
SLOVENIA

JULY 2010

1. Education population and language of instruction

Slovenia is a Central European country with a population of 2.057.698 (1 January 2010). At the beginning of 2010, 33 % of the population was aged between 0 and 29 years. At the beginning of the 2009/10 school year, there were **161 805** pupils in schools providing compulsory education, including 1 553 pupils with special needs in adapted education programmes.

The state-wide official language of instruction is Slovenian. In the Hungarian-speaking area, bilingual instruction in Hungarian and Slovenian is compulsory (ISCED 0-1-2-3). The Italian-speaking area hosts Italian schools, where Slovenian is a compulsory subject, and Slovenian schools, where Italian is a compulsory subject (ISCED 0-1-2-3). There are also international schools (English and French).

2. Administrative control and extent of public-sector funded education

The majority of pre-school children, basic and upper secondary school pupils attend public kindergartens (98,3 %) and schools (99 %), which are set up and funded entirely by the state and municipalities. Private schools, which are set up by private entities and provide education according to state-approved programmes, are subsidised by the state (the grant rate is approximately 85 %). In the school year 2009/10, there were 849 compulsory schools of which three were private (two Waldorf schools, one Catholic). There were 136 public and 6 private upper secondary schools for youth.

Administration responsibilities are distributed among the national authorities, local authorities, and schools. The Ministry of Education and Sport is responsible for the development of pre-higher education policies; inspection procedures; the allocation of funds; the implementation of laws and administrative decisions relating to pre-primary, compulsory and upper secondary education institutions. The Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology is responsible for the field of higher education, research, technology, metrology, development and promotion of the information society.

Most of the responsibilities for higher vocational education (short tertiary education) fall within the authority of the Ministry of Education and Sport, while some belong to the higher education sector. Local authorities (*občinski sveti*) are responsible for setting up pre-school institutions and basic schools; they take part in their administration and co-finance their operation and the salaries of pre-school employees. Schools councils (*sveti šol*) composed of representatives of the founder, employees, and parents, are the central governing bodies with considerable responsibilities regarding management, finances, and the teaching process.

School inspection is the responsibility of the National Inspectorate for Education and Sport (*Inšpektorat Republike Slovenije za šolstvo in šport*), which falls under the authority of the Ministry of Education and Sport. Evaluation in pre-higher education includes traditional approaches, external evaluation of students and expert support for self-evaluation, and national and international research.

The quality assurance system in higher education includes accreditation and internal and external evaluation of institutions and programmes. Accreditation and external evaluations that are in the responsibility of the newly established National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education are supported by internal evaluation, which is at the discretion of higher education institutions and their quality assessment commissions.

3. Pre-primary education

Pre-primary education (1-5 year) is an integral part of education system. Pre-primary provision integrates centre-based child care and early general pre-school education. The programmes are carried out by public and private pre-school institutions (*vrhci*), pre-school units attached to basic schools (*vrhci pri osnovnih šolah*) and private pre-school teachers at a childminder's (*vzgojno-varstvene družine*). The Ministry of Education and Sport is in charge of the formation of staff, programmes and aids to particular groups of children. The municipalities are the main founders, funders and direct providers of services.

Attendance is optional. Children can be admitted from the age of 11 months until they enter compulsory education at the age of 6 (that is from 5 years and 8 months to 6 years and 8 months).

The basis for the parental payment is the cost of the programme attended by the child, which must include the costs of education, child care and nutrition. Parents' payments are set by the local community according to the family income in comparison with the average salary in Slovenia. Parents pay 0 to 80 % of costs of preschool education, depending on the level of their income. In the case of more than one child attending preschool institution the law guarantees parents a lower price according to family income for the older children.

4. Compulsory education

(i) Phases

Pupils aged 6 enter the 9-year compulsory school.

<i>Osnovna šola</i> (basic school or single structure of primary and lower secondary education)	9-year compulsory education
<i>Prvo obdobje</i> (First cycle 1-3) (ISCED level 1)	Age 6-8
<i>Drugo obdobje</i> (Second cycle 4-6) (ISCED level 1)	Age 9-11
<i>Tretje obdobje</i> (Third cycle 7-9) (ISCED level 2)	Age 12-14

Compulsory basic education takes 9 years to complete.

