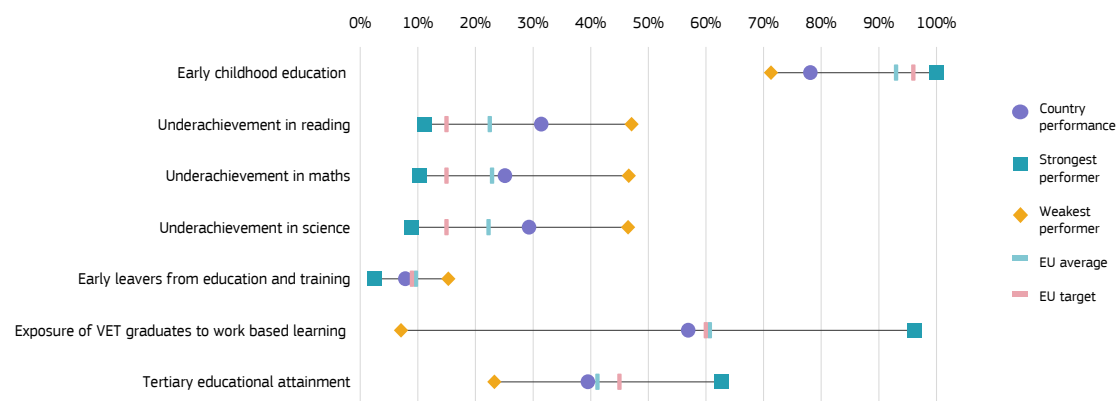
# 1. Key indicators

**Figure 1: Key indicators overview**

			Slovakia		EU	
			2011	2021	2011	2021
<b>EU-level targets</b>			<b>2030 target</b>			
Participation in early childhood education (from age 3 to starting age of compulsory primary education)	≥ 96 %		72.3% <sup>13</sup>	78.1% <sup>20</sup>	91.8% <sup>13</sup>	93.0% <sup>20</sup>
Low achieving eighth-graders in digital skills	< 15%		32.8% <sup>13</sup>	:	:	:
Low achieving 15-year-olds in:	Reading	< 15%	22.2% <sup>09</sup>	31.4% <sup>18</sup>	19.7% <sup>09</sup>	22.5% <sup>18</sup>
	Maths	< 15%	21.0% <sup>09</sup>	25.1% <sup>18</sup>	22.7% <sup>09</sup>	22.9% <sup>18</sup>
	Science	< 15%	19.3% <sup>09</sup>	29.3% <sup>18</sup>	18.2% <sup>09</sup>	22.3% <sup>18</sup>
Early leavers from education and training (age 18-24)	< 9 %		5.1% <sup>b</sup>	7.8% <sup>b</sup>	13.2%	9.7% <sup>b</sup>
Exposure of VET graduates to work-based learning	≥ 60 % (2025)		:	56.9%	:	60.7%
Tertiary educational attainment (age 25-34)	≥ 45 %		25.5% <sup>b</sup>	39.5% <sup>b</sup>	33.0%	41.2% <sup>b</sup>
Participation of adults in learning (age 25-64)	≥ 47 % (2025)		:	:	:	:
<b>Other contextual indicators</b>						
Equity indicator (percentage points)			:	30.9 <sup>18</sup>	:	19.30 <sup>18</sup>
Early leavers from education and training (age 18-24)	Native		5.1% <sup>b</sup>	7.9% <sup>b</sup>	11.9%	8.5% <sup>b</sup>
	EU-born		:	:	25.3%	21.4% <sup>b</sup>
	Non EU-born		:	:	31.4%	21.6% <sup>b</sup>
Upper secondary level attainment (age 20-24, ISCED 3-8)			93.3% <sup>b</sup>	89.3% <sup>b</sup>	79.6%	84.6% <sup>b</sup>
Tertiary educational attainment (age 25-34)	Native		25.5%	39.5% <sup>b</sup>	34.3%	42.1% <sup>b</sup>
	EU-born		:	:	28.8%	40.7% <sup>b</sup>
	Non EU-born		:	:	23.4%	34.7% <sup>b</sup>
Education investment	Public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP		4.3%	4.6% <sup>20</sup>	4.9%	5.0% <sup>20</sup>
	Public expenditure on education as a share of the total general government expenditure		10.3%	10.1% <sup>20</sup>	10.0%	9.4% <sup>20</sup>

Eurostat (UOE, LFS, COFOG); OECD (PISA). Further information can be found in Annex I and at *Monitor Toolbox*. Notes: The 2018 EU average on PISA reading performance does not include ES; the indicator used (ECE) refers to early-childhood education and care programmes which are considered by the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) to be 'educational' and therefore constitute the first level of education in education and training systems – ISCED level 0; the equity indicator shows the gap in the share of underachievement in reading, mathematics and science (combined) among 15-year-olds between the lowest and highest quarters of socio-economic status; b = break in time series, u = low reliability, : = not available, 09 = 2009, 13 = 2013, 18 = 2018, 20 = 2020.

