



Structures of Education and Training Systems in Europe

Slovenia

2009/10 Edition

European Commission



STRUCTURES OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEMS IN EUROPE

SLOVENIA

2009/10

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INTRODUCTION: GENERAL POLICY CONTEXT

Slovenia became an independent country in 1991. The European Union recognised Slovenia in January 1992, and the UN accorded its membership in May 1992. Slovenia joined the Eurozone on 1 January 2007. Slovenia is a democratic republic and a social state governed by law. The state's authority is based on the principle of the separation of legislative, executive, and judicial powers, with a parliamentary system of government. Power is held by the people and they exercise this power directly (through referendums and popular initiatives) and through elections. The highest legislative authority is the National Assembly (90 deputies) which has the right to enact laws.

The bicameral Slovenian Parliament is composed of the National Assembly and the National Council. The President of the Republic represents the Republic of Slovenia and is the commander-in-chief of its armed forces. The President calls the legislative elections; promulgates laws; proposes candidates for the position of Prime Minister; of Judges to the Constitutional Court and members to the Court of Audit; appoints, and recalls ambassadors; accepts the credentials of foreign diplomats; grants clemencies, etc.

The Government of the Republic of Slovenia – as the highest body of the state administration – passes regulations and adopts legal, political, economic, financial, organisational, and similar measures for regulating areas within the state's jurisdiction. The Prime Minister-elect is proposed to the National Assembly by the President of the Republic after discussions with representatives of the parliamentary deputy groups. The present Government was appointed on 21 November 2008. It was formed on the basis of a coalition agreement signed on 14 November 2008 between the Social Democrats (SD); ZARES – *nova politika*; Liberal Democracy of Slovenia (LDS), and the Democratic Party of Pensioners of Slovenia (DeSUS). It has 19 members, including the Prime Minister and 15 Ministers.

The judicial system is the third branch of government. The state prosecution holds a special place in the justice system as it is an independent state authority part of the executive branch of power.

The Constitutional Court is the highest judicial authority with regard to the protection of constitutionality, legality, human rights, and basic freedoms.

The Court of Audit is the highest body which supervises state accounts, the state budget and all public spending. Under the Constitution, the Republic of Slovenia has an Ombudsman whose responsibility is the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms in relation to state authorities, local authorities and persons in public office.

In the process of social partnership, interests of employers and employees are promoted in a particular way. Only representative unions are included in negotiations between employers and the state. At the government level, there is an Economic and Social Council of Slovenia which comprises five representatives from the government, employers and employees respectively. In Council meetings and negotiations its members advance their views on social, economic and budgetary policies, particularly dealing with issues such as social agreements; social rights; compulsory insurance; employment problems; prices; taxes; the wages system; wages policy; employee co-management, and so on.

There are 210 municipalities in Slovenia. Municipality is the basic self-governing local community. Municipality bodies comprise a mayor, a municipal council and a supervisory committee, with the municipal council being the highest decision-making body. The constitutional changes of June 2006 introduced provinces to the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia (not yet established).

Slovenia is a small country having a surface area of 20 273 km² and a population of 2 042 335 inhabitants (as of 30 June 2009). The population density varies considerably from region to region, with an average of 100 inhabitants per km².

Slovenia's population is ageing. The share of young population is declining while the share of old population is growing and based on the baseline scenario, this process will continue also in the future. Due to rising net migration, the share of prime-age population will still be growing until 2010 when it is expected to start to decline. In the first half of 2009 the ageing index, describing the ratio between the numbers of persons aged 65 or more and persons under 15 years of age, grew by 0.4 of a point and reached 118.0 on the country level. On 30 June 2009 the ageing index for men was 90.1 and for women 147.5.

In 2008, 18 % of the adult population (aged 25-64) of the Republic of Slovenia have attained basic education qualification or less, 59 % have attained upper secondary education qualification and almost 23 % of adult population have attained tertiary education qualification.

The Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia (1991) stipulates freedom of choice in education. Basic education (primary and lower secondary education – *osnovne šole*) is a single structure system consisting of nine years of compulsory schooling. Over the previous decade, the main priorities have been to improve the education levels of the population and offer all Slovenian citizens equal educational opportunities, regardless of their residence, cultural or linguistic origin, health condition, social background or gender

The constitution regulates fundamental rights in the area of education by determining that:

- Education is free,
- Compulsory basic education is the responsibility of the state,
- The state must finance compulsory education with public funds,
- It is the responsibility of the state to give its citizens the opportunity to obtain adequate education.

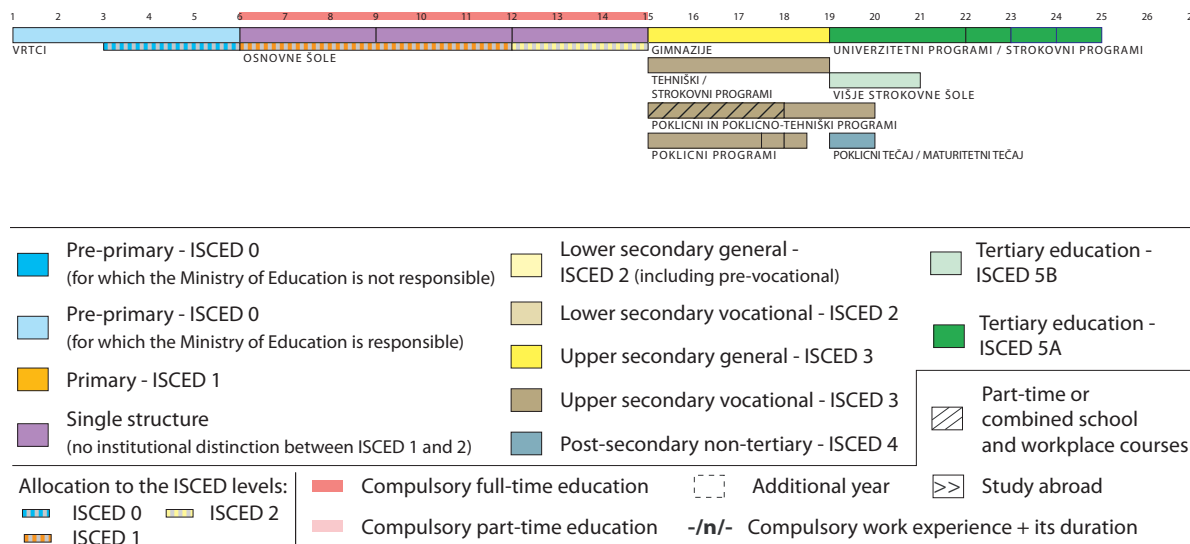
Slovene is the official language in the Republic of Slovenia. In the areas with the Italian and the Hungarian minority, Italian and Hungarian, respectively, are also official languages.

In areas with Slovene and Italian population that are defined as areas with nationally mixed population, certain *vrtni* (pre-school institutions) and schools offer instruction in Italian. In pre-school institutions and schools with Slovene as the language of instruction, children also learn Italian and vice versa.

In areas with Slovene and Hungarian population, pre-school institutions, and schools provide bilingual education in Slovene and Hungarian (bilingual pre-school institutions and schools).

1. INITIAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING: ORGANISATION, FUNDING AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

1.1 Organisation of the initial education and training system



The structure of the Slovenian education system in 2009/10:

- Pre-primary education (ages 1-5) provided by autonomous public pre-school institutions, organisational units of pre-school units at basic schools or private pre-school institutions;
- Basic education; single structure of primary and lower secondary education (ages 6-14) provided by basic schools;
- Upper secondary education (ages 15-18) consisting of:
 - short vocational education (120 ECTS) provided by upper secondary vocational schools (*poklicne šole*),
 - vocational education provided by upper secondary vocational and technical schools (*poklicne šole* and *srednje strokovne in tehniške šole*),
 - technical education provided by upper secondary technical schools (*srednje strokovne in tehniške šole*),
 - vocational and technical education provided by upper secondary vocational and technical schools (*poklicne šole* and *srednje strokovne in tehniške šole*),
 - general education (four years) provided by general upper secondary schools *Gimnazije*;
- Short tertiary (higher vocational) education (120 ECTS) provided by higher vocational colleges;
- Higher education provided by public and private universities, faculties, art academies and professional colleges. It consists of three cycles:
 - First-cycle professional or academic (180-240 ECTS),

- Second-cycle masters studies (60-120 ECTS),
- Third-cycle doctoral studies (180 ECTS).

Alongside, there are sub-systems:

- Special needs education;
- Music and dance education.

1.2 Distribution of responsibilities

Central level

The responsibility for the implementation of the education policies adopted by the National Assembly rests with the Ministry of Education and Sport; the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology, and the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs. The Ministry of Education and Sport is responsible for education and training in the pre-university environment, including higher vocational colleges. The ministries carry out most of the financial, administrative and expert tasks, develop concepts and strategies, legislation and regulations on the basis of experts' opinions.

Education policies related to the pre-university level and adopted by the National Assembly are implemented by the Government, the Ministry of Education and Sport and institutes for the development of education. Their responsibilities include also the creation of policies for the admission of students into schools and colleges, financing schools and colleges and supervising staffing and employment procedures. Feedback on the performance of the education system is collected through statistics, targeted evaluation and research studies, state-wide examinations and international research. There are three national agencies providing support: the National Institute for General Education (*Zavod RS za šolstvo*), the National Institute for Vocational Education and Training (*Center RS za poklicno izobraževanje in usposabljanje*) and the National Centre for Adult Education (*Andragoški center Slovenije*). These developmental bodies prepare expert materials which serve as the basis for decision-making. They draw up national curricula for basic, upper secondary and short higher vocational education curricula which requires approval from the Ministry. They assist in the evaluation of schools and contribute to the preparation of state-wide examinations. They promote and encourage the further development of schools, offer expert advice to teachers and initiate education-related projects. Responsibility for the curricular matters of higher vocational colleges is divided between the pre-university and university sectors. Most of the responsibilities fall within the authority of the Ministry of Education and Sport, while some remain within the higher education sector. The Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs shares partial responsibility with the Ministry of Education for vocational and technical education and training: the system for certification of national vocational qualifications, and the agreement of education policies with social partners. The Ministry of Internal Affairs is responsible for the training of police, customs and penal administration officers. The Ministry of Public Administration handles professional training and further education programmes for civil servants. Education of military personnel is under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Defence. The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health collectively manage and decide on matters relating to the health care of young people, healthy nutrition of young people, AIDS, tobacco use, drug abuse and violence. The Ministry of Culture co-operates with the Ministry of Education in all matters concerning both culture and education (e.g. development of libraries, literacy and reading culture, linguistic issues, intercultural dialog, etc).

The responsibility for tertiary education was transferred to the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology in 2005. The sectors which fall under its authority include: universities and single higher education institutions, student residences and tertiary education libraries.

Regional/local level

At the local level there are 210 municipalities with self-governing competences which administer public pre-school institutions, basic schools and music schools. Decision-making power in a municipality rests with the elected municipal Council and the Mayor. Education matters are usually managed by the municipal departments of social affairs.

Municipalities have the founder's duty to provide the major part of funds for capital investments, maintenance and extra curricula activities. Their responsibility related to pre-school institutions also includes the provision of salaries for staff. The state provides funding for salaries of employees in schools and supplementary funding for buildings, equipment and operational expenses. The criteria for funding and financing are set by the Minister of Education and apply to the entire state. The local community and schools have a very limited influence on educational structures and the financial structure in the education sector, with the latter covered by the law and national regulations. Their influence is limited to non-compulsory contents or open curricula and maintenance of buildings and grounds.