(ii) Admission criteria

Compulsory education is free for all children whose sixth birthday occurs in the calendar year of entry into the first grade. Parents have a statutory duty and a right to choose a public or private school or they may educate their child in a home situation. The school located in the school district of the family residence is obligated to enrol their children, but parents are free to choose another basic school of their preference with the school's approval. If parents choose so, a child's readiness to start school may be assessed when the child enrolls into basic school: dependant on that assessment the commencement of schooling can be brought forward or postponed.

(iii) Length of school day/week/year

The school year comprises 175 to 190 days of teaching (depending on holidays) between 1 September and 31 August of the following year. The school year is divided into two assessment periods. Schools are open five days a week, and the minimum number of lessons (45 minutes) varies from 20 per week (1st grade) to 30 (9th grade) (or from 22 to 32 in bilingual and Italian-speaking schools; and in SEN – Special Education Needs – classes/schools) depending on the grade and the number of optional and extracurricular subjects taken. Pupils are allowed to take 5 days of additional holidays during the school year.

(iv) Class size/student grouping

The law stipulates a maximum of 28 pupils per class. This requirement is lower for classes that include SEN pupils or pupils from the Roma community: in classes including pupils from the Roma community, the maximum number of pupils per class is 21; in classes including SEN pupils, the maximum number is not specified and it is up to the schools expert group to decide with the approval of the Ministry). The actual class size in 2008/09 was 19 pupils on average (ISCED 1 and ISCED 2). In schools with the adapted curriculum for children with special needs, the actual average class size was 5.8 pupils.

A class normally consists of pupils of the same age. However, in small schools pupils of different ages may be taught together (multi-grade classes). In the first cycle pupils have the same general teacher for most subjects. Specialist teachers may participate in teaching in co-operation with the class teacher in physical education, music, drawing and languages. The first year is taught by two teachers jointly, the second teacher being either a pre-primary teacher or a class teacher (the second teacher participates in teaching only half of the periods). In the second cycle specialist teachers are gradually introduced in education, for example: teachers of expressive and physical subjects and also foreign language specialists are introduced initially. During the third cycle (from 7th to 9th grade) pupils are taught exclusively by specialist subject teachers. From the school year 2006/07 onwards, some subjects (mother tongue, mathematics, foreign language in the last two years (8th and 9th grade) may be taught by two teachers or teaching may involve in-class grouping or subject streaming; it is up to the school to decide among these three options.

(v) Curriculum control and content

The National Curriculum Document, adopted by the National Council of Experts for General Education, comprises general content of compulsory subjects and general objectives which all pupils should achieve. Within this framework, schools and teachers specify the actual content of subjects; they choose their own teaching methods and have the freedom to select textbooks and exercise books of their choice (although textbooks must be selected from a list of approved materials adopted by the Council of Experts). Basic school activities include the compulsory curriculum and extracurricular activities. Attendance of the latter is optional. The compulsory curriculum comprises compulsory subjects and compulsory subject options along with discussion periods, during which pupils discuss different issues that concern their life and work with their class teacher.

Compulsory school subjects in basic education are: mother tongue (Slovenian; Hungarian, and Italian in ethnically mixed areas), one foreign language studied from the age of 9 to 14, mathematics, geography, history, civic and patriotic education and ethics, environmental studies, physics, chemistry, biology, social studies, music, visual arts, technologies (ICT included), home economics and sports. In the last cycle, schools must offer optional compulsory subjects in the field of social sciences and humanities, natural sciences and technology, and foreign languages. From the school year 2008/09 the second compulsory foreign language is gradually being phased in (in grades 7 to 9); it is expected that in 2011/12 all basic school pupils shall be obliged to learn two foreign languages. In addition to compulsory subjects, pupils of the last cycle must choose 2 hours of optional subjects. If parents agree, pupils can take 3 hours of optional studies. Extra activities consist of before-school and after-school classes and other forms of pupils' care, supplementary lessons (for underachievers), additional lessons (for talented pupils), extra-curricular activities, and out-of-school classes. In after-school classes pupils study, complete their homework and participate in cultural or artistic activities and sports.

