



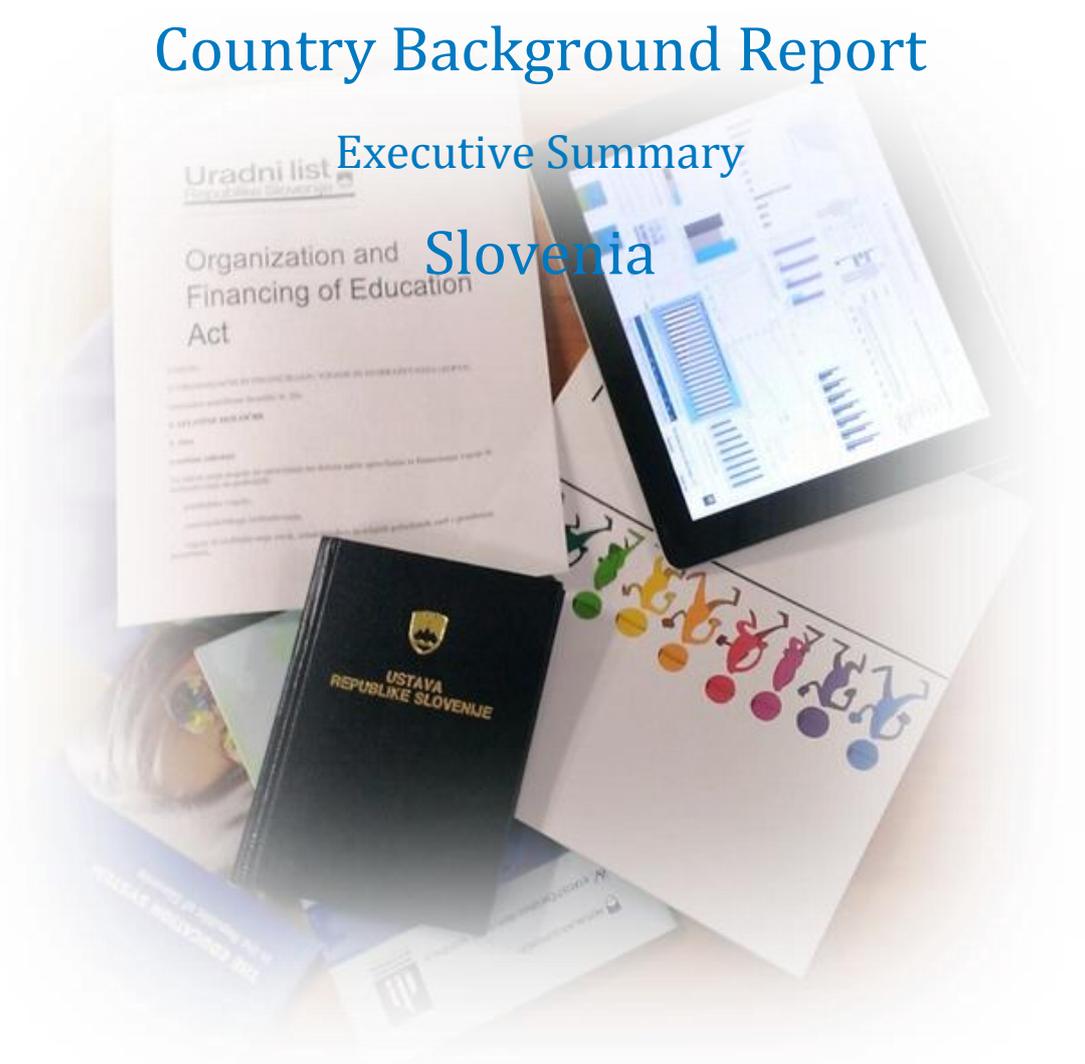
REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION,
SCIENCE AND SPORT

OECD Review of Policies to Improve the Effectiveness of Resource Use in Schools

Country Background Report

Executive Summary

Slovenia



This report was prepared by a national steering committee led by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport as an input to the OECD Review of Policies to Improve the Effectiveness of Resource Use in Schools (School Resources Review). The OECD and the European Commission (EC) have established a partnership for the Project, whereby participation costs of countries which are part of the European Union's Erasmus+ programme are partly covered. The participation of Slovenia was organised with the support of the EC in the context of this partnership. The document was prepared in response to guidelines the OECD provided to all countries. The opinions expressed are not those of the OECD or its Member countries. Further information about the OECD Review is available at www.oecd.org/edu/school/schoolresourcesreview.htm.

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The national Context

The Republic of Slovenia, established as an independent state on 25 June 1991, achieved strong and stable growth in the period of transition, especially during the period 1995–2008, reaching an average slightly above 4% of economic growth. The global financial and economic crisis has influenced the Slovenian economy markedly from late 2008 onwards. In the fourth quarter of 2008, Slovenia faced the first decrease of GDP since a decrease in the second quarter of 1993.

In the first half of 2016, Slovenia's GDP increased by 2.5%, compared to the same period of the previous year. Economic growth is largely favourably impacted by a stronger external demand (exports). The country closed the year 2015 with a deficit of 1.117 billion EUR or 2.9% of GDP, the lowest since the economic crisis years. Before the economic crisis in 2008 the deficit amounted to 537.3 million EUR or 1.4% of GDP.