**Figure 2: Position in relation to strongest and weakest performers**



Source: DG Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, based on data from Eurostat (LFS 2021, UOE 2020) and OECD (PISA 2018).

## 2. A focus on equity

### Equity and inclusion in education have been long-standing challenges in Slovakia.

According to the 2018 PISA, more than half of Slovak 15-year-olds in the bottom social quartile lack basic skills (51.9%) compared to 1% in the highest quartile, which indicates that students' socio-economic background strongly affects their performance (OECD, 2019). The overall proportion of secondary school pupils with low levels of basic skills is significantly above the EU average (31% vs 22.5% in reading, 29% vs 22.3% in science, and 25% vs 22.9% in mathematics). In addition, low-performing and disadvantaged students often find themselves in the same schools; the related isolation index<sup>1</sup> shows that this is the case to a higher degree in Slovakia than in other EU countries. Rural areas and East Slovakia, which have the highest proportion of schools with disadvantaged students, also have the highest rate of early leavers from education and training (Section 4). This reinforces regional disparities at later stages of education, too: the tertiary educational attainment rate ranges from 35% in West Slovakia to 54.7% in the Bratislava region. The urban-rural divide related to the tertiary

educational attainment level is also deep: the attainment rate in cities is 60% vs 31.9% in rural areas (Figure 3). Additionally, the proportion of pupils with special educational needs who are placed in fully separate educational settings in Slovakia is the highest among the 23 EU countries surveyed (5.63% vs 1.55% in EU23) (EASNIE, 2020). This trend particularly affects Roma people (see below).

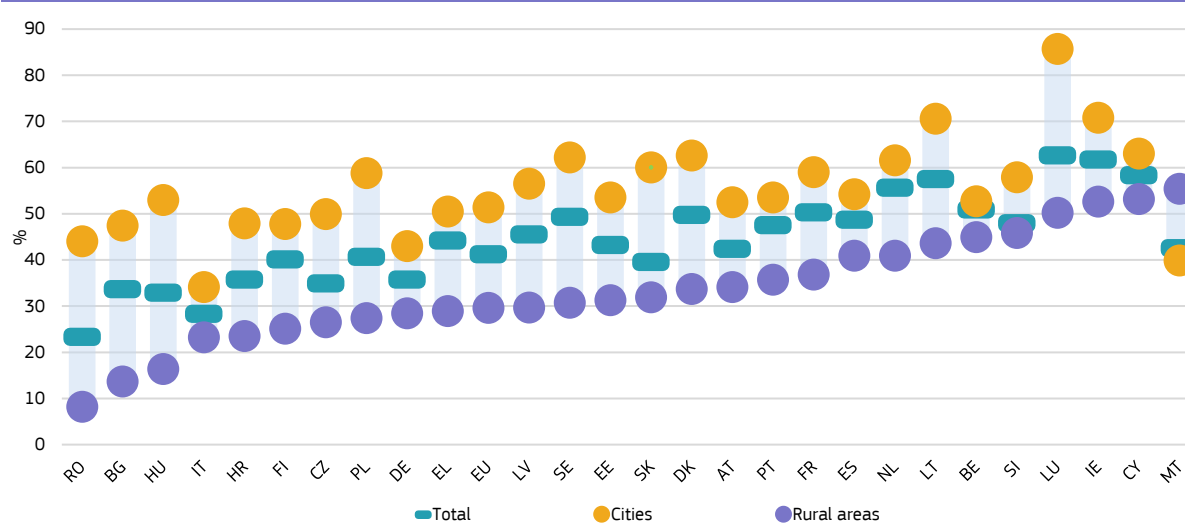
**To improve inclusiveness, Slovakia plans to re-define its concept of special educational needs, and develop its catalogue of eligible support measures and the system for financing these.** Investment will be made to improve the accessibility of schools and higher education institutions (HEIs). A scholarship scheme has been launched to facilitate access to higher education for students with a disadvantaged socio-economic background. Following the pandemic, the recent amendment to the law on higher education<sup>2</sup> envisages counselling centres being set up at all HEIs.

Finally, a national strategy on equity in higher education is being drawn up.

<sup>1</sup> SK: 0.76 vs EU: 0.67 (2018 PISA, OECD).

<sup>2</sup> Amendment of 23 March to Act No 131/2002 Coll.