Institutional level

The central governing body of a school or a pre-school institution is a Council where teachers, parents and representatives of the founder are represented. In the council of a higher vocational college, the representatives of a founder, staff and social partners (employers and students) are represented. The main tasks of councils are: to adopt the development plan and the annual work plan, as well as the financial plan and final accounts of the school including the implementation reports; making decisions about the implementation of additional extra curricula programmes; dealing with disciplinary and behavioural issues; resolving appeals of pupils and staff complaints, and appointing and dismissing the head teacher. Head teachers manage the pedagogical and administrative processes in schools.

Councils of higher vocational colleges also have the power to propose new vocational standards, manage and coordinate the qualifications framework within sectors, appoint their members to exam committees for final exams, organise practice and training for vocational degrees, assist the implementation of vocational career counselling, and advise on the structure of schools including their admission levels, the number of staff positions and the open part of the curriculum. Representative associations of employers provide qualification examinations, accredit and manage the companies for the provision of workplace experience and training, manage the register of workplace training and execute inspection thereof.

In accordance with the Constitution, higher education institutions are autonomous. This ensures their full freedom of research, artistic expression and knowledge provision and autonomous internal organisation and operation. They independently appoint members of the teaching staff, specify the criteria for their election and award teaching career titles, as well as specify their own study regime. They have full autonomy in the assessment and evaluation of students' knowledge and award their own degrees according to the law. Furthermore, they elect, appoint and relieve their governing bodies and manage received financial resources and/or assets.

A university is a legal entity and consists of faculties, academies of art and/or higher professional colleges. The governing bodies of the university are: Chancellor, University Senate, Management Board and Student Council. The governing bodies of a member of the university, which has considerable autonomy, are the Dean, Senate, Academic Board and Student Council. The main governing body of a higher education institution is the Management Board which consists of representatives of the founder, employees, students and employers. The Management Board provides for general management and daily administration. Chancellors co-ordinate teaching, research or arts activities and monitor, assess and ensure the quality of education provision. Deans or directors of

university member institutions are technical managers. The senates of institutions are composed of the Dean, higher education teachers and lecturers, research and scientific staff, and student representatives.

1.3 Financing

The responsibility for financing pre-school institutions (*vrtni*) and schools is shared by the government and municipalities, although in some cases financing may also be provided by private funds. Public pre-school institutions and schools are funded from public finances. Private educational institutions can be financed from public funds if they have been granted a concession. Sources of finances are the state and municipal budgets (from taxation), other founder's funding sources, contributions from various chambers and employers (for practical training), and also contributions from pupils for individual services (school excursions, photocopying and similar), and fees in private schools, payments from parents for pre-school education, moneys from the sales of services and products, donations, sponsors' contributions and other sources.

The state budget provides finances for salaries of school employees, material costs and asset maintenance, buildings and equipment; advisory work, awards, competitions, pupils' insurance, subsidies and similar. Finances are distributed in accordance with regulations (standards and criteria for staff, equipment and organisation) set by the Minister of Education in consultation with the relevant council of experts and trade unions.

Parents' contribution to the costs of the child in pre-school institution depends on their financial situation (between 0 and 80 %). Fees in publicly funded higher education institutions cannot be charged to full-time students who are citizens of the European Union.

Higher education is financed directly from the State budget. Since 2004 the lump-sum method has been used for financing higher education institutions. The grant for the first cycle studies is calculated according to the number of full time students and graduates in a particular field of study. For the second cycle only enrolled students are taken into account when defining the appropriation. Resources for development and research activities are calculated separately in line with the national research policy. Resources for investments, equipment and maintenance of buildings are also specified separately. The State budget provides funds for scholarships, campuses, subsidies for student meals and housing, healthcare insurance etc. In addition to State financing, higher education institutions may collect financial contributions from other sources (i.e. tuition fees or other student fees, subventions, inheritance, research grants and contracts with industry and other sources). Supervision of the use of public funds in higher education falls under the duties and responsibilities of the Court of Audit of the Republic of Slovenia.

1.4 Quality assurance

Pre-school institutions and schools conduct internal evaluations. The quality of the provision of educational process is measured by means of different methods of self-evaluation, while on the national level various national and international research projects measure pupil's academic results. Self-evaluation process is in the responsibility of the school heads.

For external evaluation of schools, the state-wide external examinations of knowledge are used, at the end of the Year 6, 9 and 13. Evaluation procedures are conducted by expert bodies: the National Testing Committees and the National Matura Committees. The National Examinations Centre provides technical and administrative support to all committees. The administrative aspects are evaluated by the National School Inspectorate who conducts inspections of schools and ensure protection of pre-school children and other learners' rights. The areas of control include the organisation, financing and conduct of educational programmes.

Implementation, monitoring and evaluation of new educational programmes, new programme elements and their changes follow procedures prescribed by the Modernisation of Educational Activity Rules. Monitoring of the educational practice is a responsibility of three public institutions: the National Education Institute, the Institute of the RS for Vocational Education and Training (vocational education programmes) and the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education.

The evaluation of the education system as a whole is conducted by a special advisory body at the Ministry called the Council for Quality and Evaluation. The Council proposes a list of evaluation topics and determines evaluational research projects. On the basis of research reports the Council report to the Minister. External evaluation of the education system includes also yearly analysis of pupils' and students' results in external assessment at the national level; analysis of national results and indicators in comparable international research projects (PISA, TIMSS, PIRLS, TALIS, SITES, CIVICS, etc); and analysis of results of basic, developmental and applicative research projects in all areas of education co-financed by the Slovenian Research Agency (CRP).

The responsibilities for the evaluation of higher vocational colleges fall within the authority of both ministries: of Education and Sport and of Higher Education, Science and Technology. The responsibility for accreditation of study programmes (ISCED B, short-cycle) lies with the Council of Experts for Vocational Education and Training, which nominates the Accreditation Committee. A representative of the higher education area is also a member of this body. External evaluation of higher vocational colleges, however, is the responsibility of the Council for Higher Education and the newly established National Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (October 2009).

In traditional higher education the system of internal quality control is accompanied by external quality assurance. All higher education institutions organise self-evaluation activities at least once a year by using the common criteria, specified by the Chancellor and the Senate. Chancellors make self-evaluation reports, the findings of which are presented on an annual basis to the Senate of their institution, the Management Board and the Council for Higher Education. External quality assurance includes both accreditation and external evaluation of higher education institutions and study programmes. According to the Amendments to the Higher Education Act (October 2009), the newly established National Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education will take over accreditation procedures and periodical external quality controls. The Agency is responsible for the implementation of the system of quality assurance. It devises criteria and procedures of external evaluation; promotes self-evaluation; collects reports from higher education institutions on evaluation results and prepares aggregate reports.

2. PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION

Slovenia has established an integrated approach to pre-school education, combining education, play and care in pre-school institutions for children aged 1 to 5 years. Comprehensive care for pre-school children involves meals, rest and sleep, as well as various educational programmes. Activities are organised in smaller groups which stimulate the child's individuality and respect the child's right to privacy. The new pre-school education programmes strongly emphasize the child's right to choose, which is related to the right to play and the right to creative expression. Much attention is paid to the equal progress opportunities, which apply to all – children with special needs, Roma children and children from socially disadvantaged families.

Public and private pre-school institutions are required to employ practitioners with appropriate qualifications and to have suitable facilities and equipment. The network of pre-school institutions is organised in such a way that it enables parents and children accessibility and the option to choose a suitable programme for pre-school children. Pre-school institutions can also organise their activities in family daycare, as home education or as part-time childcare at home. The aim of pre-school institutions is to support parents in bringing up the child, to improve the quality of family life and to create positive conditions for the development of child's physical and intellectual abilities.

Public pre-school institutions are founded and financed by local communities. They are also financed from parents' contributions (from 0 to 80 %, depending on their income), from the national budget (for specific purposes like transport of pre-school children) and from donations and other sources.

Programmes of pre-school education are part of the system of education and schooling. Programmes are adopted by the Council of the Republic of Slovenia for General Education. The principles of pre-school education – i.e. those of democracy, pluralism, autonomy, professional competence and responsibility of employees, equal opportunities for children and parents, regard for diversity of children, the right of choice and individuality and the principles of maintenance of balance of various aspects of the child's physical and intellectual development – are set out in the Pre-school institution Act (1996, amendments 2000, 2003, 2005). Among the objectives of pre-school education, the following are especially emphasized: development of comprehension skills and skills of acceptance of others and oneself, regard to distinctiveness and cooperation in groups, development of skills of recognition of emotions, stimulation of emotional perception and expression, stimulation of curiosity, exploratory spirit, imagination and intuition, development of independent thinking, stimulation of communication skills for an effective and creative use of language, at later stages stimulation of reading and writing, stimulation of perception of artistic works and artistic expression, transmission of knowledge from various fields of science and everyday life, stimulation of physical and locomotive development, and development of self-dependence regarding hygienic habits and health care.

Pedagogical and pedagogical-educational work in pre-school institutions is conducted in Slovene, except in ethnically mixed areas, where it is conducted in Italian or bilingually, in Slovene and Hungarian. Activities are organised in coeducational groups.

2.1 Admission

Pre-school education is not compulsory; children are admitted from 1 to 6 years of age or to the age when they enter compulsory schooling. There are no special admission requirements. The decision regarding children's participation in pre-school education is made by their parents at any time of the year. Parents have the right to choose pre-school education programmes for their children in a public or private pre-school institution. The local community is obliged to initiate the procedure of setting up a pre-school institution if there is sufficient interest from parents, however, it cannot always ensure a sufficient number of admission places. According to the law, in cases where there are not sufficient

admission places, children from socially disadvantaged families and children with special needs are given priority. Upon admission of the child to a pre-school institution, parents should enclose the child's health condition certificate confirmed by a paediatrician.

2.2 Organisation of time, groups and venue

Pre-school education can be performed by autonomous public pre-school institutions, organisational units of pre-school units at basic schools, private pre-school institutions and private persons. Pre-school institutions can also organise childcare at childminder's home. This form of education and childcare takes place at home and is provided by pre-school teachers and their assistants employed at a pre-school institution, or by private pre-school teachers. Care at childminder's home is organised when there is a strong interest from parents and an insufficient number of free places at a public pre-school institution. Pre-school institutions can also organise childcare in the home of the child. This is a special service which can be performed by pre-school teachers employed at a pre-school institution or by external contractors with at least secondary education or with five years of work experience in the field of education and schooling. This service is entirely paid for by the parents.

Pre-school education groups children from 1 to 3 years of age and from 3 to 6 years of age or to the age when they enter compulsory schooling. The size of pre-school institutions is not prescribed. Teaching groups can be homogenous or heterogeneous within one age group, or they can be combined (they include children of both age groups). The normative number of children in teaching groups is defined by the national regulation. Teaching groups of the first age group should comprise no more than twelve children (ten if they are age-heterogeneous). Teaching groups of the second age group should comprise no more than twenty-two children. Teaching groups are smaller if they are age-heterogeneous (nineteen) or if they include children from 3 to 4 years of age (seventeen). According to the condition and situation of the pre-school education activities in the local community, the community may raise the prescribed number of children in a teaching group by no more than two children. The number of children in a teaching group is smaller if the group includes children with special needs or Roma children.

A day-programme teaching group for children from the first age-group should be monitored for at least six hours by two pedagogical workers, and the teaching group for children from the second age-group for at least four hours (afternoon programmes less: three or two hours).

Pre-school institutions can offer programmes of different length. The day-programme includes education, childcare and meals. It lasts from six to nine hours and can take place in the morning, in the afternoon, throughout the day or in shifts. The half-day programme lasts from four to six hours and can take place in the morning, in the afternoon or in shifts. The short programme lasts from 240 to 720 hours a year. It is designed for children from remote or demographically disadvantaged areas.

Operating times of the pre-school institution may vary, according to the needs of the parents. Usually operating times are five days per week throughout the year from 5.30am to 4pm. Larger pre-school institutions also offer afternoon groups which can stay open until 8pm.