With the economy recovering, the 2015 unemployment rate fell for the second year in a row; however, it remains twice as high as in 2008, i.e., 10.3% in September 2016. Slovenia is also among the countries which failed to raise the share of youth employment to the pre-crisis level.

Legislative amendments to reduce labour market segmentation and increase its flexibility were passed in 2013. The amendments reduced the protection of employment, which, as estimated by the OECD, is reflected in the reduction in the index of protection of regular employment in case of individual dismissal (EPR) from 2.39 to 1.99. This is below the OECD average.

The population of Slovenia was 2 064 188 at the end of 2015. The number increased slightly in 2015; while the number of Slovenian citizens dropped by more than 0.3%, the number of foreign nationals rose by 6.1%. Most of the immigrants come from the territories of the former Yugoslav republics. There are two national minorities, the Italian and the Hungarian National Communities, a Roma Community and several ethnic groups living in Slovenia.

In 2015, 19.2% of the population was at-risk-of-poverty or social exclusion. This means that approximately 385 000 people were exposed to this risk. Compared to the year 2014, it decreased by 1.2%, but remained above the level of 2008, when the effects of the economic crisis were not yet visible. 24 000 more people were exposed to the risk of social exclusion in 2015 than in 2008.

The school system

Slovenian education system is composed of the following levels: ISCED 0 - pre-school education combining early childhood education and care and pre-primary education for children from age 1 to age 6, ISCED 1 and 2 - basic compulsory (integrated primary and lower-secondary) education, ISCED 3 - upper-secondary education, ISCED 5 - short-cycle higher vocational education, ISCED 6 - bachelor's level, ISCED 7 - master's level, and ISCED 8 – doctoral level. Slovenia also has a well-developed system of non-compulsory basic music and ballet education.

Pre-school education in Slovenia caters to children aged one to six or the starting age of compulsory basic education, and is not compulsory. Kindergartens provide education and care in two age groups: children aged 1 to 3 (public kindergartens welcome children from 11 months) and children aged 3 years to basic school age. In addition to care, one of the key objectives of pre-school education in

Slovenia is to provide every child with high quality and age-appropriate learning and social experiences. Pre-school education is provided by public and private kindergartens. Public kindergartens are established by local communities. In the school year 2015/16, pre-school education was provided by 978 kindergartens and their units. Most kindergartens, i.e. 91%, are public; 89 kindergartens, or 9% of all kindergartens, are private. Pre-school education is also provided for children in hospital care.

Primary and lower-secondary education is organised as a single-structure nine-year basic school attended by students aged 6 to 15 years. Children enrol in the first grade of basic school in the year when they reach the age of six. The key basic education goals include providing students the opportunities to acquire knowledge and develop skills consistent with their abilities and interests, fostering personal development, developing the ability for life-long learning, fostering the sense of belonging to one's state, national identity and cultural heritage, as well as educating on common cultural values, human rights, diversity and tolerance, developing skills of communicating in Slovenian and foreign languages, educating for sustainable development, for taking responsibility for one's actions, one's health, for other people, and environment, developing entrepreneurial skills, innovation and creativity. Basic school education is compulsory and financed from public funds. Public basic schools are established by municipalities. There are 452 basic schools in Slovenia, five of those are private (Waldorf, Catholic and Montessori). The Ministry currently covers 85% of the required funds for the implementation of a state-approved basic school education programme in a private school. Four schools in Slovenia provide international basic school programmes; one of them is public. In the school year 2015/2016 539 students were enrolled in such international programmes.

Upper-secondary education lasts from 2 to 5 years and is not compulsory. As a rule, it begins at the age of 15. The main goals of upper-secondary education in Slovenia are to allow the entire population to attain a general educational qualification and an occupation, allowing the largest possible share of the population to attain the highest level of creativity and educational qualification. It encompasses general education, with different types of four-year gimnazija programmes, technical and vocational education. The system of upper-secondary education is centralised; decisions on establishing and financing of upper-secondary schools, and approving and allocating education programmes are adopted at the national level. However, schools and teachers enjoy autonomy (subject to regulations) in some areas, such as implementing teaching content, choosing teaching methods, and managing employment relationships. There are 117 upper-secondary schools in Slovenia, of which 6 are private. There are also 6 special education needs schools.

A major curricular reform was implemented between 2008 and 2011. VET curricula (2008/2011) were revised to introduce a competence-based approach and a modular structure in teaching and learning, as well as increase the share of practical training. Following the reform of vocational education (2008–2011), the share of practical training in the work place (employer based practical training) increased and 20% of the curriculum is now designed in cooperation with social partners, particularly local companies.

The Law on the Slovenian Qualifications Framework entered into force in January 2016, which provides for a unified qualifications system in the Republic of Slovenia (Slovenian Qualifications Framework - SQF). The emphasis of the upcoming vocational education reform to be carried out in

2016-2021 is on developing models of practical training, which will be adapted to the specific conditions and needs in Slovenia, and will be implemented in close cooperation with social partners.