**Figure 3: Tertiary educational attainment rate (25-34) by degree of urbanisation, 2021 (%)**



Source: Eurostat (EU-LFS) , [edat\_lfs\_9913].

This is key, as Slovakia scores very low on the social dimension in this sector (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2022a). The reforms address the country-specific recommendations issued under the European Semester (2019 and 2020), calling for improving the quality and inclusiveness of education and training at all levels and equal access to quality mainstream education.

**Slovakia has launched the first implementation plan of the inclusive education strategy.**

Developed through a participatory approach and extensive public consultation, the strategy for inclusive education to 2030 was adopted in December 2021 (Ministry of Education (MoE), 2021a). It covers six priority areas: i. inclusive education and support measures; ii. counselling system; iii. desegregation in education and care; iv. making the school environment barrier-free; v training of pedagogical and professional staff; and vi. de-stigmatisation. The first action plan (2022-2024)<sup>3</sup> includes comprehensive measures to implement the strategic objectives in the above areas, as well as to develop systemic measures to integrate displaced children from Ukraine. However, a number of measures lack budgetary allocations and a monitoring framework is still to be developed. According to the action plan, an annual monitoring report is to be published on the MoE's website.

**Desegregating Roma children in education remains a challenge.**

Roma pupils are often segregated in Roma-only schools or classes<sup>4</sup>. Slovakia has been taking steps to address this segregation, mainly through adopting legislative amendments to the School Act. However, so far, there is a large discrepancy between the legislation and its implementation in practice. Furthermore, due to the decentralised system of

funding, allocation and use is difficult to monitor and evaluate (Verelst, S. et al, 2020). As Slovakia has planned new measures to better support desegregation under its NRRP, there will need to be clear guidance on implementation, monitoring of progress and an evaluation of the efficiency of the system. The infringement procedure (INFR(2015)2025) launched by the European Commission for segregation of Roma pupils in education and disproportionate placement of Roma pupils in special schools is ongoing.

**Slovakia plans to develop a system providing equity support and funding.**

According to a national analysis, the financial contribution provided to mainstream schools for educating students from a disadvantaged socio-economic background (EUR 150 per student) is not enough to cover the necessary support (MoE, 2021a). Furthermore, the allocation of 'non-normative funding'<sup>5</sup> depends on the initiative of school leaders, which may undermine horizontal and vertical equity. Also, since funding is a local responsibility, the municipality's budget determines how much funding is allocated. The national monitoring system focuses only on the extent to which the school is in line with the relevant legislation, and the effectiveness of the funding structure in place is not assessed (Verelst, S. et al, 2020). Schools with a higher number of disadvantaged children also often have teachers that are out-of-field or are insufficiently well equipped or have fewer teaching assistants (Verelst, S. et al, 2020). Slovakia is currently developing its support system and reviewing the Financing Act 597/2003 Coll. to find a solution that better supports disadvantaged students in mainstream education. However, in order to appropriately monitor the policy, regular, detailed analyses of the distribution and use of extra resources at different policy levels are required (Field et al., 2007; Schaeffer and Yilmaz, 2008), and there is room for improvement in this area in Slovakia.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.minedu.sk/prvy-akcny-plan-plnenia-strategie-inkluzivneho-pristupu-vo-vychove-a-vzdelavani-na-roky-2022-2024/>

<sup>4</sup> EU SILC\_MRK 2020: 65% of Roma children in SK aged 6-15 attend schools where 'all or most of schoolmates are Roma'

<sup>5</sup> Additional funding school heads apply for to support disadvantaged students, introduced in 2016 in Slovakia.

### 3. Early childhood education and care

**The rate of participation in early childhood education and care (ECEC) remains low, but Slovakia is implementing measures to improve enrolment.** In 2020, the ECEC participation rate of for children aged over 3 was 78.1% (EU 93%), an increase of 0.5 pp. between 2018-2020. In 2021, Slovakia implemented compulsory pre-primary education for 5-year-olds, which is likely to increase the overall ECE rate. According to a preliminary independent national analysis, 91.5% of 5-year-olds were enrolled. The lowest rates of participation – but also the strongest improvement compared to 2020 – were recorded in the most disadvantaged regions: in Košice (improvement by 9.8 pps), Prešov (by 7.4 pps) and Banská Bystrica (by 7.2 pps) (CEA, 2022). The reform of the financing system for pre-primary education planned for 2022 under the NRRP aims to ensure sustained national public financial support, which is indispensable for further reforms. Legal entitlement to ECEC for 4-year-olds is planned for 2024, extending to cover 3-year-olds in 2025. This is to be supported by substantial investment in boosting capacities, and reforms to increase the qualifications and skills of ECEC staff. Since pre-primary education providers other than kindergartens are also authorised, provision for quality assurance and for ensuring an inclusive environment will need to be made for those settings as well.