(vi) Assessment, progression and qualifications

Pupils are assessed by their teachers on the basis of the learning objectives laid down in the curriculum and the assessment procedures' regulations. Pupils' learning outcomes are assessed continuously in written, oral and practical forms and by tests set by teachers. Teachers use descriptive grades in the first cycle and numerical grades only in the second and the third cycle. Pupils and their parents receive information about the pupil's progress regularly throughout the school year.

At the end of each school year they receive a report which contains the grades awarded in individual subjects. An overall grade for total achievement, which was very important in the past, was abolished in the school year 2008/09. At the end of the second and the third cycle, state-wide assessment is organised. After the second cycle, written tests in mother tongue, mathematics, and a foreign language are organised, however, the participation of pupils is not compulsory. At the end of the ninth year, external assessment in 3 subjects is organised: in the mother tongue, mathematics and a third subject selected by the Minister for Education each individual school year. The Minister decides upon consultation with the Council of Experts for General Education which schools must arrange the assessment of which third subject. Pupils' results of the external assessment do not affect the grades or the progression of pupils to the next cycle or to the upper secondary level of education. Instead, they only provide feedback to schools, parents, and pupils.

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. Pupils receive final certificate (*Spričevalo o končani osnovni šoli*) with grades in compulsory subjects, and with the results achieved in the external assessment of the three subjects mentioned above.

Successful completion of compulsory education enables pupils to proceed to an education programme at a selected upper secondary school. Pupils who fulfil the compulsory education requirement and successfully complete at least seven of the nine years can proceed to a short vocational upper-secondary education. Pupils, who fail to complete basic schooling successfully in 9 years, have a statutory right to stay in basic school for another 2 years, and pupils with special needs for 3 more years. Under special circumstances this period can be extended for up to 6 years (Amendments to the Basic School Act, 2007).

5. Post-compulsory education/upper secondary and post-secondary level

(i) Types of education

<i>Splošno srednje izobraževanje – Gimnazija</i> (general upper secondary education)	15-18 years of age (four years)
<i>Srednje tehniško in strokovno izobraževanje</i> (technical upper secondary education)	15-18 years of age (four years)
<i>Poklicno izobraževanje</i> (short and medium length vocational upper secondary education)	15-17 years of age
<i>Maturitetni tečaj</i> (preparatory classes for the matura examination, classified as ISCED level 4)	19 or more (one year)
<i>Poklicni tečaji</i> (vocational courses, classified as ISCED level 4)	19-20 years of age (one year)

(ii) Admissions criteria

Upper secondary education is free and caters for young people between 15 and 19 years of age. Students may enrol in *gimnazija*, vocational or technical schools after they acquire basic school certificate. Subject grades from their basic school education are the most important criteria for enrolment, although schools may specify additional admission criteria (art talent tests, sports achievements). The transition from compulsory to upper secondary education is regulated at the national level through the national joint application system. Schools with a limited number of places (reputable *gimnazije* mainly) take into account the grades from compulsory subjects obtained in the last three years of compulsory education (grades 7, 8 and 9).

(iii) Curriculum control and content

The National Council of Experts for General Education and the National Council for Vocational Education decide on the core contents and the objectives of the curricula. In general education, compulsory subjects account (according to the single programme) for 80-90 % of the curriculum (Slovenian language and literature, mathematics, two foreign languages, history, geography, physical education, biology, chemistry, physics, art, psychology, sociology, philosophy and IKT). In technical and vocational education, the compulsory subjects and their number vary according to the type of course.

(iv) Assessment, progression and qualifications

The syllabi of *gimnazije* and technical schools are designed to be completed in 4 years. The school year is divided into two assessment periods. Assessment is carried out by teachers. General and technical upper secondary education ends with a final (external) examination. *Gimnazija* education ends with the general *matura*, which grants students access to all types of higher education. Technical education ends with the vocational *matura* which grants student's access to professional types of higher education; by passing one additional *matura* test they have open access to some academic programmes. The general *matura* comprises tests in 5 subjects (maths, mother tongue, a foreign language and two elective subjects); the vocational *matura* comprises 4 subjects (mother tongue, maths or a foreign language and two electives). Upon successful completion of the *matura* students are awarded a separate certificate comprising details of the tests passed and the levels and points achieved.