Governance of the education system is regulated by a number of laws, regulations and guidelines. Education policy is defined by the central government and adopted by the parliament. As a rule, norms and standards are determined by national authorities in close cooperation with social partners and are in force at the national level. Since 2012, the preparation of regulations, their monitoring, analysis and implementation for all levels of education are under the responsibility of one ministry: the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports. Other ministries (mostly the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Culture) and government bodies are involved in education policy development and implementation, among these the National Education Institute, the Inspectorate for Education and Sport of the Republic of Slovenia, the National Examination Centre, the National Institute for Vocational Education and Training, the National School of Leadership in Education and the Educational Research Institute. Several councils of experts established by the government, such as the Council of the Republic of Slovenia for General Education, the Council of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational and Professional Education, the Council of the Republic of Slovenia for Adult Education and the Council of the Republic of Slovenia for Higher Education, support the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport in specific areas of education planning and implementing education policies.

The state also has a regulatory and supervisory role in educational institutions established by a municipality (kindergartens, basic schools). The state oversees the operation of the education system with financial mechanisms, such as the system for balancing local budgets and the provision of funds for salaries of employees. As public institutions have no property of their own (they only manage assets of the founder), it is the founder who is responsible for investment and development. The state and municipalities (with the financial support from the state) perform the development and investment roles.

Regarding the contribution of parents to their children's education, Slovenia ranks somewhere around the average of OECD countries. Data from the OECD for 2013 show that private contributions amounted to 3.7% of GDP for pre-school to tertiary education.

The data on the educational attainment of 25-64 year-olds (EAG 2016, Table A 1.1.) show for Slovenia that 1 % of this population have below upper secondary level of education, 12% lower-secondary, 57% upper-secondary, and 31% tertiary education as the highest level attained. In the population aged 25 - 34, 54% are upper-secondary school graduates (of whom 42% have completed a professionally or vocationally oriented educational programme) and 41% have completed a tertiary education programme (EAG 2016, Table 1.4.).

The data on the performance of the education system based on international research show that the achievements of Slovenian students are (statistically significantly) above the OECD average in mathematics and science literacy. While reading literacy was assessed below the OECD average in the PISA 2009 and PISA 2012 surveys, the PISA 2015 survey results place Slovenia markedly above the OECD average in these competencies. In TIMSS 2011, the achievements in mathematics and science of four- and eight-graders were above average, while in science the eight-graders were sixth (behind Asian countries and Finland). Good performance of Slovenian students in those subject areas have been confirmed by the TIMSS 2015 survey results. The ICILS study (information and computer

literacy, 8th grade) ranked Slovenian students slightly above the international average. However, a vast majority of students (84%) in Slovenia reached only the second level of computer and information literacy or less. The ICCS survey results (civic education, 8th and 9th grades) showed that the achievement of civic knowledge in 2009 was above the international average, while in 1999 there was no statistically significant difference compared to the international average. The level of confidence in individual institutions normally associated with democracy was lower than the international average and students showed a slightly lower level of willingness to engage in the fundamental democratic process of elections than students at the international level.

Main challenges for the future are revolving around the heightened complexity of the educational system which consequently demands a higher and faster adaptability of teachers, educational processes, and educational institutions along with their management. With this, a challenge remains in how to appropriately value and evaluate teachers' endeavours and their professional development. Such circumstances along with the austerity measures of the Fiscal Balance Act, which were implemented in 2012 and are still partially in force, hinder further efforts for efficiency and quality of the educational system.

Governance of resource use in schools

Public expenditure on formal education (measured in accordance with the UOE methodology) in 2014 amounted to EUR 1,991 million, or 5.3% of GDP. 96% of the total public expenditure for formal education was allocated directly to educational institutions, 4% was spent on public transfers to households and other private entities. The largest share of public expenditure was allocated for compulsory basic education (43%). Trends in public spending on education show a decline over the past years.

The reasons for this decline lie in the austerity measures imposed by the Fiscal Balance Act (FBA) adopted in 2012. Although austerity measures were adopted for all public expenditure (public sector) and did not specifically target the educational system, the education sector was still affected. Some of these measures included restrictions on the creation of additional classes, introduction of a +2-standard for group size in kindergartens (the standard allowed 40 children per group, the FBA allowing for 2 more children to be allocated to a group), cutting material costs in schools or keeping a linear budget for professional development of teachers. There were also changes in the methodology for organising after-school classes, amendments to expanding teachers' workload in order to minimise new employment, closing down or merging (small) schools and residence halls for students.

The educational system in Slovenia is financed from the state and municipalities budgets. At the level of pre-school education (ISCED 0), municipalities are the sole funders except for extra costs relating to bilingual classes (the Italian and Hungarian national communities and Roma children), special needs students in kindergartens, and 50% of salaries for kindergarten teachers who work with children in hospital care. These are funded by the state.

At the level of basic schools (ISCED 1-2), the central authority covers operating costs which are related to the educational programme, local authorities cover operating costs which are not directly related to the educational programme. Upper-secondary education (ISCED 3) is fully financed by the state.

The state's share in all the resources allocated to education in 2014 amounted to 75%, while the share of the local level was 25%. The state is the predominant funder in the areas of basic school (82%) and upper-secondary education (99%), while the municipalities finance pre-school education (92%). For basic and upper-secondary schools (ISCED 1-3), the local level can give additional funds for higher standards of education and other additional services.

Public pre-school institutions are established and partly 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. At all other levels of education, there are no tuition fees in public schools and parents' contributions are not compulsory.

Public service in the field of education is organised as a public network, consisting of public kindergartens and schools, private kindergartens and schools as well as individuals who are registered (child-minders). The public network of basic schools must provide all children with the opportunity of compulsory basic education; a public network of music schools is organised so as to enable students to attend basic music education and prepare for further music education.