**Some disadvantaged children faced obstacles in attending compulsory pre-primary education.** Public kindergartens provide full-time education and care for children 1 year before compulsory school attendance, free of charge. Fees in private kindergartens for the final year are discounted by the state contribution (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2022). However, the Supreme Audit found that for children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, especially from marginalised Roma communities, accessibility was a problem, and a financial barrier was induced by additional costs such as transport and specific fees (Supreme Audit, 2021a). Some

municipalities subsidised these costs to support attendance. The Supreme Audit recommends producing a comprehensive report on pre-primary education with specific measures on capacity provision, equipment of premises, staffing (particularly, inclusion specialists) and support for socio-economically disadvantaged families.

**Slovakia takes its first steps to improve the availability and inclusiveness of ECEC for children aged under 3.** The rate of enrolment in formal childcare or education of children below 3 is 4.8%, while for those at risk of poverty or social inclusion it is even lower, at 2.3% in 2020. Facilities that provide care for children below 3 are not part of the schooling system. Their primary source of funding is parents' fees, and public facilities are partly funded by municipalities. The pilot grant scheme launched under the NRRP<sup>6</sup> aims to support the provision of ECEC and interventions for children aged 0-6, in particular those with a socio-economically disadvantaged background, including children from marginalised Roma communities. Involving Romani-speaking women and working with Roma families in their home environment should help to overcome the current barriers to accessing ECEC.

**Slovakia has adopted an integrated ECEC strategy.** To ensure comprehensive support for children aged under 7, including those with disabilities, and their parents, in June 2022, Slovakia adopted a strategy for the development of coordinated early intervention and early care services covering 2022-2030<sup>7</sup> (Ministry of Labour, 2021). The strategy aims to establish a conceptual framework, the cooperation links between central healthcare, education and social services and external stakeholders, improve the accessibility of support systems, and develop the funding system. The implementation framework including budget, monitoring and evaluation measures remains to be established.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.minedu.sk/grantova-schema-na-podporu-ranej-starostlivosti-a-intervencie/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.employment.gov.sk/sk/rodina-socialna-pomoc/socialne-sluzby/vcasna-intervencia-rana-starostlivost/>

## 4. School education

### **Slovakia is preparing a curricular reform for primary and lower secondary education, involving a broad range of experts and stakeholders.**

A public consultation on two key reform documents explaining the rationale for and goals of the reform, the proposed changes to the curricula and the expected learning outcomes closed in January (NIE, 2022a, 2022b). Nine webinars covering seven educational areas<sup>8</sup> took place from 21 January to 7 February. Among other experts and groups of stakeholders, the Slovak Chamber of Teachers has been directly involved in drawing up the reform, and parents and students also had an opportunity to comment. A new state educational programme containing all the educational standards and methodological materials is being developed by experts, and the full package will be submitted for public discussion in November 2022. Implementation of the reform in schools will be supported by a set of additional documents, including a guide to the ethos and culture of the school as a community and a guide to adapting educational standards to pupils' needs, as well as podcasts by teachers (NIE, 2022b). A network of regional teacher support centres to be established in 16 regions<sup>9</sup> will provide curricular management and school support. A digital platform is being developed to support the development of schools' educational programmes. To deliver the necessary results, teachers will need high quality support from mentors and the provision of methodological materials, teaching aids and textbooks on time. The curricular reform is being supported by the Recovery and Resilience Facility. Additionally, the Commission's Technical Support Instrument provides expertise to Slovakia to inform and facilitate the digital transformation of schools, to effectively transfer the reformed curriculum to regional and school level, and to measure the

<sup>8</sup> Language and communication, mathematics and IT, humans and society, humans and nature, humans and the world of work, art and culture, health and exercise.

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.minedu.sk/data/att/23153.pdf>

effects of these changes on learning outcomes<sup>10</sup>. The implementation report from the 2021-2023 pilot on the innovative use of digital technologies in primary schools will inform policy<sup>11</sup>.

### **Slovakia adopted a new law on transforming the counselling system and a strategy on lifelong learning and counselling, to help prevent young people from leaving education and training early.**

The rate of early leavers from education and training (ELET) increased in 2021, reaching 7.8% (EU 9.7%) from a low base of 5.3% in 2012 (EU 12.6%). The highest ELET rate remains in East Slovakia at 14.4% (2021)<sup>12</sup>, double the national rate (7.8%) (Figure 4). The proportion of early leavers who have parents with a low level of education (ISCED 0-2 level) in Slovakia is the highest in the EU, at 69.7% (EU 26.1%)<sup>13</sup>. A new five-level structure for counselling services should come into effect from 1 January 2023, in line with the new law on advisory and prevention facilities (Act No 24/2022 Coll.) of 17 January 2022<sup>14</sup>. Depending on students' needs, support is to be offered in schools by individual specialists, by newly introduced school support teams, or by centres for counselling and prevention serving all children in need, or highly specialised centres. New regional networks will be founded, based on proposals suggested by regional educational authorities. The reform is expected to be completed by 30 June 2025; it introduces also other preventive and corrective interventions set out in the 2030 lifelong learning and counselling strategy covering 2021-2030, which was adopted in November 2021 (MoE, 2021b).