2.3 Curriculum

The national curriculum for pre-school institutions (1999) is based upon appreciation of individual differences in development and learning, as well as on appreciation of the child's integrative and balanced development. The curriculum is open and enables implementation of various programmes (day, half-day, short). The objectives, contents and activities are designed separately for the first and the second age-group of children. In the interest of better transparency, they are divided into various fields; however, the suggested curriculum themes extend over the stringent limits of a single field and

are placed into the context of the children's every-day life in a pre-school institution. The following subject fields are included in pre-school institution activities: physical exercise, language, art, society, nature, and mathematics. Interdisciplinary activities like ethics, health care, safety, and traffic education are incorporated into all those fields.

The implementation of different subject fields is integrated into the daily routine. Educational work is important for the child's personality (not only as a preparation for the next educational level), which is why it is based on the ability of children and their activities. Children's play enables the most natural of advancing their development and learning. The curriculum contains the objectives and principles of pre-school education, which importantly affect every-day activities, communication and classroom arrangement. In planning routine activities (eating, resting, sleeping, tidying up), the differences between children must be taken into account (gender, social and cultural origin, philosophy of life, etc.) and such conditions must be created that those differences can be expressed. Children's particularities, the right to choose and their individuality must also be regarded. The importance of communication for social learning is especially emphasized.

Parents have a right to take part in planning the organisation and work in a pre-school institution or its teaching group. The pre-school institution is obliged to provide written information about its activities: in publications and on notice boards.

2.4 Assessment

In pre-school education in Slovenia the child's achievements are not graded. Pre-school teachers observe, analyse and direct the process of the child's learning through play. The curriculum includes general objectives (for example, getting acquainted with mathematics in every-day life), specific objectives (such as recognising the relationship between cause and consequence) and examples of activities. Pre-school teachers observe how children recognise cause and consequence through their experience, they talk to children, provide positive feedback and praise when they successfully solve a problem, and verbally inform the parents about the child's achievements. Pre-school workers assist, direct, stimulate and motivate the children, and tell and explain things to them, but they do not assess them.

2.5 Teachers

Staff in pre-school institutions includes pre-school teachers, assistants, education counsellors, organisers of health and hygiene regimes, meal organisers and pre-school teachers with special pedagogical skills. Pre-school teachers are expected to hold a higher education degree equivalent to Bachelor's (at least three-year studies) in pre-school education, or a university degree equivalent to Master's (four-year studies) from some other field (pedagogy, art, humanities, sociology) with a specialisation in pre-school education. Assistants are required to hold an upper secondary technical qualification (four-year education) and be qualified to work in pre-school education. Education counsellors are required to have a university degree/Master in psychology, pedagogy, social work, social pedagogy or special and rehabilitation pedagogy.

Pre-school institutions in Slovenia mainly employ pre-school teachers who have obtained a higher education degree in pre-school education and have an appropriate professional qualification. Their studies include courses in theories of education, methodology of teaching pre-school children, didactics, developmental and pedagogical psychology, sociology, philosophy, special pedagogy, health education and practical training in pre-school institutions. Trainee pre-school teachers also obtain practical and theoretical knowledge from various fields of education such as languages, social environment, natural science, mathematics, physical education, dance, music and other ways of artistic expression.

Most of the pedagogical staff in pre-school institutions work full time and have permanent employment contracts as public servants. According to the law, they have the right to professional development and continuing training. Pre-school institutions must allow pedagogical staff at least five days per year or fifteen days every three years for professional training, and cover the expenses: salary compensation, possible travel expenses, participant fees, and accommodation expenses. When new reforms that demand additional training of employees are introduced, such training is obligatory. Professional training is encouraged and rewarded. Certain professional training programmes, those assessed by the school authorities and other competent bodies as being of priority, are awarded points; the achieved number of points is taken into account when considering promotions. Professional training is one of the conditions for promotion of pedagogical workers to titles.

The programmes which have to be accredited by the Minister's Programme Council are mainly carried out by higher education institutions, national education and research institutes and pre-school institutions themselves, as well as by other public and private training organisations.

3. SINGLE STRUCTURE EDUCATION

All children living in Slovenia have the right to basic school education under equal and non-discriminatory conditions. Education is compulsory for pupils between six and fifteen years of age. It is offered in basic schools and is organised as a single structure (without distinction between primary and lower secondary levels). Pupils receive the same education divided into three cycles lasting three years each without a change of school. All schools are public and co-educational with only two exceptions: the Waldorf basic school and the Catholic Alojzij Šuštar Basic School are private and co-educational. At the end of compulsory education, pupils have the choice to advance to general, technical or vocational upper secondary education.

The objectives of basic education are: to encourage the balanced emotional, spiritual and social development of pupils; to develop literacy skills, a national identity and general cultural values based on European traditions; and to prepare children for a life in an equal and democratic society. The basic school curriculum is designed to encourage pupils and teachers to achieve internationally comparable educational standards. It provides all school-age children with basic knowledge and skills for the continuation of education and motivates them for lifelong learning. Schools adapt the learning environment to the needs of children with learning difficulties, special needs children and gifted children.

Compulsory education is free. This includes health insurance and medical examinations. Younger children and children with special needs are entitled to free transportation. All children are entitled to free school transportation if their school is located more than 4 km from their place of residence. Schools are required to provide school meals. Children from socially and economically disadvantaged families are entitled to school meals at a reduced price.

The geographical distribution of schools provides all children in Slovenia with the opportunity to receive basic education as close to their home as possible. This is the duty of municipalities which are responsible for the foundation of public basic schools in the form of single institutions or in the form of organisational units of other institutions. The most common combination is an institution that comprises both the basic school and a pre-school unit. Single and central basic schools usually organise all year groups (1-9) in the same building. Smaller branch units in local, usually in more remote locations where there are fewer children, provide education for the first three or the first six year groups in smaller buildings. The size of schools varies: in larger cities a central school has between 900 pupils and 1 100 pupils (including those coming from branch units). On the other hand, small branch units can enrol less than 30 pupils.

The teaching language of education in basic schools is Slovenian. Italian is used in schools of the Italian minority community, while Hungarian and Slovenian are used in bilingual schools where Hungarian minority is found. For children whose mother tongue is not Slovenian, additional lessons of Slovenian and their own mother tongue and culture can be organised. Special arrangements exist for the education of Roma children, children of foreign citizens and children of people without citizenship. All schools are coeducational.

3.1 Admission

In the calendar year when the children have their sixth birthday, parents are obliged to enrol them in the first year of compulsory school. They may postpone the beginning of compulsory schooling according to their own judgment, or according to the recommendation of a health service or a commission for child guidance which establishes whether the child is prepared for basic schooling.

Parents have a right to enrol their child in basic education programmes at a public or a private school within the school district of their residence. They may also enrol their child in a basic education

programme provided by a school in another school district if they have the target school's written consent. There are no special admission criteria. The procedure in which it is established whether a child is prepared to commence school can be initiated on the parents' request or on a request from medical services.

3.2 Organisation of time, groups and venue

The school year starts on 1 September each year and ends on 31 August the following calendar year. It is divided into two terms. Lessons are provided for up to 38 weeks per year and five days per week. The school year comprises a maximum of 188 school days for pupils in Years 1-8 and a maximum of 183 school days for pupils in the final year: Year 9. The exact number of school days can decrease by a couple of days, depending on the distribution of national holidays.

In general, lessons are 45 minutes long. The maximum total number of hours of instruction per week is: 16.5 hours (22 lessons) for pupils in the first cycle, 19.5 hours (26 lessons) for pupils in the second cycle and 22.5 hours (30 lessons) for pupils in the third cycle. Apart from the summer holidays, which last approximately ten weeks, pupils also have autumn holidays, Christmas/New Year Holidays, winter holidays and the First of May Holiday. National holidays are also school free days.

Basic school activities include compulsory and extra-curricular activities. Involvement in the latter is voluntary and optional. The compulsory curriculum comprises compulsory subjects and compulsory subject options along with discussion periods, during which pupils discuss with their class teacher different issues that concern their life and studies. Before- and after-school classes, supplementary lessons (for pupils with learning difficulties), additional lessons (for good learners and talented pupils), interest activities and out-of-school classes are optional for pupils. In after-school classes pupils study, complete their homework and participate in cultural or artistic activities and sports.

Most classes include pupils on the same educational level and of the same age. In smaller schools there are also multi-grade classes that combine pupils of different ages. Pupils of one or several classes can be divided into smaller study groups. Teachers are free to organise teaching by differentiating pupils according to their abilities. The most common is internal differentiation, although some subjects allow flexible differentiation for a limited time. With parental consent, teachers may organise a part of their lessons by: dividing their pupils into various study groups, applying a team teaching approach, applying ability grouping, or by a combination of all these forms.

The size of classes and groups is specified in the Standards and norms for the provision of basic education. The upper limit stands at 28 pupils per class. The requirements are lower in classes which include children with special needs or Roma pupils, in schools with Italian as the language of instruction, and in bilingual Hungarian/Slovenian schools.

In the first cycle (Years 1-3) all or most of the subjects are taught by general class teachers. Half of the lessons in Year 1 of the basic school are assisted by a pre-school teacher. During the second cycle (Years 4-6) specialist teachers become increasingly more involved in the teaching process. In the third cycle (Years 7-9) lessons are taught solely by specialist teachers. Where deemed necessary, teachers specialised for work with children with special needs and language specialists may also take part in teaching.

3.3 Curriculum

The basic school curriculum is based on several national curricular documents which were prepared and adopted by the Council of Experts for General Education (1998-2006), launched by Ministerial decrees, and issued in accordance with the Basic School Act. The Act specifies which school subjects are compulsory and schools have a duty to offer a list of elective subjects which pupils must choose in

the higher years. Some elective subjects are compulsory for schools to offer, some of which are compulsory for pupils to choose. There is a statutory requirement that a certain number of social sciences/humanity subjects, natural sciences/technical subjects, a second foreign language, non-denominational religious education and rhetoric lessons, must be offered. Pupils must take at least two hours of the elective subjects per week.

National curricular documents consist of the following:

- curriculum for the nine-year basic school, which specifies the exact number of yearly and weekly lessons for individual subjects, the number of discussion periods and the minimum number of hours, required for the implementation of the curriculum;
- subject syllabi which contain main topics and contents of subjects or subject groups, knowledge standards and teaching objectives;
- cross curricular contents (such as, how to use libraries and information technologies);
- extra-curricular activities;
- after-school classes and other forms of after-school care;
- out-of-school classes;
- a list of approved text books from which teachers may choose freely; and
- learning materials and other documents concerning the protection of rights of pupils, parents and teachers.

The subject syllabus includes general aims, objectives and core contents of the subject, didactic principles and recommendations and knowledge standards. Basic knowledge standards specify what pupils should be able to demonstrate, know, understand and be able to evaluate at the end of lessons.

The national core curriculum is open and specifies first of all the objectives and standards of knowledge, defined as core contents. Within the framework of the national core curriculum, teachers are free to adjust the content to specific learning environments. The curriculum stresses the process of learning and development of the skills of learners.

The aim of the teaching process is also to provide pupils with learning-to-learn skills and thus provide them with a tool for a lifelong learning. Moreover, basic schools enhance pupils' awareness about the integrity of individuals, their national identity, and overall cultural and civilisation values. Pupils are raised in the spirit of equality, tolerance, respect of inter-personal differences and human rights. They develop their own culture and traditions, while studying other cultures and learning foreign languages. Basic education also encourages personal health-care and environmental care.

3.4 Assessment, progression and certification

Teachers assess pupils' knowledge on a regular basis over the entire school year and provide pupils with information and feedback on their attainment of curricular objectives. However, the primary objective of teacher assessment is not the evaluation of knowledge but to encourage pupils to study, to improve their interpersonal skills and to improve the overall management of the education process. The knowledge acquired by pupils is assessed and evaluated through a system of tests.