Efficiency and effectiveness of the educational system is measured by achieving indicators defined by the Organisation and Financing of Education Act (OFEA). These include: attained level of education, drop-out rate, share of young people attending schools, share of adults participating in life-long learning. Indicators resonate with those proposed by the Europe 2020 strategy such as the target for early school leaving to be less than 10% and the share of 30 to 34 year olds having completed tertiary education reaching at least 40%. Slovenia has reached both goals, having set its national targets in early school leaving at 5%.

In terms of measuring efficiency and effectiveness, schools implement self-evaluation, discuss and adopt reports on the realisation of the annual work plan and the financial and human resources plans. However, achieving proposed goals does not influence the budget planning or allocation of funds.

There are several mechanisms that allow schools to exchange information and experience, which also include the effective management of resources: the cooperation of schools with the National Education Institute, the Association of School Leaders, the Educational Research Institute and other institutions that do monitoring, analyses, research, reports and projects in the field of education.

One of the current challenges relating to the governance of school resources is the funding of the implementation of a state-approved basic school education programme in a private school, which is according to the OFEA entitled to 85% of the funding received by a public school. The challenge of raising financing of private schools to 100% from public funds with austerity measures still in place affects the question of and efforts towards assuring appropriate conditions, including remuneration for teachers and educational staff in an ever more complex environment of public schools.

Resource distribution

The largest part of the funds for education, 43% in 2014, was earmarked for basic education, followed by pre-school education with 22% showing a visible growth in 2012 due to a methodology

change in the integration of expenditure into the statistics. In the field of upper-secondary education, in 2015, approximately 37% of financial means were earmarked for the implementation of general-education programmes, and 63% for other types of upper-secondary education. The share of funding for general programmes has decreased recently (in 2013, it was around 41%), while it has increased for vocational programmes (in 2013, it accounted for about 59% of all funds for upper-secondary education).

As mentioned, the financing of pre-school educational institutions is left to the local authorities and parents. For the part of basic-school education financing where means are provided by the local community (costs not directly related to the implementation of educational programmes), the allocation of funds to schools is also left to the discretion of the local level. For the part of basic-school education financing where means are provided by the state (costs directly related to the implementation of educational programmes) the allocation of funds is calculated by using a formula. The formula takes into account the number of participants, the location of the school (only for funds for professional development of teachers), the number of teachers and their qualifications (salary grades) and the number of students with special needs. In other words, these criteria are based on the actual needs of schools and the real costs incurred by them. The criteria also incorporate the number of students with special educational needs (SEN students) and pupil's linguistic background (migrants, minorities, Roma). The formula does not take into account socio-economic backgrounds of students and is the same for the whole country.

The state also finances the upper-secondary level according to a formula that similarly takes into account the number of students and the type of educational programme. Each programme has its own value, which is calculated upon several factors, such as number of teachers and support staff. Again, the formula does not take into account socio-economic background of students.

Private educational institutions co-financed from public funds, fall under the same rules which apply to public educational institutions. Public financing of private schools is intended to cover the costs of implementing educational programmes, including salaries of teachers and other employees and material costs for the provision of education. Private schools must not use funds for purposes other than the implementation of educational programmes for which they have received funding.

The initial amount for private schools is calculated in the same way as it is for public schools. Private schools (kindergartens) at ISCED level 0 get 85% of the calculated amount, private schools at ISCED levels 1 - 2 get 85% of that amount and private schools at ISCED level 3 get either 100% or 85% of that amount (depending on the legislation in force when the school was established). Private schools do not get funds for capital investments.

Between school years 1998/1999 to 2015/2016, the number of upper-secondary school students decreased by almost 30%, which represents approximately 50 average-sized upper-secondary schools with an average of 629 students. In anticipation of an increased enrollment in the coming years, the schools which were most affected by the decline in enrollment generations in recent years, were preserved by means of various measures, such as additional financing, reorganisation and the distribution of some new educational programmes.

The state has been participating in the provision of textbooks to basic school students for approximately 20 years. Textbook funds, from which the vast majority of Slovenian students borrow

textbooks, were originally designed so that a quarter of the price of new textbooks was annually paid for by parents, while schools independently took care of renewing textbook funds. In 2007, the parents' share was taken over by the state, and ever since the children have borrowed all textbooks in schools free of charge. Recently (2015 - 2017), the state has allocated additional funds for a full renewal of the textbook fund. The textbook market otherwise guarantees professional autonomy as teachers independently choose between competing textbooks of various publishers. 43 e-textbooks are available free of charge for general or core subjects in compulsory basic and upper-secondary schools.

Between 2009 and 2013, a system of e-education was developed, which included training of teachers and school leaders (to achieve the e-standard). In 2011, the first four pilot e-textbooks were designed, now there are more than 40 of them for basic subjects in natural sciences in basic school.

In 2015, there were 5 174 preschool teachers, 5 727 preschool-teacher assistants; while there were 6 826 teachers in the first and second triads (educational cycles, each covering three grades) and 6 957 teachers in the third triad in 2014.