<sup>10</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/tsi\\_2021\\_country\\_factsheet\\_slovakia.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/tsi_2021_country_factsheet_slovakia.pdf)

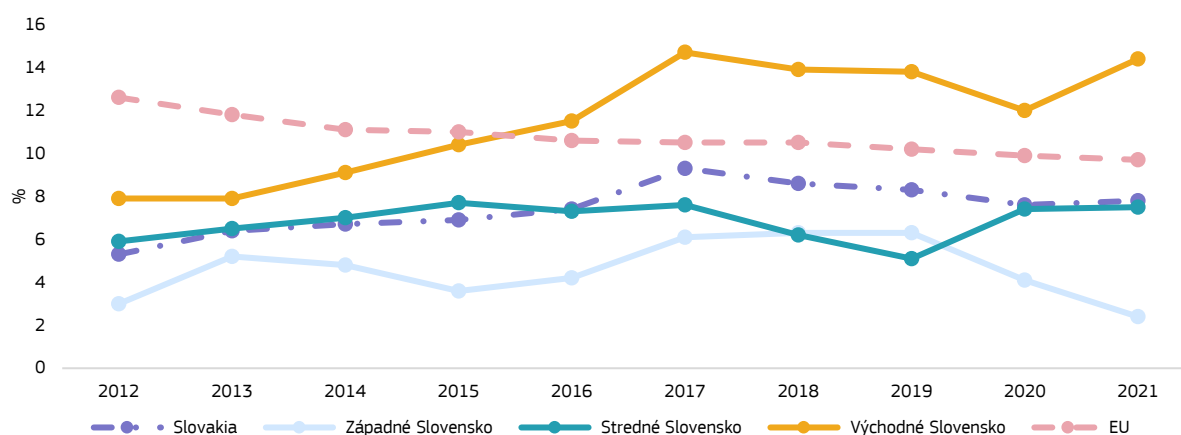
<sup>11</sup> <https://www.minedu.sk/projektovy-sprint-zrychli-digitalnu-transformaciu-skol/>

<sup>12</sup> Eurostat, edat\_lfse\_16.

<sup>13</sup> LFS special extraction, 2021.

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.slov-lex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2022/24/20230101.html>



**Figure 4: Early leavers from education and training by region in Slovakia, 2012-2021 (%)**


Source: Eurostat (LFS), [edat\_lfse\_16]. Note: Data for Bratislavský kraj not available. 2021 data for Západné Slovensko is of low reliability.

### Slovakia has published its digitalisation programme for education to 2030.

Over half (55%) of Slovaks have basic digital skills (EU average: 54%), but only 21% have advanced digital skills (EU 26%) (European Commission, 2022). The programme for digitalising education to 2030<sup>15</sup> was published on 17 May. Its objectives and activities are built around five themes: digital infrastructure and equipment for education; digital competences; transformation of education through digital technologies; development of electronic services and information systems in the Ministry of Education and schools; and cybersecurity and information safety. The first action plan (2021-2024)<sup>16</sup> includes actions under all these chapters, however, the financial plan has not yet been adopted. The 'IT Academy' ESF project remains key in supporting the digitalisation of schools. Digital coordinators in schools are being appointed and trained. Additionally, the 'IT Fitness' test<sup>17</sup>, a comprehensive test of ICT skills in Slovakia, is expanding to Czechia, Hungary and Poland from 2022.

### Slovakia is implementing projects to compensate for the learning losses due to

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.minedu.sk/program-informatizacie-skolstva-do-roku-2030/>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.minedu.sk/akcny-plan-informatizacie-a-digitalnej-transformacie-vzdelavania-v-sr-na-obdobie-2021-2024/>

<sup>17</sup> <https://itfitness.sk/sk/>

**COVID-19.** Due to insufficient digital readiness of schools and students, not everyone had equal access to distance education. Since 2020, Slovakia has therefore been implementing compensatory measures, supported also by the RRF and ESIF. These include summer schools (EUR 1.22 million in 2020 and 2021), the 'Smarter Together 2' and 'Smarter Together 3' tutoring and mentoring programmes (EUR 9.94 million), the subsidising of school club fees (EUR 289 575), and employing assistant educators in pre-primary facilities (EUR 5.07 million)<sup>18</sup>. Overall, over 16 700 students participated in summer schools, 27 000 in 'Smarter Together 2' and over 3 860 students were supported to attend school clubs. In 2021, the Supreme Audit found that there was a need to expand the coverage of the tutoring and mentoring programmes for disadvantaged pupils (Supreme Audit, 2021b). The overall impact of the measures remains to be assessed.