In the first cycle the results of pupils' learning are expressed in a verbal form as descriptive grading (*opisno ocenjevanje*). Second and third cycle pupils' learning (Years 4-9) is assessed with numerical grading. Assessment and evaluation is carried out in accordance with the provisions of the Basic School Act and Regulations on Examination and Assessment of Knowledge and Advancement of

Students in the Basic School, issued by the Minister of Education. Teachers are required to set clear, transparent and non-discriminatory public criteria for assessment and evaluation. Furthermore, they must encourage pupils to take an active part in the planning of assessment and evaluation and inform them about the criteria, methods for evaluation and assessment, as well as informing pupils of their grades on regular basis.

Descriptive grading aims to encourage pupils' interest in learning and to increase their internal motivation towards learning and studying. Numeric grading presents an external learning motivation. Pupils are encouraged to achieve the best results they can. These results are used as admission criteria in upper secondary schools and thus can later enable the pupil to enrol in the school of their choice. Numeric grades are based on the national 5-level grading scale as follows: 5 (excellent), 4 (above average), 3 (average), 2 (satisfactory), 1 (fail).

At the end of the second cycle there are external national examinations that are optional for pupils. External national examinations at the end of the third cycle are compulsory for all pupils. Pupils are required to take an examination in their mother tongue, maths and a third subject. The third subject is selected from the range of compulsory subjects in the final years of basic school by the Minister of Education in consultation with the Expert Council.

National examinations are prepared by the National Committee in agreement with the Subject Committees and organised by the National Examination Centre, while the responsibility for the evaluation of results lies with the National Education Institute of Republic of Slovenia. The latter also carries out the analysis of results, upon which it proposes changes and amendments to the national subject syllabi if necessary.

Following the completion of each school year, basic schools provide each pupil with an annual Report Card which contains final grades in each subject. Final grades are formulated by teachers themselves. Pupils, who successfully complete basic education, receive a school-leaving certificate containing final grades for individual subjects of Year 9. National Results achieved by the pupil in the external national examination are entered into the certificate separately and do not have any effect on the completion of the basic school programme.

If parents organise home-schooling for their child, the child must nevertheless enrol in a basic school which carries out the evaluation and assessment of his/her knowledge together with his/her attainment of standards of knowledge prescribed by individual subjects' national syllabi.

Pupils with pass grades may advance to the next year level. Pupils in the first two cycles (Years 1-6) may proceed to the next year even if they receive a fail grade, but pupils who receive a fail grade in Years 3-6 may repeat a year with their parents' consent or by a decision of the Teachers' Assembly. Pupils of the third cycle, who receive a fail grade in only one or two subjects, can retake an exam in the relevant subjects and may proceed to the following year if they pass the exams successfully. Pupils who fail in three or more subjects must repeat the year. However, Year 9 students have several attempts available to improve their final grades and can improve grades in several subjects. Decisions relating to pupil progression are taken by the Teachers' Assembly. The pupil and/or pupil's parents may appeal against final grades.

Pupils who complete basic school and receive a school-leaving certificate may continue their education. Pupils who fulfilled their compulsory education obligation but failed to complete the programme receive a certificate on the fulfilment of their obligation and may enrol into short vocational education programmes.

3.5 Guidance and counselling

Basic school counsellors guide pupils through the education process and provide them with advice in decisions concerning further education and vocational orientation. Each school organises its own counselling service. The counselling service assesses the readiness of pupils for entry into the first year of the basic school programme, offers advice and helps newly admitted pupils with their inclusion in the school environment. School counsellors help pupils to solve problems and issues concerning their education, personal development, socio-economic status, and so on. Pupils are informed about career planning during lessons or through out-of-school education activities. Teachers also invite pupils' parents to participate in lessons and to provide pupils with information about their profession and other employment opportunities. In the final years of basic school, vocational guidance is provided by school counsellors in a structured manner. Counselling activities are supported by field trips, visits to different types of work environments and secondary schools in the vicinity of the school as well as school visits to the local employment office(s).

3.6 Teachers

Basic schools employ various types of teaching staff. Class teachers teach most subjects or subject areas in Years 1-6. Pre-school teachers act as 'second teachers' in the first year. Subject teachers are specialised in teaching one or two subjects and are gradually integrated into the education process. They start teaching specific subjects in Year 4. In Years 7-9 all subjects are taught by subject teachers. In some cases, they may also teach specific subjects in Years 1-3 (such as, music education, foreign languages, and so on). Counsellors provide educational and vocational guidance and advice. School librarians manage school libraries and participate in language classes.

The law and other regulations, issued by the Minister of Education, specify qualification requirements for teaching positions. Pre-school teachers must possess at least a Bachelor degree, while all other members of teaching staff must hold a Master degree.

The required qualifications for teaching, education of pupils with special needs and school counselling may be awarded through the consecutive model. To achieve this, the candidates must first receive a diploma in the desired field and then complete additional professional training. Candidates who start working in schools for the first time must also complete a ten-month traineeship, followed by a Teacher Certification Examination (State professional exam). Upon successful completion of the prescribed requirements, candidates can become full-time employees and are awarded the status of a civil servant.

Members of educational staff have the right and obligation to participate in additional professional training programmes for a minimum of five days during each school year. Professional training is also one of the requirements for promotion and career advancement.

4. UPPER SECONDARY EDUCATION

In Slovenia, post-compulsory education begins with upper secondary education. It is divided into general upper secondary education (*gimanzije*), technical upper secondary education and vocational upper secondary education. Upper secondary schools can specialise with the provision of a single type of education, for example, general upper secondary schools *gimnazije*. Alternatively, they can be organised as a school centre which combines various types of upper secondary programmes.

The main objectives of upper secondary education in Slovenia are: to provide all residents with opportunities to acquire ISCED 3 level of education, to enable all residents to acquire the highest level of education possible while maintaining high standards of knowledge, to increase the creativity of the greatest possible number of residents; to foster the development of society, and to enable students' involvement in the European integration processes.

General upper secondary schools *Gimnazije* offer students aged 15-18 years, four years of general education in preparation for continuation of their education at university level. Upon completion of *gimnazija*, students undertake state wide external examinations (*matura*), which allow them to enrol in any type of tertiary education course. Those who fail to complete *gimnazija* and/or do not wish to pursue further education can acquire professional and vocational skills and knowledge in short one-year vocational courses, after the completion of which they can search for suitable employment in the labour market.

Gimnazije provide courses with different specialisations, for example, classical, technical, with International Baccalaureate courses, arts or economics, and so forth. The language of instruction in *gimnazije* is Slovenian. In areas populated by the Italian national minority, some schools provide secondary education in Italian (with Slovenian as a compulsory second language) while others offer education in Slovenian (with Italian as a compulsory second language). Education in *gimnazije* in the area where members of the Hungarian national minority reside is provided bilingually, in Slovenian and Hungarian. There are two other general upper secondary schools which offer two-year International Baccalaureate courses in Years 3 and 4, and the programme of the International School (provided in the English language). Citizens from other EU member states have the right to receive upper secondary education under the same conditions as Slovenian citizens.

Schooling is free of charge. Privately-owned *gimnazije* receive public funding (to the extent of at least 85 % of the public *gimnazije* costs), but may also collect admission fees (which are minimal) and charge students for certain services (such as, learning materials, excursions, and so on). All *gimnazije* are co-educational. The number of students at individual schools may vary: from 60 to approximately 1 100 students. In large school centres, which have combined various types of upper secondary schools, the number of students can be up to 3 000.

The objectives of **vocational and technical education and training** are to develop key competences, skills and vocational qualifications at an internationally comparable level and to provide knowledge and skills for employment, further education and lifelong learning.

Upper secondary vocational and technical education is divided into seven broad technical/vocational fields within which several types of courses are available. Courses differ in their length (including their credit point values), admission criteria, options for the continuation of education, level of vocational standards for a specific profession, and levels of qualification. Types and levels of vocational and technical education programmes are specified by the law as follows.

Short vocational programmes take from two to three years (120 credit points) ⁽¹⁾ and end with a final examination. Upon completion, students are qualified for independent fulfilment of simple vocational tasks which are carried out in accordance with standardised work procedures and appropriate instructions. Alternatively, they assist with more complex work tasks, typical for certain professions with broad profiles.

Vocational programmes are longer with courses taking approximately three or four years (180 to 240 credit points) and concluding with a final examination. Upon completion, students are qualified to undertake independent work in occupations with broad profiles. Successful completion of the final examination allows candidates to continue their education in relevant technical-vocational courses. Those who choose not to continue their education but rather commence an employment contract may, after three years of work experience, undertake a master craftsman, foreman, or managerial examination, after which they are awarded the qualification of technician, equivalent to the qualification acquired in technical upper secondary education.

Technical education programmes take from four to five years (240-300 credit points) and end with the vocational *matura* examination. The vocational *matura* examination leads to the award of the qualification of technician, which allows students to either enter the labour market or to continue their studies in higher education. Students who complete a technical programme are qualified for the independent conduct of complex, non-standard, technologically more complex work processes and tasks.

Combined vocational-technical programmes take approximately two years (120 credit points) and end with the vocational *Matura* examination. Technical-vocational education therefore provides vocationally qualified candidates with the possibility of acquiring a technical qualification and thus gaining access to higher education. The characteristics and objectives are equal to characteristics and objectives of technical upper secondary education.

In addition, short one-year courses leading to vocational qualifications are available which are usually regarded in international comparisons as a form of post-secondary non-tertiary vocational education (ISCED 4).

Education in public vocational and technical schools is free. Schools may charge fees for special services (such as, administrative costs, special equipment, and so forth). All schools are co-educational.

4.1 Admission

Students may enrol in *gimnazija*, vocational or technical schools after the successful completion of basic school. Subject grades from their basic school education are the most important criteria for enrolment, although schools may specify additional admission criteria. *Gimnazije* which specialise in the arts may require candidates to undertake special talent tests, *gimnazije* specialised in sports may require candidates to provide evidence of their previous achievements in sport. Technical or vocational schools may also apply specific criteria for admission beside the successful completion of

⁽¹⁾ The Vocational and Technical Education Act (2006) establishes credit evaluation of education programmes. In general, 1 CP is equivalent to 25 hours of learning, including guided instruction and individual work (seminars, projects, homework, individual study, practical training, preparation for the final examinations, etc). Each component of the curriculum (subject or module) is validated through the process of preparation of the programme by professional bodies in cooperation with social partners. They have the autonomy to decide on the relative weight of a programme unit. The Institute for Vocational Education is authorized to support the preparation of education programmes and submits them to the Council of Experts for Vocational Education and Training for the accreditation. The CP system is used for accumulation and transfer of units. Programme units (modules) are evaluated from the point of learning outcomes (competences) and individual workload. The same unit of the programme can be evaluated differently in different learning contexts.

basic school. Pupils who have fulfilled the compulsory education obligation but have not completed basic school successfully (or have completed the special needs education programme), may enrol in short vocational education programmes.

In cases where the number of candidates exceeds the number of available places, the central enrolment procedure for the admission of candidates is taken into consideration. This nationally determined procedure is agreed by the Minister of Education, based upon the proposal of the Expert Council. Admission procedures are administered at a central level. Pupils in the final years of basic school discuss their educational career plans with their teachers and school counsellors. They also receive information from upper secondary schools, which organise information days for potential students prior to the beginning of the admission/enrolment process. Based on the upper secondary schools' proposals the Ministry of Education and Sport prepares and coordinates general admission criteria for enrolment. The Ministry also administers and manages the candidates' applications and selection procedures. Upper secondary schools can decide to limit enrolments or increase the number of available student positions, after they have established the exact number of applicants. Further selection procedures in case of surplus enrolments are also managed by the Ministry. Selection criteria include the students' past study record of the skills and knowledge which are important for successful education, or successful fulfilment of work tasks, in a particular profession.