Pre-school teachers complete at least a three-year qualification at bachelor's level. Teachers in primary and secondary schools complete, with a few exceptions, a five-year qualification at master's level. Statutory conditions of the qualifications for teachers in primary and secondary schools are mostly the same. Teachers of specialised subjects and teachers of practical skills in vocational and adult education must fulfill additional requirements of relevant practical experience, professional skills or specialised knowledge. In addition to the level of education, the law also stipulates pedagogical-andragogical competences for teaching in kindergartens and schools. Teachers in vocational and technical schools are required to have working experience as well. Further training courses last mostly one year (up to 60 ECTS credits) and do not confer degrees, but professional qualifications. They are designed for those who already have degrees obtained in study programmes of the first and second degrees and wish to upgrade their professional qualifications.

Teachers and other teaching staff on all educational levels are civil servants. They are employed in accordance with the procedure provided by law. Salaries of public servants, labour relations and retirement are uniformly regulated for the entire country. The Employment Relationship Act provides for employment with entering and terminating the contract, the common 40-hour working time, the types and forms of employment, rights, obligations and responsibilities in relation to working time, pay, leave, etc. Teachers obtain jobs in two ways: by applying to public tenders of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport for trainee positions, or to public tenders of vacancies put out by kindergartens and schools. In that case, the selection is done by school leaders and tender commissions.

There are several types of aid for students and students: subsidised transportation and school meals, and some additional forms of assistance, depending on the socio-economic status of their families.

Education of children with special needs (SEN children) takes place in regular basic schools and specialised facilities for students with profound impairments or disabilities when regular schools cannot provide appropriate adaptation and assistance. These children are included in special education programmes implemented by institutions for children with special needs. Schools with

regular programmes are provided with additional resources for students with special needs who are included in their programmes. Institutions for children with special needs are funded separately.

One of the challenges for resource distribution is the allocation of funds for pre-school education. Whereas the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport strives to achieve a high quality pre-school education, which includes more than child-minding, the municipalities argue that funds allocated by the state do not suffice for reaching such goals. Another challenge for resource distribution in pre-school education is the discrepancy between the municipalities and the Ministry of Finance regarding the development of the criteria for determining the poll tax in municipalities, which is the basis for additional financing of municipalities by the state (appropriate use).

In basic education the main challenge is the provision of after-school classes. There are differences in views between the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport and schools regarding the number of after-school classes that should be offered. Parents, and consequently schools, have an interest in increasing the number of those classes to assure the care of their children while they have duties, while the ministry requires a more efficient use of resources. An increase in the provision of after-school classes implies a higher workload for teachers. With the stagnation of funds available for education, the increased and more complex workload of teachers is not reflected in their salaries.

In the field of upper-secondary education, the largest part of funding is obtained according to the formula, which, however, cannot take into account all the specificities of individual schools. Schools give initiatives to change or supplement the formula, so that it does take into account the specificities of individual schools (empty units, the location and importance of the school to the environment, the employee structure, etc). In upper-secondary education, the main challenge is therefore how to include specificities of particular schools and their goals, which are not related to the number of students, in an existing system of financing (formula).

Resource utilisation

Instruction in schools is conducted in classes and study groups (*študijski krožki*). Norms mostly determine the maximum number of students in a class or group, exceptionally they determine the minimum number of students required to form a class or group. The class can include a maximum of 28 students. There are lower standards for classes in bilingual basic schools and basic schools with Italian as the language of instruction, for classes which include students with disabilities or Roma students, and for combined classes.

In upper-secondary education, the norms for the formation of classes are generally higher than the norms for the formation of classes in basic education. Special additional resources are allocated for the work with students with special needs at the system level.

The Slovenian education system does not have any specific programmes at the lower-secondary level. The so-called lower-secondary level forms part of a single nine-year basic education. Learners decide on the branch of their education after completing basic school, choosing between enrolling in upper-secondary general education (the gimnazija programmes) or in vocational and technical upper-secondary education. In the school year 2016/2017, upper-secondary schools offered possibilities to enroll into 13 short vocational programmes, 62 vocational education programmes, 47 technical programmes, 29 vocational-technical programmes, 3 vocational courses, 6 programmes of

professional gimnazija, one of them - the art gimnazija - offering 4 different branches and 5 modules, 5 programmes of general gimnazija and 1 programme of the matura course. Students who successfully complete basic school are free to choose where they will enrol. Vocational guidance in basic and upper-secondary schools is coordinated by the counselling service, which offers professional information, diagnostic, vocational counselling, vocational education, information feedback and monitoring of trainees.

The school year lasts for both basic and upper-secondary education from 1 September to 31 August. The allocation of classes and the duration and distribution of school holidays is determined by the Minister responsible for education, with the Rules on the school calendar and with annual detailed instructions for their execution.

Organised educational work (instruction and other planned educational activities) takes place in basic schools and gimnazijas for 38 weeks maximum (approximately 190 days in a school year), in the 9th year of basic school and 4th year of gimnazija for 35 weeks (approximately 175 days in a school year). In vocational and technical upper-secondary schools, organised educational work can take a maximum of 42 weeks (approximately 210 days in a school year).

The school year is divided into assessment periods; in basic schools there are two assessment periods per year: the first lasts from 1 September to 31 January and the second from 1 February to 24 June, or to 15 June for 9th year students.

There are two assessment periods in gimnazijas and in vocational and technical schools; the first runs from 1 September to 15 January and the second from 16 January until the completion of classes, that is, until June 24, except for students of vocational schools with individual learning contracts with employers - they end up practical training with the employer in the second half of July, depending on the number of additional weeks of practical training. In their final year of schooling, students end their instruction in the last days of May; the exact date is determined by the Minister, responsible for education, with a yearly directive on the implementation of the school calendar.