### Slovakia is taking steps to rationalise its public expenditure and school governance.

According to the amendment of the Act on State Administration in Education and School Self-Government (No 596/2003 Coll.) of 14 April<sup>19</sup> jurisdiction over schools is transferred from the Ministry of Interior to the Ministry of Education

<sup>18</sup> Information provided by the Ministry of Education, March 2022.

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.slov-lex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2003/596/20220101.html>

effective from 2022. Since 2013, the Ministry of Education has been responsible only for upper secondary schools set up by the regions. Both ministries overlap in some managerial and financial roles (European Commission, 2019). Following the amendment, the education departments of district offices will be transformed into the regional school administration offices under the Ministry of Education, creating a specialised administration for state education and simplifying the flow of funds to regional education. The amendment has been opposed by SK8, the association of self-governing regions, which recommends re-evaluating competences instead<sup>20</sup>.

**Low salaries for teachers limit the attractiveness of the teaching profession, and there are pronounced shortages of teachers.** Teachers' average actual salaries at pre-primary, primary and general secondary levels of education range from 56% to 75% of those of other tertiary-educated workers in Slovakia; they also remain far below the 2020 EU-22 average for teachers (OECD, 2021). In 2022, public sector wages rose by 3% in July, while in February inflation was 9%. This is the first salary increase for teachers in the past 2 years. The teacher population is ageing: in 2020, 40.3% of primary and secondary school teachers (ISCED 1-3) were aged over 50, while just 15.3% were under 34. Teacher shortages become pronounced, and it is expected that by 2023, Slovakia may lack 3 500 teachers, mainly in Bratislava<sup>21</sup>.

**Comprehensive measures were implemented to support children and students fleeing the war in Ukraine.** As of May, over 31 000 school-aged children and young people from Ukraine were registered in Slovakia, and over 9 700 (31%)

were enrolled in the national school system (European Commission / EACEA / Eurydice, 2022b). To support their integration, the Ministry of Education allocated EUR 200 per pupil in March to support initial costs<sup>22</sup>, published guidance and supporting materials for schools and Ukrainian parents<sup>23</sup>. To coordinate the enrolment of refugee students, schools can update their free capacity on a central website<sup>24</sup>. Slovak language courses for displaced children and students and webinars for teachers were also provided.

## 5. Vocational education and training and adult learning

**Slovakia is introducing reforms to its systems for vocational education and training (VET) and adult learning, to address skills mismatches and skills shortages.** The country's economic growth is being held back by its limited number of graduates in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), which leads to shortages across a number of high-skilled and medium-skilled jobs. Among OECD countries, Slovakia has one of the highest skills mismatches (35%) in the EU-ISCED 3-8. In 2021, the employment rate for upper secondary VET graduates was 75.3%, 5.4 pps less than in 2020 (80.7%) and 9.3 pps less than in 2019<sup>25</sup>. Participation by adults (aged 25-64) in learning has been one of the lowest in the EU – in 2021, it was 4.8% (EU 10.8%). In the past, this has also been affected by a lack of governance structures. Some reforms have been adopted or launched under the NRRP.

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/881867/financovanie-skol-by-sa-malo-zjednotit-do-posobnosti-rezortu-skolstva/>;

<https://domov.sme.sk/c/22638751/samospravne-krajne-suhlasia-so-vznikom-skolskych-uradov.html>.

<sup>21</sup> <https://enrsi.rtvs.sk/articles/news/293396/around-1300-teachers-missing-in-the-slovak-education-system-this-year>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.minedu.sk/b-grohling-skolam-ktore-vzdelavaju-ziakov-z-ukrajiny-pomozeme-s-preplatenim-nakladov/>

<sup>23</sup> <https://ukrajina.minedu.sk/vseobecne-informacie/>

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.minedu.sk/30527-sk/najst-skolu/>;  
<https://www.minedu.sk/zaregistrovat-skolu/>

<sup>25</sup> Eurostat, edat\_lfse\_24.