4.2 Organisation of time, groups and venue

The school year in upper-secondary education begins on 1 September and ends on 31 August (with the exception of a few vocational programmes, in which the school year begins on 1 March and ends on 28 February the next calendar year). Summer holidays take place in July and August and last from nine to ten weeks. Students also have autumn holidays, Christmas/New Year Holidays, winter holidays and the First of May holiday. National holidays are also school free days. Schools provide education as part of the curriculum or the entire curriculum in two groups, from Monday to Friday, with the school day beginning at 8am. The distribution of school days, school free days and school holidays is specified by the Minister, who issues the school calendar for each school year.

Coursework in *gimnazije* consists of 45-minute lessons, organised by subject, together with exercises and practical work, compulsory elective contents, excursions, seminar work, project work and individual work. Organised school work may comprise, at most, 36 lessons per week (from 32 to 36 lessons). Teaching time is spread over five days per week and 38 weeks per school year (from 1 September to the second half of June). School activities consist of 35 weeks of coursework plus three weeks of compulsory elective contents. The school year may comprise from 4 605 to 5 340 45-minute lessons (depending on the year level of study). Students usually begin the course at the age of 15 years. Students of the same age attend the same year. The common practice is that the same teachers teach the same students the same subject for all four years of schooling. The school year is divided into terms. Assessment grades are given in the end of each term.

The school year in **vocational and technical education** begins on 1 September and ends on 31 August. Few schools follow the March/following February arrangement. The duration and organisation of coursework is similar in all courses of the same type. Coursework includes theory lessons and exercises, practical experience, workplace training, extra-curricular activities, excursions and the individual work of students. The maximum duration of coursework is 42 weeks per individual school year with a maximum of 36 lessons per week. School lessons last 45 minutes. Practical training in vocational or technical education may be provided in schools or it can take the form of intensive practical workplace training with an employer or in a business centre which carries out workplace training for several enterprises. Schools which provide courses in the field of agriculture may provide practical experience at the school estate.

4.3 Curriculum

Programmes of upper secondary education are prepared by education experts, the National Education Institute, the Centre for Vocational Education and Training and social partners. They are adopted by the Council of Experts for General Education and the Council of Experts for Vocational Education and promulgated by the Minister of Education. The programme usually contains the following elements:

- the name of the course,
- the objectives,
- the duration of the programme,
- the compulsory forms of testing and assessment of knowledge,
- the subject-specific knowledge and skills required for teachers of individual subjects,
- the entrance requirements,
- the criteria for the selection of candidates in cases of limited admission,
- the requirements for the progression and the completion of the programme, and
- the curriculum documents which include:
 - teaching subjects weekly schedule,
 - subject curricula, and
 - examination catalogues for individual subjects.

The curricular part of the programme is in the autonomy of the Council of Experts, while the Minister of Education takes a final decision upon the structural and formal elements of the programme as suggested by the Council.

Each school must prepare an implementation curriculum (syllabus), which specifies the implementation of coursework for a specific subject. The implementation curriculum is adopted by the school council as a part of the school's annual work plan. The latter also includes the team coordination of teachers, the actual contents of the elective curriculum, the distribution of coursework into modules, the organisation of classes (in groups or classrooms) and flexible differentiation (additional lessons, supplementary lessons, project work and team work), as well as connections with the environment.

General upper secondary education (*gimnazije*)

Students in general upper secondary education (*gimnazije*) can choose from several *gimnazije* of different profiles; they can select contents and subject options within the curriculum. The Classical *gimnazija* offers, in addition to the core curriculum subjects, Latin and the option of studying Ancient Greek. The Technical *gimnazija* includes optional subjects, such as biotechnology, electronic science, mechanics, computer science and materials, laboratory work, construction, agriculture, wood engineering, microbiology, descriptive geometry, computer systems and networks, and similar. The *gimnazija* specialising in economics includes subjects from the field of economics and entrepreneurship. Arts *gimnazije* offer a music option, dance courses, visual arts courses, acting and drama courses. Some *gimnazije* also offer a European course with a higher level of language learning (Slovenian as well as foreign languages, including CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning)); a new compulsory subject, European Studies; additional project work; compulsory international cooperation; and an extended choice of extra-curricular activities.

Teaching subjects weekly schedule:

Compulsory subjects	Year (lessons/week):				Total
	1	2	3	4	
Slovenian	4	4	4	4	560
Mathematics	4	4	4	4	560
First Foreign Language	3	3	3	3	420
Second Foreign Language	3	3	3	3	420
History	2	2	2	2	280
Physical Education	3	3	3	3	420
Music	1.5				52+18*
Arts	1.5				52+18*
Geography	2	2	2		210
Biology	2	2	2		210
Chemistry	2	2	2		210
Physics	2	2	2		210
Psychology**			2		70
Sociology**		2			70
Philosophy**				2	70
Information Science	2				70
Core optional subjects		1-3	1-5	8-12	490-630
Compulsory elective contents	90	90	90	30	300
Total hours	32	32	32	29-33	

* Lessons included in compulsory elective contents

** Psychology and Sociology may be introduced in Year 2 or 3, while Psychology can be introduced in Year 3 or 4.

Subject curricula are designed so that students can gradually attain the appropriate level of knowledge, competences and skills and develop non-cognitive attitudes. Students learn the foundations of scientific reasoning in various fields, while developing an interest for deepening and upgrading their theoretical knowledge base. By the time they complete *gimnazija*, they reach the level of knowledge required for a successful career in a university, the labour market and in life in general. General *gimnazija* curriculum promotes creativity and ensures the provision of the knowledge and skills which are the common basis for all university studies. Compulsory subjects are: mother tongue, mathematics, a first foreign language, a second foreign language, history and music, arts, geography, biology, chemistry, physics, psychology, sociology, philosophy and information science. Elective subjects are those aimed at students' special preferences and/or in preparation for the *matura* examination. Elective subjects may include: a third foreign language, history of arts or any other subject according to the national core curriculum. Compulsory elective contents aim to equip students with knowledge and skills, according to their own interests and wishes and can be completed either internally or externally. Between 81 % and 93 % (as in an arts specialisation) of the total course is compulsory. Students can choose the rest of the course. Students can also participate in additional extra-curricular activities (for example, choir, artistic workshops, debating and literature group meetings, the school radio and the school newspaper). Schools organise extra foreign language courses and courses for gifted students preparing them for various competitions.

Schools may adapt the number of hours intended for core curriculum options according to their specific profile and the preparation of students for the *matura*. Schools have the autonomy to decide how to implement the curriculum. In accordance with teaching capacities and students' needs and interests, the schools decide which specific subjects should be emphasized. The school may choose, for example, a balanced curriculum, or a wider range of foreign languages, natural science subjects, sports, social sciences or European studies. It is up to the school to decide which of the optional *matura* subjects its students should be prepared for more thoroughly.

Technical and vocational education

Programmes of technical and vocational education are prepared by education experts, schools in cooperation with social partners, the Centre for Vocational Education and Training, councils of experts, the ministers of education and the Minister of Labour. Vocational standards, which serve as the basis for courses, are adopted by the Minister for Labour based upon the proposals of the Council of Experts of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational and Technical Education. A vocational standard is a statutory document which contains the following prescribed elements: name and code of the occupation, required level of education, vocational/professional competences and a description of fields of work originating from the vocational profile. The whole programme is adopted by the Minister of Education. Programmes contain elements similar to the programmes of *gimnazija*.

Programme courses may lead to a single or several vocational qualifications. If they are based on a higher number of vocational standards they are divided into several modules. Each module corresponds to a specific vocational standard and contains objectives, practical and theoretical content, and certain key competences as well as all other necessary course elements. Students who successfully pass a single module but do not complete the total course and cannot acquire a formal level of education can acquire a certificate of a national vocational qualification. The latter allows them to perform certain work tasks or a particular job within an occupation.

The course structure includes general subjects, technical-theoretical subjects, practical training and extra-curricular activities. Practical training includes practical lessons at school, in school workshops or in specialised school classrooms or laboratories, or within school estates or workplaces, while in some courses practical training also includes work experience.

The compulsory part of the **technical education curricula** includes approximately 50 % of theoretical subjects (Slovenian, a foreign language, mathematics, arts, social sciences (history, geography, sociology, psychology), information science, natural sciences (physics, chemistry, biology) and sport). Objectives and general contents in lower years are the same in all curricula. However, in the later years of study, there are a larger range of available elective subjects and specifically-oriented contents which allow vocational orientation and specialisation in a particular field. In the final year the course finishes with practical training. Coursework in the first two years stress the development of motivation and transferrable practical competences. To encourage entrepreneurial spirit, autonomy and team work, practice in senior years is planned as team work. In the future, as this structure is fully implemented, it will enable a higher level of mobility between courses, pre-qualifications and the rationalisation of education.

Curricula in **vocational programmes** are designed according to different occupational/vocational fields. Contents are being continuously modernised, reflecting the changes that result from developments in industry and business. A common characteristic of different curricula is that inter-curricular boundaries are being removed, while new fields of specialisation are constantly emerging. The main features of the vocational curricula are: openness ('open curriculum' allows schools to decide autonomously upon 20-25 % of the course content), integration of key competences, promotion of lifelong learning, mobility schemes for students (they can transfer between different courses and schools), and the implementation of the credit point system (ECTS).

4.4 Assessment, progression and certification

The primary aim of assessment and evaluation of knowledge during the year is to foster learning so that students can progressively reach the standards of knowledge specified in the curriculum and examination catalogues. The Minister of Education issues rules specifying different forms of evaluation. Evaluation of knowledge in each subject is carried out by the relevant subject teacher, who also awards the students their end-of-year grades.

Following the assessments, students are given numerical and descriptive grades. The scale of grades used in numerical assessment is 1-5. Grade 2 indicates satisfactory; 3, good; 4, very good; and 5, excellent. Unsatisfactory (grade 1) is a fail grade, while other grades (2-5) are pass grades. Other activities (extra-curricular activities, compulsory elective contents, field work and other activities) are graded with the descriptive grades: 'pass' or 'fail'. Students progress to the next year if they receive a pass grade in all subjects by the end of the school year and if they complete all the obligations specified by the relevant education programme. With the approval of the Teachers' Assembly in vocational/technical school, students may progress to the next year even without having completed all the obligations; for these students, an individual learning plan is prepared. If students fail in three or less subjects, they may undertake a re-examination. Students with more than three fail grades may repeat a year once, although this can only be done once throughout the entire course. However, students with special needs and students with social or health concerns may repeat the same year several times.

At the end of each school year students receive their school year certificate which contains grades achieved in individual subjects, and the grade for their overall success (satisfactory, good, very good or excellent). The grade for the overall success is decided by the Teachers' Assembly based on the proposal of the teacher responsible for the group that the student belongs to.

The modular structure of **technical and vocational education programmes** enables students to acquire vocational qualifications, in accordance with their own interests and talents, without necessarily having to complete the entire course. Students may complete their education over time by completing individual modules. Each module provides them with a specific recognised partial qualification which enables them to compete for employment in particular jobs.

After successful completion of the programme:

- students of *gimnazija* undertake the general *matura* examination (the external state wide examination),
- students of technical upper secondary education undertake the vocational *matura* examination (partly external and partly internal state wide examination),
- students of vocational upper secondary education undertake the internal final examinations.

In order to complete upper secondary school students must successfully pass the corresponding examinations.