The allocation of school holidays and school-free days is the same for primary and secondary schools. The total number of hours of instruction for each subject is determined by educational programmes, the maximum number of hours per week for students is limited by law.

In basic schools, students' weekly obligation is determined by educational cycles. In the first triad (educational cycle from 1st to 3rd year) the obligation is a maximum of 24 hours per week; in the second triad (from 4th to 6th year) a maximum of 26 hours per week; and in the third triad (from 7th to 9th year) a maximum of 30 hours per week.

In gimnazijas and vocational and technical schools the students' obligation, without hours of sports education, can be a maximum of 30 hours per week; the extent of all forms of educational work may not exceed 36 hours per week. In vocational schools, theoretical and practical education can amount to no more than 8 hours daily, while the weekly load should not exceed 38 hours.

Schools carry out programmes on the basis of the Catalogue of compulsory elective courses, prepared by the National Education Institute or created by schools themselves. They carry them out by themselves or in cooperation with external contractors. Elective courses give students opportunities to acquire knowledge and skills according to their individual wishes and inclinations in

accordance with their values and life goals. Compulsory electives are activities that the school offers students very autonomously, and are usually carried out in a concise form.

The school system is facing various pressures and ambitions to increase pupil time obligation on a daily and weekly basis. There are particularly noticeable and persistent attempts to increase teaching hours of certain subjects (second foreign language as a compulsory subject, science subjects, technical and computer literacy, more hours of sports in basic school). Currently there are intensive deliberations underway on changing the concept of the extended programme. The goal would be to develop a different model of additional organised activities that would replace the current concept.

Teachers' full working time under the general law is 40 hours per week. Full-time includes the right to a 30-minute break for lunch. The school leader can assign to a teacher additional 5 hours of instruction within the 40-hour working week, which is recompensated by a salary supplement. School leaders can also reduce the load of a teacher for 3 hours a week and reduce the salary accordingly. The 40-hour working week includes a statutory obligation of 30-hour educational work of pre-school teachers in kindergarten, and of 35-hour obligation of their assistants.

Within the 40-hour working week, teachers have a statutory teaching load defined by teaching hours per week. A lesson in school generally lasts 45 minutes. The teaching load of a teacher in basic school is 22 hours, in after-school classes it amounts to 25 hours. Teachers of the language of instruction (Slovenian, Hungarian and Italian) in basic schools teach 21 hours per week.

The teaching obligation of the teachers of theoretical subjects in upper-secondary schools is 20 hours, with a few exceptions. Teachers' work obligation generally comprises preparation for classes, instruction, other individual and group work with students and correcting and evaluating their products. In addition, teachers must work with colleagues, with professional bodies of the school, with experts outside the school and parents. Teachers must perform the tasks of the class teacher, a mentor to their students and to trainee teachers. Their duties also include arranging cabinets, collections, educational workshops, gyms, playgrounds, plantations, etc. They participate in in-service teacher training, organise cultural, sporting and other actions, prepare and lead field trips, excursions, competitions, open-air schools, camping, etc. Individual tasks are not time-codified.

In-service teacher training is a right and duty of all professionals in education; it is defined by law and the collective agreement for the activity of education and further regulated by rules. The collective agreement provides for the right of the teaching staff to 5 days of in-service teacher training per year, or up to 15 days in three years. The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport organises and finances in-service teacher training with the aim of their professional development, the development of public kindergartens and schools and the development of the whole education system, thereby increasing its quality and efficiency.

Educators can seek the help of a specially organised counseling service; furthermore, they have several sources of help and counselling throughout their time of service. Trainees consult with a mentor who is assigned to them during the traineeship or in the period of initial work and their preparation for the teaching certification examination. Educational advisers of the National Education Institute constitute another permanently accessible source of professional assistance. The units of the Institute are positioned in all regions of the country. Teachers' circles are organised according to school subjects and subject areas, where pre-school and school teachers meet, develop

new ideas, share experience and solve expert problems. Teachers of vocational schools can be linked with pedagogical advisors of the Centre for Vocational Education. Teachers in adult education can rely on the experts of the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education.

Additional assistance is offered by the Slovenian Education Network (SIO), which provides online classrooms for various school subjects and topics. The portal of the online classroom helps each pre-school and school teacher find his or her online community in which to exchange experience, find a list of seminars and advice for his or her area and links to useful addresses.

In general upper-secondary schools, one teacher teaches 13 students on average, while in vocational and technical programmes, he or she teaches 14 students, which is fully in line with the OECD average. In higher vocational education, this ratio is 1:22. In school year 2014/15, the average number of students in a class was 24.7. However, there are significant differences between individual categories of educational programmes.

The managing authority of schools and kindergartens is the institution's council and the management body of the institution is the school leader. A public kindergarten or school can appoint an assistant, who helps the school leader in the performance of management and teaching duties. Institutions may also have an expert council, which deals mainly with the issues of professional work of the institution; decides on expert issues within the mandate set out by the constitutional document; provides expert bases for programmes of work and development of the institution; gives opinions and proposals to the institution's council, director and expert head for the organisation of work and conditions for the development of activities; and performs other tasks determined by law or the constitutional document.