### **The amendment of the Act on Vocational Education and Training came into force on 1 January.**

The majority of upper secondary pupils are enrolled in VET programmes<sup>26</sup> (67.3% in 2020 vs EU 48.7%). In 2021, 56.9% of recent VET graduates reported to have experienced work-based learning<sup>27</sup>. Secondary vocational schools are required to develop their programmes working together with the relevant professional organisations or an employer with whom the school organises practical education or has a dual education contract. The new amendment also introduces measures to improve training opportunities for students, including through better in-company services, internationalisation of practical training, longer apprenticeship contracts and expanding the possibility of carrying out practical training in dual education for pre-school education teachers and social workers.

### **Slovakia has adopted its lifelong learning and guidance strategy for 2021-2030 and the first action plan, covering 2022-2024.**

The strategy<sup>28</sup>, which was adopted in November 2021, and the first action plan<sup>29</sup> create a robust strategic framework to react to new dynamics in the labour market. They put forward measures to create a coherent lifelong guidance system, including through a new plan for graduate tracking, identifying funding opportunities, developing information tools and career management capacities, increasing the quality of lifelong learning and guidance, and also improving inter-ministerial coordination. Slovakia has set a 2030 target of 50% of adults in learning in a year, well below the EU target of 60%.

**The governance of the adult learning system has been fragmented in Slovakia**, based on several ad hoc interventions mainly financed under the ESF and mostly targeting job seekers.

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<sup>26</sup> Eurostat, educ\_uae\_enrs05.

<sup>27</sup> Eurostat, edat\_ifs\_9912.

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.minedu.sk/data/att/22182.pdf>

<sup>29</sup> <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-06/Akcnyn-plan-schvaleny-vladou-SR.pdf>

The NRRP and the related complementary measures under the Commission's Technical Support Instrument focus mainly on improving the digital skills of adults aged 70+.

**Slovakia plans to pilot individual learning accounts or similar schemes providing adults with training entitlements, supported with EU funds.** Based on the 2022-2024 action plan, the pilot would cover 5 000 participants, who will be allocated EUR 200 each. The account holder will have full freedom ('individual right') to decide on the training, whether as part of a learning programme agreed with their employer or elsewhere.

## **6. Higher education**

### **Tertiary educational attainment is close to the EU average, but the gender gap has further increased.**

Between 2016 and 2021, the tertiary educational attainment rate grew sharply, by 16.1 pps, and in 2021, 39.5% of adults aged between 25 and 34 in Slovakia held a tertiary education degree (EU 41.2%). The gender gap in favour of women has increased, and in 2021, it reached 23 pps, the second highest in the EU. STEM graduates made up 22.2% of the total number of graduates in 2020, remaining below the EU average (24.9%)<sup>30</sup>. The proportion of female STEM graduates out of all STEM graduates (34.2%) is above the EU average (32.4%). The employment rate for recent tertiary graduates (aged 20-34) was 84% in 2021, in line with the EU average (84.9%).

### **Slovakia has amended its higher education law to reform the governance and accountability of higher education.**

On 23 March, the Slovak Parliament approved the Law amending Act No 131/2002 on higher education. The reform aims to improve university management and financing, allow greater flexibility within HEIs, and open academia to business and foreign applicants. The amendment,

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<sup>30</sup> Eurostat, educ\_uae\_grad02.

which is part of the reforms to higher education under the NRRP, will:

- strengthen the powers of the management board, including the budgetary decisions;
- strengthen the powers of the rector in the senior staff appointments or selections, and in budgetary proposals;
- empower the minister to appoint the same number of management board members as academia;
- require all members of the management board to be external;
- allow flexibility in faculty governing bodies;
- introduce performance contracts with HEIs;
- simplify the requirements for appointing and employing lecturers and professors, including foreigners.

**The reform of the quality assurance system progresses well.** Since 1 September 2020, new accreditation standards based on ESG<sup>31</sup> 2015 have been applied. The standards and processes of the new Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education<sup>32</sup> were assessed by experts from ENQA and EQAR. HEIs need to comply with the new standards<sup>33</sup> by 31 August 2022, and request an evaluation of their internal quality assurance systems by December 2022. If positively assessed, a HEI will acquire the right to independently create, modify and implement study programmes within the fields of study and degrees for which it has applied for assessment. There will therefore be a move from the accreditation of individual study programmes to institutional accreditation. The Agency will continue to accredit new study programmes in the fields for which the institution is not yet

<sup>31</sup> Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area <https://www.enqa.eu/esg-standards-and-guidelines-for-quality-assurance-in-the-european-higher-education-area/>.

<sup>32</sup> Established on the basis of the Act No 269/2018 Coll. - the Quality Act <https://saavs.sk/en/>.

<sup>33</sup> Standards for the Internal Quality Assurance System; Standards for Study Programmes.

authorised. An assessment of HEIs' internal quality assurance systems is planned for 2023.