Gimnazije

The preparation and organisation of the general *matura* examinations is the responsibility of the National Examination Centre, the State Matura Commission and the school Matura Commissions. The general *matura* examination is held in the spring and autumn term, in one or two parts. It comprises five subjects, of which three subjects are compulsory for all students (Slovenian/Hungarian/Italian, Mathematics and a foreign language), while the other two may be chosen from the approved list of *matura* subjects. Examinations can be written; written and oral; written and practical; written, oral and

practical; only practical; or they can take the form of a demonstration. The forms of different examinations are laid down in subject examination catalogues. Written examinations are taken by all candidates on the same day and at the same time. Examination papers are defined by examination committees (external bodies) and the results are also evaluated by external evaluators, experienced or retired teachers and/or teachers from higher education institutions.

A student's attainment in the *matura* examination is measured in points and converted into grades according to the five-level grading scale. Some subject examinations can be taken at a higher or lower level of difficulty.

Successful completion of *gimnazija*, along with the completion of the *matura* examination, allows students to enter higher education. Admission criteria in higher education are based on results achieved in the *matura* examination. However, in some cases the admission criteria may also include grades achieved in specific subjects during upper-secondary school, either during the last year or any year, the grade for overall success, or tests of special skills, and so forth.

Technical and vocational education

The vocational *matura* examination is organised partly externally and partly by the school. It includes four subjects; two common subjects (mother tongue and one of the technical-theoretical subjects) and two subjects of the student's choice. The preparation and organisation of the vocational *matura* examination is the responsibility of the National Examination Centre, the State Matura Commission for vocational *matura* and the school Matura Commissions.

Vocational upper secondary education courses end with an internal final examination. Candidates may take the final exam no more than three times in a single school year.

After the completion of education and after the completion of the final exam or the vocational *matura* examination, students acquire a qualification, which is basically the same as the name of the course. The qualification is entered in the school-completion certificate. Schools are obliged to also issue a Certificate Supplement, containing a description of the course, the achieved grades and the specification of work tasks and occupational positions for which the pupil is qualified.

Students can appeal against the grades awarded in their end-of-year certificates or against the grades achieved during the final examination. Re-assessment of the applicant is carried out by a committee which comprises external members. Students may also appeal against grades achieved in the vocational *matura* examination. Students who leave school prior to the completion of the course receive a certificate detailing their acquired knowledge and competences which they need for participation in the National Certified Vocational Qualification Scheme.

4.5 Guidance and counselling

Responsibilities for occupational and educational guidance are shared amongst teachers and counsellors. Career guidance is partially included in the 'Guidelines for the work of counselling services' and is carried out in several ways: visits of staff to different classes, individual consultations and workshops. The development of occupational orientation plans and guidelines is entrusted to the National Education Institute and the Centre for Vocational Educational and Training. It initiates various projects, the purpose of which is to provide students with the ability to make autonomous decisions concerning their education and life in general and to equip them with skills they need to plan their occupational or professional career.

Gimnazije help students to search for information about study opportunities provided by the higher education sector using ICT. School libraries supply students with publications which describe higher education institutions, courses and professions. Lessons of information science equip students with

the ability to search for information available on the internet. Additionally, all teachers provide students with information about further career and education opportunities in their field of subject specialisation. Schools also regularly invite former students to present their personal experiences and organise school trips to various companies and higher education institutions. *Gimnazije* provide guidance activities during class discussion hours as part of cross-curricular contents and through the contents of core curriculum options.

Each technical and/or vocational school has its own counselling service which provides students with counselling and educational and career guidance.

4.6 Teachers and trainers

In general, teachers are full-time employees with the status of civil servants. They have the right and duty to participate in in-service training activities for at least five days of each school year. Further professional development and in-service training is also one of the pre-requisites for promotion.

Teaching staff in *gimnazije* include:

- general subject teachers,
- technical subject teachers,
- visiting teachers and foreign lecturers who participate in foreign language teaching,
- counsellors who provide counselling services,
- librarians who are in charge of the school libraries and participate in lessons,
- teachers responsible for the organisation of contents of core curriculum options,
- teachers responsible for the organisation of adult general education,
- teachers of practical subjects and skills, and
- laboratory assistants, instructors, and staff responsible for the organisation of practical lessons.

The second cycle of Bologna studies (Masters), or a university degree in one or two subjects, is required for teachers of theoretical subjects, counsellors, librarians, teachers responsible for contents of core curriculum options and for adult education teachers. Teachers of practical subjects and skills are required to have a higher vocational qualification (ISCED 5B), while laboratory assistants, instructors and staff responsible for the organisation of practical lessons must have completed at least a technical upper-secondary education programme (ISCED 3A). Apart from the appropriate level of education in their field of instruction, all members of teaching staff must complete pedagogical and teacher training (within initial education or consecutively) as well as pass the State Teacher Certification Examination. In practice, the majority of teachers have completed a university study programme in their relevant field; they have then obtained their teaching qualifications during an additional six-month theoretical training course at university. In addition, they acquire practical skills in a traineeship period prior to the State Teacher Certification Examination which lasts from six to ten months. The total period of preparation for a *gimnazija* teacher is five to six years.

Teaching staff in vocational and technical schools include:

- general subject teachers,
- technical-theoretical subject teachers,

- teachers of practical knowledge and skills,
- counsellors, librarians and other technical workers (such as, teachers in adult education courses, laboratory assistants, instructors, organisers of practical experience), and
- master craftsmen, who participate in workplace training.

They must have previous work experience, appropriate education and they must pass the Teacher Certification Examination. The appropriate qualification includes a Bachelor or Master degree in a relevant discipline, supplemented with completed pedagogical training worth at least 60 ECTS credits.

Teachers of practical knowledge and skills, laboratory assistants, instructors and organisers of practical experience must have completed at least an upper secondary technical and pedagogical qualification in the relevant field and have acquired the necessary practical experience. Master craftsmen must successfully pass the master craftsman examination in accordance with the law. Counsellors, librarians and teachers of adult education courses must have completed an appropriate higher education course (second cycle equivalent to a Master degree) and a pedagogical course.

5. POST-SECONDARY NON-TERTIARY EDUCATION

In the national education and training system, post-secondary non-tertiary education is not recognised as a special category. International statistical reports (UOE) include the one-year *matura* course and vocational courses in this category. These 'second chance' courses have been designed for young people and adults who either have dropped out of the education process and wish to complete upper secondary education in a second attempt, or for those who wish to reconsider their future career. For more information see Section 4.

6. TERTIARY EDUCATION

Tertiary education in Slovenia is divided into traditional higher education (ISCED 5A-6) and the newly developed higher vocational education sector (ISCED 5B). The field of higher education is administered by the Ministry for Higher Education, Science and Technology (established in 2005), while the higher vocational education sub-sector remained within the responsibility of Ministry of Education and Sport.

The two sub-sectors are guided by separate legislation: the Higher Education Act (last revised 2009) and the Higher Vocational Education Act (2004).

In the National Classification System of Education and Training Activities and Outcomes (KLASIUS, 2006), which is one of the formal bases for building a Slovenian eight-level qualification framework, the levels of tertiary education are arranged as follows:

KLASIUS	ISCED	Bologna cycle	Study programmes (from 2006)
6.1	5B	Short cycle	Higher vocational programmes
6.2	5A	First cycle	Professional/academic programmes – equivalent to Bachelor
7	5A	Second cycle	<i>Magisterij</i> programmes – equivalent to Masters Long first degree programmes – equivalent to Masters
		Third cycle	Doctorate of science programmes
8.2*	6		

* KLASIUS code 8.1 denotes the former *Magisterij* of science/art (the introduction to doctoral studies before 2004)

6.1 Higher vocational education

Short higher education in Slovenia was introduced in 1996 as part of the overall education reform. The first post-secondary institutions were founded within upper secondary school centres. Later they became independent and expanded throughout the country. The Higher Vocational Education Act (2004) clearly separated this type of education from upper secondary education.

The network of higher vocational colleges has expanded substantially in recent years. Currently there are sixty higher vocational colleges (2009/10 academic year), of which thirty are public, two of the private colleges are state subsidised, and the remaining twenty-eight are private or independent. These colleges were set up to meet the needs of the national and local economies, with due regard to occupational profiles. They must meet the quality standards determined by national accreditation bodies and other requirements stipulated by the law. The main aim of higher vocational colleges is to develop occupational skills. Approximately 40 % of the curricula are thus devoted to practical training in firms and companies. Upon completion of study, students receive a diploma with the name of the programme and the title of the vocational qualification, which enables them to start working in specific occupations and middle management teams. The duration of higher vocational education is usually two years (120 ECTS).

In addition to education leading to a higher vocational diploma, vocational colleges also provide short courses of 10-35 ECTS which are designed for refreshing the knowledge and skills of adults.

6.1.1 Admission

The general requirement for admission to higher vocational colleges, as stipulated by the law, is the successful completion of upper-secondary education at level 5 according to the national qualification

scale (qualification of a technician). The following applicants qualify for higher vocational studies: those who have passed the *matura* or the vocational *matura* examination, or those who have a vocational qualification of master craftsman or equivalent. In addition, master craftsmen applicants must have at least three years of work experience and must comply with the proficiency standards of Slovene language and mathematics at the level required for the vocational *matura*.

Applicants apply to higher vocational colleges through the joint national application system managed by the National Higher Vocational Registration Services. The number of study places is approved and publicly announced by the Ministry of Education. The specific criteria for students' selection are determined by higher vocational colleges independently and are applied if the number of applicants exceeds the number of available places. Vocational colleges may also require tests prior to admission. Student selection is usually based on previous study records or combined previous study records and admission test results.

6.1.2 Students contributions and financial support

Full-time students of higher-vocational colleges with a state-subsidised place pay no tuition fees; however, they do pay administrative fees (registration and certification costs). The level of the tuition fees for part-time and/or non-state-subsidised students is determined by institutions themselves. If a student takes longer than the prescribed period to complete a course, the entitlement to free study is lost. Part-time and/or non-state-subsidised students contribute to tuition and administrative costs.

Students may benefit from a range of financial support to cover the cost of living and/or to pay fees. Full-time students, who do not pay tuition fees, may receive a scholarship to cover living costs. Scholarships are usually awarded on the basis of social criteria, but the amount is normally dependent on the student's academic performance. They are also entitled to subsidised accommodation or a place in a public student's residence and also to meals at reduced prices. In addition to financial assistance for students, their parents are given tax relief.

Adult students are usually financially supported by their employers. Unemployed adult students may receive financial support from state funding programmes designed specifically for the education of unemployed people.

Loans may be awarded to any student under commercial conditions.

Students from EU member states enjoy the same conditions of study as Slovene students. The situation for students from third countries depends on the existence of a mutual bilateral agreement between Slovenia and the country. Where such an agreement exists, the students are considered to have all of the same study benefits as the EU students.

6.1.3 Organisation of the academic year

The academic year in higher vocational education is from 1 October to 30 September. Students work lasts from 37 to 42 weeks (40 hours per week). Instruction covers a minimum of 34 weeks with lessons consisting of 20 to 40 hours per week. Higher vocational institutions enjoy considerable flexibility in planning and structuring their study year. Teaching activities are divided into two semesters of 17 weeks each. Within the limits set by the law and the Minister's regulation, colleges decide on their provision of courses throughout the academic year. Colleges are free to set examinations following the Rules issued by the Minister. The Rules on the Assessment of Students (2006) stipulate the obligation of higher vocational colleges to organise at least three examination periods per study year; that is within 30 days after the conclusion of each semester (winter and spring) and one examination period in September.

Public holidays (occasional/national/religious holidays) are the following: 31 October (The Reformation Day), 1 November (the Remembrance Day), 25 December (Christmas), 26 December (Independence and Unity Day), 1 January (New Year), 8 February (*Prešern* Day or the Day of Slovene Culture), 5 April (Easter Monday), 27 April (The Day of the Uprising against Occupation), 1-2 May (the International Worker's Day) and 25 June (the Statehood Day).