Students who successfully finish a vocational secondary education programme take the final examination (*zaključni izpit*) which enables them to enter the labour market or grants them access to a higher level of technical education (*srednje poklicno-tehniško izobraževanje*).

Matura courses (*maturitetni tečaj*) are designed for pupils who did not finish *gimnazija*, and wish to enter university. Vocational courses (*poklicni tečaj*) are designed for those who did not pass the *matura* and wish to obtain a vocational qualification and qualification for employment or those who wish to obtain another qualification. These two types of courses are regarded as the second chance education.

Master craftsmen exams (*mojstrski izpiti*) are designed for those who have completed a three-year secondary vocational school and acquired a minimum of three years' work experience. By passing such an exam, as well as a short 'bridging' exam from general education subjects, master craftsmen are qualified to guide apprentices or to continue their education at ISCED 5B level.

6. Higher education

Tertiary education in Slovenia comprises higher vocational college education and higher academic and professional education.

Higher vocational education is provided by higher vocational colleges (*višje strokovne šole*) that offer two-year vocational education (120 ECTS) at the sub-degree level (short-cycle, ISCED level 5B). Higher vocational colleges issue a diploma, stating the field of education, and a Diploma Supplement in the Slovene language and in one of the EU languages. Joint study programmes are also possible

The traditional higher education study programmes are offered by public or private universities and single higher education institutions (*samostojni visokošolski zavodi*).

(i) Structure of higher education

By the academic year 2010/11, all higher education institutions have introduced the three-cycle structure of three degrees: Bachelor, Master and Doctorate. Bachelor programmes can be academically or professionally oriented accredited by 180 or 240 ECTS. Typical cumulative length of a Bachelor + Master degree is 300 ECTS. Long programmes exist in medicine, veterinary medicine and dentistry (6 years); and in pharmacy, architecture, teacher education in mathematics and theology (5 years).

(ii) Access

General admission criteria for access to higher education are defined by law and also depend on the curricula.

The general entrance requirement for higher vocational colleges is the completion of an appropriate four-year secondary technical school or *gimnazija*. Admission is also granted to candidates who have completed an appropriate three-year secondary vocational school education; or who have three years of working practice and pass additional entrance exams.

The general *matura* certificate (*maturitetno spričevalo*) grants access to all forms of higher education. A vocational *matura* examination (*poklicna matura*) grants access to professionally oriented courses. If students pass an additional exam from the general *matura* at the end of secondary professional education, they may also apply for admission to academic types of courses. In establishments with a limited number of places, the results of *matura* and the results obtained in upper secondary school subjects are taken into account as the selection criteria. If specific abilities are required in a certain course, the results of special tests of skills or talents are also taken into account.

(iii) Qualifications

In vocational colleges study ends with a diploma examination (*diplomski izpit*), which consists of a written exam and an oral presentation. Diploma includes the name of vocational qualification derived from the name of the programme completed. Graduates can then start working in specific occupations. They may also transfer to the second or the third year of professionally oriented higher education courses.

Higher education degree programmes, lead to the professional or academic title determined in accordance with the Professional and Academic Titles Act (61/06). The typical professional titles of graduates of first cycle study programmes are *diplomirani* (+ profession) (UN) and *diplomirani* (+ profession) (VS). Graduates of the second cycle *magisterij* study programme acquire the professional title of *magister* (+ field of study), while graduates in technical, teacher training and art studies acquire the title of *magister inženir* (+ field of study), *magister profesor* (+ teaching subject/s), *magister akademski* (+ profession).

Graduates of medicine, dental medicine, pharmacy and veterinary medicine acquire the professional titles of *doktor medicine*, *doktor dentalne medicine*, *magister farmacije*, *doktor veterinarske medicine*. The doctoral study programme results in the diploma and obtained academic title of *doktor znanosti*.