**Slovakia has adopted an internationalisation strategy for higher education to 2030.** The strategy, which was adopted in December 2021, provides for the development of internationalisation as an effective tool for increasing the quality of higher education and research by 2030<sup>34</sup>. It focuses on increasing the availability of international mobility opportunities and the modernisation of higher education in the context of internationalisation.

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<sup>34</sup> <https://www.minedu.sk/data/att/21821.pdf>

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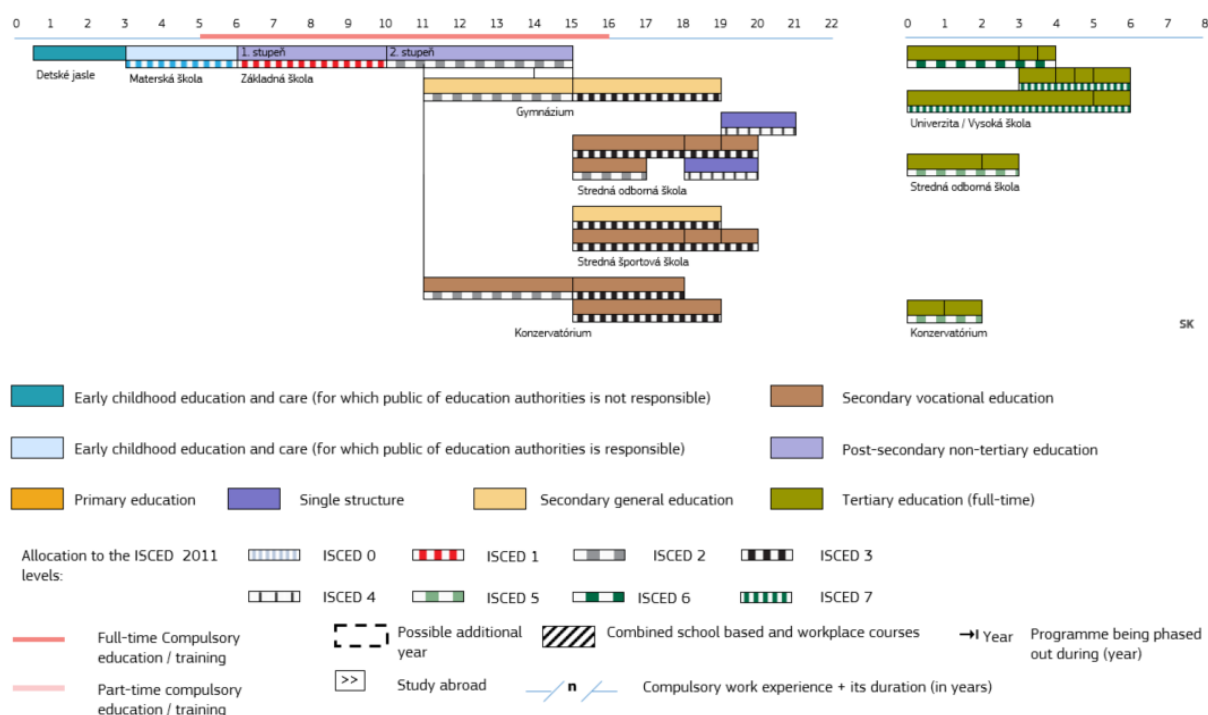
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## Annex I: Key indicators sources

Indicator	Source
Participation in early childhood education	Eurostat (UOE), educ_uae_enra21
Low achieving eighth-graders in digital skills	IEA, ICILS
Low achieving 15-year-olds in reading, maths and science	OECD (PISA)
Early leavers from education and training	Main data: Eurostat (LFS), edat_lfse_14 Data by country of birth: Eurostat (LFS), edat_lfse_02
Exposure of VET graduates to work based learning	Eurostat (LFS), edat_lfs_9919
Tertiary educational attainment	Main data: Eurostat (LFS), edat_lfse_03 Data by country of birth: Eurostat (LFS), edat_lfse_9912
Participation of adults in learning	Data for this EU-level target is not available. Data collection starts in 2022. Source: EU LFS.
Equity indicator	European Commission (Joint Research Centre) calculations based on OECD's PISA 2018 data
Upper secondary level attainment	Eurostat (LFS), edat_lfse_03
Public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP	Eurostat (COFOG), gov_10a_exp
Public expenditure on education as a share of the total general government expenditure	Eurostat (COFOG), gov_10a_exp

## Annex II: Structure of the education system



Source: European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2022. The Structure of the European Education Systems 2022/2023: Schematic Diagrams. Eurydice Facts and Figures. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

Please email any comments or questions to:  
[EAC-UNITE-A2@ec.europa.eu](mailto:EAC-UNITE-A2@ec.europa.eu)