6.1.4 Assessment, progression and certification

Courses are organised for both full-time students and adults, or for adults only. The typical duration of study is two years (120 ECTS); this is combined with practical training within the workplace of a relevant industry or public sector. The programmes are designed to equip individuals with the knowledge, skills and competences to be able to operate independently and without supervision within the workplace. To some extent, they are expected to be able to cope with change in the workplace and take responsibility for evaluation and the improvement of activities at work. Curricula and modules are based on professional standards but also include optional choices. The proportion of practical and independent work for students (such as, project work, product elaboration) is considerable. The last term in the final year is devoted to a diploma project (thesis) which is carried out individually or in small groups.

Programmes are offered in the areas of mechanics; electrical engineering; electronics; photography; geo-technology and mining; building and civil construction; informatics; wood technology; logistics; media; mechatronics; design; social work networking; telecommunication; dental hygiene; environmental protection; the economy; administration; food and nutrition; horticulture; management in the rural environment; tourism; and hospitality.

Upon completion of all requirements of the programme, the student is awarded a Diploma with a Supplement in the Slovene language and/or in one of the languages of the EU. The diploma document includes the name of the vocational qualification derived from the name of the programme, regulated by the Act on the Names of Qualifications, and Professional and Academic Titles (2006). Irrespective of this rule, in technological fields of study the name of the qualification is combined with the title *inženir* or *tehnolog*.

6.1.5 Guidance and counselling

In accordance with the law, upper secondary schools must provide a counselling service. The provision of this service includes career counselling in the period of transition to tertiary education and testing students' aptitude for specific occupations. Higher education colleges organise open days and job fairs, and publish brochures with detailed descriptions of courses of study on offer and the variety of occupations open to their graduates. Career counselling is also provided by employment agencies (although mainly for adults and the unemployed).

In 1998, new active counselling services provided by Information and Career Counselling Centres (CIPS) were added to traditional career counselling in schools and employment agencies. They assist young people and adults in planning their career and also provide counselling services to career counsellors, professional counsellors, counselling staff in schools and other employees of the National Employment Agency. Additionally, they collect information on occupations and the labour market; on education and training opportunities; on employment opportunities in specific occupations (vacancies, numbers of unemployed and so forth); and provide guidelines on writing applications and attending interviews with employers.

6.1.6 Academic staff

Teaching staff in higher vocational colleges include lecturers, instructors and workers in laboratories. The lecturers must be elected as lecturers by the Assembly of Lecturers of a particular college in order to be able to teach at that college. The title is granted for five years and can be extended. Teachers must have completed at least appropriate two-cycle studies or hold a university degree equivalent to Masters. They must have relevant professional references and achievements.

6.2 Higher education

Higher education is regulated by the *Higher Education Act* (OG. RS, No. 119/06, last revised 2009).

Higher education institutions in Slovenia are public and private universities, faculties, art academies and professional colleges. Faculties and art academies can offer both academic and professional study programmes, while professional colleges offer only professional study programmes. The difference between university and professional institutions lies in research based studies and academic research activities.

In 2009/10 there are:

- three public universities with fifty-three member institutions,
- two private universities with seven member institutions, and
- twenty-six single higher education institutions, of which twelve are receiving state subsidies.

All higher education study programmes and institutions, regardless of their status (public or private), must be accredited and registered according to the provisions of the Higher Education Act in order to obtain degree awarding powers.

With the higher education reform of 2004 (with Amendments in 2006) and the introduction of a three-cycle structure, according to the Bologna principles, institutions have been allowed to implement the new studies progressively. All institutions are obliged to complete the Bologna reform by the academic year 2009/10. The first cycle includes academically and professionally oriented study programmes and provides access to the second, and consequently to the highest, level. Long higher education programmes leading directly to a *Magisterij* (Master) are possible in case of professions regulated by EU directives, or if it is required by the national regulations of that particular professional field. Currently, beside EU regulated professions, only studies in theology lead directly to a *Magisterij*. Students who were enrolled in pre-Bologna programmes before the academic year 2009/10 may continue their studies under the conditions valid at the time of their enrolment, however, they must graduate by the academic year 2015/16.

Beside the degree studies, higher education institutions offer also various supplementary and refreshing courses and other lifelong learning opportunities for adult students.

The language of instruction is Slovene; foreign language is possible alongside Slovene, or in parts of the programme where visiting professors are conducting lectures.

6.2.1 Admission

The general admission requirement is regulated by law. Students must have completed general or technical upper secondary school. Candidates are required to hold a general *matura* examination certificate or a vocational *matura* certificate with one additional bridging examination. Students apply to courses through the joint national application system. Higher education institutions determine the number of available study places for each study programme (*numerus clausus*). Public institutions,

and private ones that receive public subsidies, require governmental consent in determining numerus clausus. The selection criteria in the case of limited enrolments are determined by the individual study programme. If the number of eligible applicants exceeds the number of places available, a selection is usually made on the basis of upper secondary school grades, *matura* examination results and/or an aptitude test. Within this general framework, the responsibility for the admission of students rests with the institutions.

6.2.2 Students contribution and financial support

Full-time students enrolled in first and second cycle studies in public and private state-subsidised higher education institutions do not pay tuition fees. This also applies to students from other EU member states and foreign students from the countries with a mutual bilateral agreement with Slovenia. All students are only charged a small registration fee of approximately 25 € per year. Doctoral students in the third cycle are either employed by the State, in which case their tuition fees and salaries are covered from the State budget, or they have the status of a doctoral student. In the latter (rare) cases the State subsidises part of the tuition fee for the majority of such students.

Part-time students (and students in non-subsidised places at private institutions) pay tuition fees in the amount of 2 000-10 000 € per year (depending on the study programme).

Students have to buy books and study materials; they usually pay extra for study visits, excursions and additional study activities.

Student support is available in different forms. Full-time students can receive scholarships which are also available to foreign students on the basis of mutual agreements and through some tenders, mostly for post-graduate studies. The amount of the scholarship depends on students' socio-economic status, the previous study results and the year-level of study. In addition to scholarships, students are also entitled to subsidies for accommodation, transport, food, health insurance and student work experience. Students' parents also receive financial assistance in the form of family allowances (which takes account the family income) and tax relief.

6.2.3 Organisation of the academic year

The academic year in higher education in Slovenia starts on 1 October and ends on 30 September. Courses usually run from October to the middle of June. Higher education institutions decide on their provision of courses independently, in line with the regulations. The academic year is divided into two semesters (winter and spring) of fifteen weeks each. Winter holidays, consisting of four weeks between January and February are devoted to winter term examinations. Spring examinations take place for four to five weeks between June and July, and autumn examinations, lasting four weeks, take place between the last week of August and the last week in September. Public holidays are: 31 October (the Reformation Day), 1 November (the Remembrance Day), 25 December (Christmas Day), 26 December (the Independence Day), 1 January (New Year), 8 February (the Day of Culture), 5 April (Easter Day), 27 April (the Day of the Uprising against Occupation), 1-2 May (Labour Days). There are also other teaching breaks during the University week: the Rector's Day and the Dean's Day.

6.2.4 Assessment, progression and certification

Instruction takes the form of lectures, seminars, working in small groups, laboratory and field work. A number of programmes, in particular those professionally oriented, include practical training and work placements in industry, schools and other workplaces. Students are subject to continuous written and/or oral examinations. Marks are awarded for seminar papers, colloquia and/or each examination following the completion of a course. A 10-level marking scale is used; the minimum pass grade is 6

and the maximum is 10. Some forms of assessment are only graded Fail and Pass. The conditions under which students progress from one year of studies to the next are determined by the higher education institution and the requirements specified in the study programme. Students must usually pass the majority of examinations by the end of the academic year (one or two examinations may be left for the following year). Students may apply for revision of assessment or they may request a new assessment for a better result. The requirements for completion of studies are decided by higher education institutions and are set in the study programme plan when accredited. A diploma thesis is usually required at the conclusion of studies and, in some cases, also final examinations.

Qualifications awarded to students upon the completion of programmes are determined by the higher education institution and study programmes in line with the Act on professional and scientific titles. Students receive a diploma stating the acquired title.

The general degrees are:

- first-cycle degree (*diploma prve stopnje*) requiring 180 to 240 credit points (three to four years of study)
- second-cycle degree (*magisterij stroke*) requiring 120 or 60 credits (equivalent to five years cumulative duration of full time studies)
- third-cycle degree (*doktorat*) requiring 180 credits in addition to *magisterij*.

All grades attained from courses and the diploma thesis are included in the Diploma Supplement. The diploma thesis can take the form of an artistic production (a concert or performance). Higher education institutions recognise students' prior learning and verify their knowledge, skills and competences acquired in formal or non-formal settings or by informal learning.

6.2.5 Guidance and counselling

Each upper secondary school has a counselling service whose duties include career counselling and advising pupils with regard to their choice of tertiary education institution. Higher education institutions organise information days, open days, career fairs and issue transparent information about their studies. Some higher education institutions established their own career centres which offer students career counselling, help with planning the right study paths, tutoring and enable communication with alumni.

The employment service of Slovenia also offers career counselling, however, it is mainly for adults and the unemployed. Since 1998, centres for information and career guidance complement traditional forms of guidance within schools. They offer the service of advice for educational and professional choices to the wider public, including youth and adults as well as supporting career advisors and other counsellors at institutions. Centres also give information and issue publications on different occupations, life as an employee, educational opportunities and the options and availability of financial support for education and training.

6.2.6 Academic staff

The main categories of higher education teachers are the following: assistant professors (*docent*), professors (*izredni profesor*), full professors (*redni profesor*) and lecturers (*lector*). Lecturers in professional colleges can also be given by junior lecturers (*predavatelj*) and senior lecturers (*višji predavatelj*). Lecturers and lecturers are required to hold a *magisterij* and pedagogical skills, while professors are required to have a scientific doctorate in addition to pedagogical skills. There are also part-time teachers and visiting lecturers. Teaching, research (or artistic development) and administration are part of the work of all categories of positions.

All academic staff are elected on the basis of regulations and criteria, set by the higher education institution. A special election process called *habilitacija* enables candidates to obtain one of the titles of higher education teaching. The procedure is conducted by the higher education institution on the basis of its own rules and is renewed every five years. The title of full professor is, however, permanent. Universities elect candidates autonomously. The Senate of the Council of Higher Education, responsible for the *habilitacija*, gives consent to appointments at single higher education institutions which are not members of a university.

Higher education institutions independently decide on the establishment of chairs, professional bodies and the appointment of staff. The Management Board of public higher education institutions includes representatives of the founder and employers. The distribution of tasks is decided internally by the institution and according to its rules. Teaching, research and/or artistic development are normally an important part of all positions.

7. CONTINUING EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Continuing education in Slovenia is a wide ranging and diverse form of education and training which includes formal specialised education and non-formal education and training. It includes:

- 'second chance' education, such as *matura* courses, vocational courses and master craftsmen examinations,
- the certification system for the assessment and award of national vocational qualifications, and
- non-formal education and training.

7.1. 'Second chance' education

Matura preparation courses and vocational courses have been designed for young people and adults who either failed initial education and wish to complete upper secondary education in a second attempt, or wish to reconsider their future career. This kind of education is considered a continuation of formal upper secondary schooling and another pathway to upper secondary school certificate. It is regulated by: the *Gimnazija* Act (1996; last revised 2007), the Vocational Education and Training Act (2006) and the *Matura* Act (2003; last revised 2007). The same rules apply for these courses as for the upper secondary education of youth. For more information see Section 4.