The TALIS survey (2009) showed that Slovenian school leaders often carry out activities associated to the so-called index of educational leadership; the biggest differences in comparison with other countries in the survey appeared in the monitoring of students' work and observation in classrooms, where Slovenian responses achieved maximum values. Slovenia was among the countries which were above the OECD TALIS average within the index of pedagogical management, which also means that Slovenian school leaders worked more together with teachers to eliminate deficiencies and address educational problems and played an important role in informing teachers about the possibilities of updating their knowledge and teaching skills. In terms of leadership style, Slovenia belongs to the group of countries where school leaders largely accept the pedagogical leadership style, but at the same time do not neglect the administrative/management style.

Public institutes were established in order to support the implementation of management and teaching duties of school leaders, with the School for Leadership as the central public institute. The School for Leadership carries out numerous programmes to support school leaders and has an elaborate "lifelong learning system" of school leaders in educational leadership and management.

School leaders' salaries are determined according to the criteria related to the size of the institution (the number of students, programmes, branches, etc.). The school leader's assistant is a legally provided position, where the employee is entirely or partly exonerated from the obligation of teaching or working in the class while performing this function. The position is appropriately evaluated in the wage system.

The kindergarten curriculum (1999) is a national document, intended for kindergarten professionals which provides for professional planning and high-quality pre-school education in kindergarten. It is based on the development-process approach, is open and flexible, it evolves and changes at the implementation level, and allows for a rapid response of children in the kindergarten group, the organisation of life in kindergarten and its interaction with the wider environment. Manuals, teaching materials and aids for kindergarten activities are not prescribed. Kindergarten are autonomous in the procurement of teaching and learning materials and tools, which are available free of charge for the teaching staff.

The child's achievements are not assessed. Pre-school teachers observe, analyse and guide children's learning through play. They encourage children in their learning in a variety of ways, assist them, direct and motivate them, explain and clarify. Parents are given verbal information about their child's achievements.

The basic school programme consists of a mandatory part (compulsory subjects, electives in the third educational triad and class meetings) and an extended one (after-school classes, early-morning care service, additional classes, remedial classes, extracurricular activities), in which students are free to take part or not to take part. The curriculum is set out in the timetable and syllabi for compulsory and elective subjects as well as the guidelines and concepts defining other forms of work with students (early-morning care, after-school classes, extracurricular activities) and optional elective subjects, open-air school and cross-curricular areas, library and IT skills, and other documents guiding the work of the school staff.

Teachers test and assess students' knowledge throughout the time when the school subject is carried out. In the first and second years teachers assess the progress of students with descriptive grades. From the third year onwards teachers assess the achievement of standards of knowledge prescribed by the syllabi, with numerical grades on a scale of one to five, with grade one being negative, others positive.

The national assessments of knowledge at the end of the 6th and 9th years test the knowledge of the mother tongue and mathematics; in year 6 also of the foreign language; and in year 9 of the subject chosen by the minister, responsible for education. Assessments are mandatory for students. Achievements do not affect the grades and represent only additional information on the knowledge of students.

Upper-secondary education is divided into general education, which includes different types of gimnazija and the matura course, and vocational and technical education. General education is intended to prepare students for further education at universities. Vocational and technical education is intended for the acquisition of a profession to enter the labour market, with technical education intended for a continuation of education in tertiary education programmes as well. Changes between vocational and general education tracks are enabled by special one-year courses (*Matura* course and vocational course) funded by the state.

The timetables determine the weekly and annual number of hours for each subject. They slightly differ between various types of gimnazija programmes, but all are characterized by the basic division into compulsory and elective parts. The scopes of the first and the second parts vary according to the type of programme. The compulsory part comprises from 81% (in general gimnazija) to 93% of all

hours (in some orientations of art gimnazijas) with the remaining time left to the discretion of the student. The smallest choice of electives is in the first year, and the largest in the fourth, when students prepare for the matura examination.

Expert Councils for general education and for vocational education and training adopt syllabi or catalogues of knowledge for each subject from the curriculum. In addition to goals and didactic recommendations, the syllabi and catalogues include guidelines on cross-curricular links which help teachers to structure the learning content. Didactic recommendations for each subject also contain guidelines for teachers to use information and communication technology (ICT) in the classroom or homework of students when obtaining information, learning, communicating, preparing presentations etc. and for developing their digital capabilities. There are various forms of teaching - lectures, exercises, seminars, workshops, fieldwork, research camps, seminar papers, etc., where the methods are largely left to the discretion of teachers. They use textbooks and other teaching materials in school. Four in ten teachers in basic schools use ICT in their lessons for more than 25% of the time. In upper-secondary schools about one in two teachers use ICT in their lessons for more than 25% of the time.

General rules on testing and assessing knowledge of upper-secondary school students are determined by the Gimnazije Act and the Act on Vocational and Technical Education, with more specific rules included in the Rules on the assessment of knowledge in upper-secondary schools adopted by the minister, responsible for education. Based on these regulations, each school prepares its own assessment rules established by the school leader after a preliminary hearing in the teachers' assembly.

The system of Quality assessment and assurance in education in Slovenia is based on the internal evaluation of quality, i.e. self-evaluation. Internal evaluation is one of the regular activities of the school. The evaluation can take place at the level of the individual and / or a smaller unit within an educational organisation, as well as at the level of the entire educational institution. In order to support these processes and build a unified national evaluation system in education, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport was in the process of implementing a major pilot project to gradually set up a comprehensive quality assessment and assurance framework at the time of drafting this report. This project is supported with resources from the European Structural Funds.