7. Special needs

Provision of special needs education in Slovenia follows a multi-track approach towards inclusion, which means that a variety of services between mainstream education and segregated settings are offered.

A Special Education Needs (SEN) Guidance Commission coordinates professional and administrative activities that qualify a child for placement in an appropriate educational setting. The Commission follows a principle of 'placement in the most enabling environment' when decisions are made about the extent to which an individual student is placed in regular education classrooms, or assigned to an alternative placement. Admission to inclusive education requires a SEN guidance order, similar to the admission to special education.

Provision in mainstream schools consists of special educational support through special arrangements (inclusive education, remedial teachers and additional teaching hours), adapted programme with equal educational standards as prescribed in the curriculum (adaptations are provided so the SEN pupil can participate in the program). Special classes are offered in pre-school institutions and in basic schools. Mainstream schools also offer programme with educational standards at a lower level. In this situation, adaptations mean that certain subjects are omitted from the general curriculum (resulting in a less extensive curriculum) and educational standards are set at a lower level.

Special institutions offer special education programmes for pupils with moderate and severe mental disabilities. The most specific programme in special institutions is so called tutoring programme, which includes various contents: social skills, interest and motivation, preventive disciplinary strategies, compensatory measures and positive behaviour management.

The principle of 'inclusion' prevails. The majority of pupils and students have been integrated into mainstream education settings.

8. Teachers

Pre-school teachers at the pre-primary level qualify for the traineeship position after obtaining a qualification *diplomirana vzgojiteljica predšolskih otrok* (Bachelor degree for pre-school teachers;

Compulsory and upper secondary school teachers qualify for the traineeship position in schools after obtaining the Master degree with the title of *magister profesor*. The traineeship period of 6 – 10 months of training in a work placement ends with a Teacher Certification Examination, which finally qualifies them for a permanent position.

Teachers of the first cycle (3 years) of basic education are general teachers (class teachers). Teachers in the second cycle are either general teachers or specialist teachers, while in the third cycle only specialist teachers are allowed to teach. Pre-school and school teachers of general subjects must hold a relevant diploma (from a faculty of education, faculty of arts, faculty of sports, faculty of mathematics and sciences and others) and the title required by legislation.

In upper secondary education all teachers are specialists in their field. Depending on the institution and subject, vocational and technical school teachers are required to complete either: 1) an appropriate academic or professionally oriented Bachelor or Master degree programme or; 2) the highest possible qualification in their own vocational field and pedagogical course of 60 ECTS. A minimum of 3 years of work experience is often required.

Professional college teachers (lecturers and senior lecturers) are usually holders of Master or Doctorate degrees and/or experienced professionals. University teachers must hold a doctoral degree. They are elected in compliance with the highest standards defined by a university senate (rigorous habilitation system).

Teachers working in the public sector are granted civil servant status.

9. Ongoing reforms and policy initiatives related to “ET 2020” strategic framework

In April 2009, the minister of education appointed a group of experts to prepare the new White Paper on Education. They will review the current situation and draft the development plan for the future. Their tasks include an overview and analysis of the current situation in education, and identification of trends and policies in the EU, especially in the priority areas. The group is expected to complete its work by 1 March 2011.

From 2008 to 2010, the Ministry of Education and Sport and the National Education Institute have conducted a project titled 'Communication in Foreign Languages' with the view of testing the introduction of a foreign language in the early years of basic school in Slovenia. 65% of basic schools offer foreign language lessons as an elective subject in the first year of school. Positive feedback has led to the decision to introduce the first foreign language in the first years of the basic school; however, there are still some unresolved issues, such as: which language should be taught as the first foreign language; how to provide teaching continuity, and when and how the second foreign language should be introduced. The Ministry is developing the legal basis for the introduction of the first foreign language in year one of the basic school (instead of year four, as is the current practice). Prior to the legalisation of this solution, it is necessary to train teachers for teaching foreign languages to this age group. It is necessary to ensure teaching continuity and to find an appropriate solution for the introduction of the second foreign language. Second foreign language is currently undergoing a progressive introduction in schools in Slovenia and is being tested as a pilot programme. From 2012 it is expected to become compulsory for all pupils in year seven. At the time when the decision was taken to introduce the first foreign language in year one, it was also suggested that the second foreign language could also be introduced at an earlier stage. The National Education Institute is currently drafting a new concept of foreign language teaching which includes these changes. At the same time, the Ministry of Education has started a parliamentary procedure to amend the Basic School Act so that compulsory learning of the second foreign language is postponed by two years (to academic year 2014) to allow enough time for

teacher training and school adjustments to start teaching two foreign languages in earlier years of basic school.