Adults, who have completed vocational education in the past and have three or more years of work experience and wish to progress, are given the opportunity to prove their mastery of trade. The Rules on Master Craftsman Examinations (2009) regulate the examinations for acquiring the title of a Master. The award of Master enables the holder to become a trainer of apprentices or even to continue his/her education at a higher vocational level. Before taking the Master Craftsman examinations, candidates usually complete a short preparatory course.

7.2. Certification system

The system of Certification of National Vocational Qualifications has been designed for youth and adults who wish to assess competences that were acquired informally or through their work.

7.2.1 Policy and legislative framework

The certification system, as regulated by the National Vocational Qualifications Act of 2000 (amendments in 2003, 2006, 2007), is seen as an additional option alongside the traditional VET. The Act specifies the procedures and the institutions bearing responsibility for the preparation of standards and catalogues of knowledge and skills, the conditions and procedures of assessment and the award of qualifications. In obtaining the certificate, the candidates acquire a qualification which proves their competences. They can use the certified qualification when seeking a particular job.

The aims of the certification system are: to provide a quicker and more flexible response to the needs of the labour market, to increase economic effectiveness, to improve the adaptability of the economy, and to address social inclusion and reduce the unemployment rate.

7.2.2 Distribution of responsibilities

Stakeholders of the certification system are many and include the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs, the Centre for Vocational Education and Training with its National Reference Point for

Vocational Qualifications, the Adult Education Centre, the National Examinations Centre, the Employment Office, and other ministries, chambers and trade unions.

The basis for the certification of vocational competences are occupational standards, launched by employers' organisations or schools, Chambers, ministries and trade unions, and are discussed by the Council of Experts for Vocational Education and approved by the Minister of Labour, Family and Social Affairs. The Minister appoints members of vocational field commissions from the list of established experts and the representatives of Chambers, ministries and trade unions. Commissions ensure the development and update of occupational standards and develop the qualification structure in a certain occupational field. Research, development, counselling and technical support is provided by the Centre for Vocational Education and Training, the Adult Education Centre and the National Examinations Centre.

The procedures for assessing and certifying vocational qualifications are performed by registered contractors, such as, business educational centres, schools, adult education organisations and chambers. They must meet the prescribed conditions. The registration of contractors is regulated by the National Examinations Centre. The registered contractors establish commissions for the assessment and certification of vocational qualifications; members should hold a license from the National Examinations Centre.

7.2.3 Financing

The institutions involved in the operation of the Certification system are normally financed from the State budget. Candidates who apply for assessment only pay for material costs of assessment according to the Rules issued by the Minister of Labour, Family and Social affairs.

7.2.4 Programmes and providers

The national vocational qualification is a publicly recognised qualification which is necessary to pursue a specific part of an occupation, and therefore is based on the appropriate vocational standard. Vocational standards also serve as the basis for the preparation of formal vocational education programmes which are delivered by vocational schools. A formal vocational education programme consists of several modules; each module is derived from a particular vocational standard. Various vocational standards comprise one formal vocational programme. Students who do not entirely complete the formal programme can provide evidence that they have acquired the competences corresponding to a specific programme module outside the regular school system. They need to prove that they are able to perform in a particular job. Learning outcomes based on vocational standards are defined for each qualification regardless of how it is acquired: by completing the whole vocational programme or by completing a part of the programme (one module) or by accumulating work experience. In the latter case, the Certification System is used. Candidates can prove their competences before the relevant commission. Content elements are the same as in formal vocational education programmes.

In some cases, new qualifications are developed which are not derived from the existing vocational education programmes, especially at lower levels of difficulty and complexity. Such qualifications usually respond to current labour market needs. The contents, methods and measures of the assessment of knowledge and skills are written and published in the catalogues.

A network of institutions and bodies, registered by the National Examination Centre, enable individuals to obtain a formal recognition or certification for the knowledge and skills they have acquired. Applications from candidates are dealt with by the relevant commission which examines submitted documents and other evidence or the candidate's portfolio and determines whether the candidate meets all the requirements defined by the catalogue of specified occupational competences. If he/she

meets the prescribed requirements, the commission certifies their vocational qualification and awards them a certificate. If the candidates do not meet the requirements defined by the catalogue, they undergo an assessment of their knowledge, skills and competences. In this procedure the candidates prove knowledge that is not evident from their documents. After successfully accomplishing the assessment, the candidates are awarded a certificate.

7.2.5 Quality Assurance

The control over the professional standards and the legality of institutions involved in the recognition and the award of qualifications is performed by the National Inspectorate of Labour.

7.2.6 Guidance and Counselling

There are several centres and points for vocational orientation and guidance in Slovenia. Guidance and counselling is provided also by national and regional Employment Offices. The provider of the certification and assessment of national vocational qualifications ensures that candidates receive guidance and information on the possibilities and conditions of the procedures. With the assistance of a counsellor, candidates collect documents and other evidence required for the certification of a vocational qualification and prepare their portfolio.

7.2.7 Teachers and trainers

Members of assessment commissions hold an appropriate degree in education according to the field of vocational qualifications and a license of the National Examinations Centre which must be renewed every five years. They must possess an appropriate diploma in the field of education that corresponds to those defined by the catalogue of standards of vocational knowledge and skills. The catalogues are approved by the Minister of Education on the proposal of the Council of Experts for Vocational Education.

7.3. Non-formal education and training

Non-formal education and training includes various forms and types of provision which do not lead to a higher qualification:

- general training includes courses that raise the cultural level of the population, increase literacy, language competencies and so forth,
- advanced vocational training or supplementary education in higher education, and in-service training in sectors, such as teacher training, culture, health, agriculture, social work, and so on.

7.3.1 Policy and legislative framework

Non-formal education and training is intended for those who simply wish to acquire new skills, or who wish to refresh, expand, update or broaden their skills. Such skills are not certified, nevertheless, the legislation on vocational education and tertiary education does include principles and mechanisms to facilitate recognition, certification and accreditation of knowledge and skills acquired in non-formal education. In addition, the legislation requires that schools and higher education institutions provide programmes of non-formal education (supplementary training) as part of their regular activities. The non-formal section of education is an important part of the adult education strategy and lifelong learning policy in Slovenia. The non-formal education sector is governed mainly by the following policy documents, strategies and legislation: the *Resolution on the Master Plan for Adult Education in the Republic of Slovenia until 2010* and the yearly adopted *Programmes of Adult Education*; the *National*

Strategy of Lifelong Learning, issued by the Minister of Education (2007); the *Adult Education Act* (1996; last revised 2006); and the legislation of other sectors of the economy and society.

7.3.2 Distribution of responsibilities

The central and local authorities, together with the different organisers of education, are responsible for ensuring activities are in line with national goals and guidelines, defined by the *National Strategy* and the *Resolution of the Parliament*. The ministries directly involved in education issues are: the Ministry of Education and Sport; the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology; and the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs.

The Slovenian Institute for Adult Education (established in 1991) is responsible for the development, research, guidance, information and promotion of adult education. The Institute is also involved in evaluation projects, follow-up, monitoring and supervision activities.

The National Council of Experts for Adult Education is a body appointed by the Government and is responsible for monitoring and evaluating the development of adult education. The Council also proposes and approves programmes and catalogues of knowledge and skills and advises the ministers and the Government.

7.3.3 Financing

The main document which determines the budget and financing of various forms of non-formal education is the Annual Plan of Adult Education (APAE), prepared by the Ministries of Education and of Labour and approved by the Government. There are three main mechanisms in place to regulate the distribution of public finances to non-formal education providers:

- regular financing of the network of institutions (peoples' universities, regional guidance centres, study circles mentors' network, University of the Third age),
- official initiation for tenders for the provision of training programmes,
- financing the institutes that organise and/or provide non-formal education: Slovenian Institute for Adult Education, National Institute for Vocational Education and Training, National Institute for General Education, National School for Leadership in Education, National Examination Centre, Centre for Out-of-School Activities.

Additionally, there are substantial financial means earmarked for different target groups and provided by other ministries. The major part of sources aimed at job related training is provided by employers themselves and by the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs as an instrument of active employment policy.

7.3.4 Programmes and providers of non-formal education and training

Providers of non-formal education are:

- adult education institutions, such as, peoples' universities and in-company training centres (for example, school for flight controllers, centre for training military staff, and so on);
- schools and higher education institutions which provide supplementary education programmes, refresher courses and the like;
- private schools specialised in a certain field of training which operate on a commercial basis, for example, foreign language schools, riding schools, and schools of rhetoric;

- other institutions and organisations, whose main activity is not education and training (libraries, museums, theatres, and other centres of culture; political organisations and parties; organisations for the rural and agricultural sector of the population; organisations of local communities; organisations for leisure time; professional organisations; organisations for environmental protection; social welfare organisations; organisations for the disabled; organisations for helping families, parents and consorts; organisations for tourism and holiday organisations; organisations of seniors; organisations of housewives; and organisations of workers temporarily employed in foreign countries).

Programs fully subsidised by the government include, for example, adult literacy programs (such as, communication in the native language, mathematics, social skills, and learning-to-learn programs) and the Learning for Young Adults project. The latter is a program which is aimed at young adults who have dropped out of the regular school system. Learning takes place hands-on, throughout the project which is decided upon by the young person together with his or her mentor and the results of which are presented to the local community.

Other programmes of non-formal education and training are drawn up by the institutions themselves. Examples of courses include: education and training for the unemployed, education for democracy, foreign language learning, Slovene language for migrants, education for quality of life, education for the implementation of the special rights of minorities, education for adults with special needs, and other types of general adult education.

7.3.5 Quality assurance in non-formal education and training

The evaluation and monitoring of non-formal education that is provided by people universities, schools and higher education institutions, is regulated to the same standards as formal education. Various forms for supervision and evaluation of non-formal education are in place, these include verification of public institutions; regulatory procedures for the adoption of supplementary and alternative programmes; obligatory Teaching Certification Examination for teaching and other professional support staff. The self-evaluation obligation includes people's universities. The Slovenian Institute for Adult Education has developed a model of self-evaluation for adult education under the name *Offering Quality Education to Adults*.

Control over compliance with laws, regulations and other documents regulating the organisation and earmarked expenditure of public funds and the provision of education, is conducted by the Inspectorate of the Republic of Slovenia for Education and Sport which is a body within the Ministry of Education.

In order to assure quality in education in general, the minister appoints the Council for Quality and Evaluation (2008). The Council coordinates the implementation of new programmes; cooperates with institutions that carry out self-evaluation projects; determines strategies and procedures of evaluations; selects topics for contractual research (commissioned evaluation studies); and reports to the Minister(s), other Councils, and to the wider public.

Bodies responsible for quality assurance at the national level are: the Council of the Republic of Slovenia for Higher Education, including the Senate for Accreditation, the Senate for Evaluation and the Senate for Habilitation; the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology (registration of higher education institutions in the registry); the Ministry of Education and Sport (higher vocational colleges); and the Slovenian Research Agency (for research organisations, programmes and projects). A special agency for quality assurance has not yet been established.

7.3.6 Guidance and counselling in non-formal education and training

There are two well organised guidance and counselling networks in Slovenia. The fourteen guidance centres for adult education were established on the initiative of the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education. Their main task is to inform the adult population about learning opportunities and to assist them in choosing the most suitable career path or appropriate program. The second network includes the Information and Career Counselling Centre which covers the whole country, through its information centres, and operates as part of the National Employment Office. These centres provide information on education programmes and offer assistance in career planning and job seeking.

Information and counselling is also provided by educational institutions which employ counselling staff for this purpose, by chambers and other organisations specialising in career counselling.

7.3.7 Teachers and trainers in non-formal education and training

The same regulations for education and training apply to teachers in schools, higher education institutions and peoples' universities as in the rest of the public system. Non-formal education and training provided outside the regular school system is less regulated in respect to teachers' qualifications. The organisers have a high degree of autonomy.

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Higher Education Act (Official Consolidated Text)

List of useful links

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