OFEA stipulates that schools should provide a safe and supportive learning environment, where corporal punishment of children is prohibited together with any other form of violence against and among children and unequal treatment based on gender, sexual orientation, social and cultural backgrounds, religion, race, ethnicity and national origin, and particularities of physical and mental development.

In the implementation of the kindergarten curriculum, educators must observe the principles of the curriculum, as well as be mindful of daily activities in the kindergarten, since they are just as important as written goals and content.

The Elementary School Act provides for the preparation of the school's educational plan, which contains educational activities and forms of cooperation between school and parents and their involvement in the implementation of the educational plan. Educational activities are proactive and preventive activities, counselling, guidance and other activities (praise, recognition, awards,

educational measures, etc.), with which the school develops a safe and supportive environment. The cooperation between school and parents is implemented through school councils which consist of representatives of parents, school employees and the founder of the school.

The fundamental objective of all participants in the educational process is the optimal development of the child. The fundamental objective of the counselling service in kindergarten or school is to support all participants, so that they can achieve the common objective. All children regardless of their individual or group differences have a right to equal opportunities for optimal advancement in education. The counselling service in kindergarten or school is involved in ensuring, establishing and maintaining the conditions for optimum development of every child in kindergarten or school.

Promoting cooperation between teachers and the development of learning communities in schools takes place through the participation of teachers in study meetings (upper-secondary education), which are an established form of active learning and participation of practitioners in individual subjects or areas. Thematic conferences are shorter, 8-hour forms of education, aimed at the entire school staff, while seminars are shorter or longer forms of training designed for the acquisition of new skills, upgrading already acquired knowledge and professional and personal growth of the individual and the entire staff.

In addition to the basic activity of education, schools can also carry out activities that are not related to education, as long as they are in accordance with Article 72 of the OFEA and only with the permission of the school leader. Thus, the school can rent its premises (eg. the gym) to various sports organisations, clubs and other groups for a variety of purposes.

Teacher assessment is carried out by the school leader in accordance with the Public Sector Salary System Act and the Decree on the promotion of civil servants to salary grades. Acquired ratings have a direct impact on the possibility of promotion of employees in salary grades. Due to the economic and fiscal crisis, various restrictive measures and intervention regulations have been in force since 2010, which have restricted or even prevented advancement in salary grades.

The performance review of school leaders is regulated by Rules on criteria for establishing work performance of directors in the field of education. In accordance with the rules, a director of a public institution can gain up to two additional salaries due to job performance. However, intervention rules are in force in this case as well, according to which the school leaders are not entitled to job performance supplement as long as austerity measures imposed by the Fiscal Balance Act are in place.

The basic dilemma is how to ensure the optimal method of financing ISCED levels 1-2 level which would ensure all participants optimal and comparable educational conditions irrespective of the size and status of the school, taking into account limited budgetary possibilities. The normative system of financing by individual class or learning group is currently in force. During this time, attempts have been intensified to find an acceptable financing model based on the number of students.

An additional challenge is imposed by the increased complexity of teachers' work and the environment that demands a heavier workload, while the budget for education is stagnating.

Resource management

The association of school leaders offers support to schools and their leadership in the management of resources. The association helps to link school leaders to regional associations, other schools and organise mentoring networks of schools.

The monitoring and control of spending at various levels of the education system is carried out as follows: the school council confirms the financial plan and annual account of the school. The Inspectorate of Education supervises the implementation of educational programmes at the school. The Court of Audit conducts financial reviews of the management of the education system and of individual schools. The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport keeps financial and content controls over the business operations of the school. Municipalities carry out financial and substantive controls over the operations of schools funded by municipalities. Each school can hire an external audit (a private audit firm).

At the national level, the spending of financial means for early childhood education is monitored by the Ministry of Finance, which collects expenditure in specific areas of all municipalities on the basis of their annual accounts. At the local level, each municipality prepares an annual account, showing the amount of funds earmarked for kindergartens. The regularity of expenditure in kindergartens and municipalities is controlled by the Court of Audit. The regularity of expenditure in kindergartens is supervised by municipalities, which are the founders of kindergartens; it can also be supervised by their supervisory boards.

Information on the extent of activities is the basis for the systemization of jobs in basic schools, which the school leader proposes to the Minister, responsible for education, for approval. Schools' suggestions are reviewed and coordinated by the ministry and then approved by the Minister.

An upper-secondary school records the spending of annual funds in their books of accounts, so that the destination of funds, the economy and effectiveness of spending can be seen at any time.

The successfulness of a school leader is assessed by the school council. Assessment is done annually; one of the criteria is the evaluation of financial results of activities. The assessment has certain impact on the possibility of promotion and also a financial impact in terms of pay, but the latter is currently frozen.

Schools must submit reports on the use of funds (balance sheets) to the Agency for Public Legal Records and Related Services (AJ PES). The financial data from the annual accounts of public institutions are published on the AJ PES website. The same applies to the system of adult education.

Upper-secondary schools must submit reports on the use of funds received and on the realisation of their financial plans to the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports.

All public institutions must send semestral reports to their founders (the ministry or municipality) on the basis of which it is possible to monitor the operations of the individual user of the budget and, in case of finding an interim deficit of funds, take steps to ensure that the amount of funds set out in the financial plan will not have been exceeded by the end of the year.