In 2010, the National Education Institute presented its successful implementation of the new strategies for cross-curricular integration which include planning and amending the time-table and organisation and conduct of lessons with blurred boundaries between subjects. The new strategies facilitate the development of environmental awareness, inter-cultural and civic competencies, linguistic and critical literacy, media literacy, IT competencies, etc. Following pilot projects in a few *gimnazijas*, project teams were trained in most *gimnazijas* so that two years later these models became a permanent practice which is now being introduced in basic, technical and vocational schools.

The Minister appointed a group of experts for monitoring and developing education of migrant children. The working group conforms to the National Strategy and Guidelines for Education of Children of Non-national Parents, adopted by the National Council for General Education (2009).

In December 2009, the Minister appointed an Expert Group for advising him on the preparation of the Teachers Act. The Expert Group has adopted principles and European teacher education policy recommendations as the basis for drafting norms on teacher education.

In the period from 2008 to 2011, the area of vocational education and vocational programmes are undergoing a reform which in the process of implementation in schools. The reform included, among other things: recognition of informally acquired knowledge; improvement in the portability of competences; strengthened cooperation and the implementation of instruments such as EUROPASS, EQF, ECVET, EQARF.

In 2009, the National Vocational Qualifications Act (2000) which regulates the recognition of knowledge, skills and qualifications to perform in specific occupations or their parts regardless of the manner in which the knowledge has been acquired (either through work experience, voluntary work, in spare time, through courses, self-taught or in some other way) was amended. In the future, proposals for new professional qualifications will have to include, among other things, the information on their position in the structure of national professional qualifications and workplace qualifications.

In May 2010, the Slovenian Parliament adopted two youth laws which regulate youth labour. Youth labour is defined as a planned programme of informal learning through experience that can promote personal and social development of young people, their integration in the society and improve their employment opportunities. Volunteer youth work is defined as work which complements formal education and training. The area of youth labour is recognised as one of social components in the implementation of the Reform Programme to Implement the Lisbon Strategy. As part of the fourth development priority in Slovenia (Modern Social State and Higher Employment), the inclusion of young people in the work environment is one of the priority measures. Competences acquired through work are recognised as an important potential for young people. The Ministry of Education and Sport and the Youth Office of the Republic of Slovenia provide financial support for the development of youth structure. For the period 2009 – 2012, the two institutions are devising measures for the development of competences for young people through youth labour work experience, opportunities to acquire qualifications as a youth worker and new workplaces.

In 2010, the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology has started formulating a long-term higher education development strategy which will be mainly reflected in:

- a new national higher education programme,
- a new higher education act,
- a new national qualifications framework and
- a new system of higher education funding.

The Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology has drafted the Guidelines for the National Programme of Higher Education 2011–2020. Higher education in Slovenia in 2020 will be based on the four pillar policy to support the role of higher education in the knowledge-based society. The two cornerstones on which the four pillar policy is built include appropriately structured study programmes in the reformed system and an advanced system of higher education funding.

The four pillars include:

- diversification which promotes diversity in the types of institutions and their missions and diversity in study programmes with the view of achieving the main objectives of higher education;
- internationalisation and openness to the international community as prerequisites for the operation of tertiary institutions in the current global conditions;
- quality which will ensure everyone can acquire internationally comparable and recognised tertiary qualifications, employability and mobility across Europe and world-wide; and
- the social dimension which will provide fair access to higher education and ensure there are no barriers to expedient completion of studies.

The project of drafting the National Qualifications Framework is coordinated by the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs (2006–2013). The key issue in the development of the Slovenian national qualifications framework is the classification of tertiary qualifications. This question has been examined by a special project group appointed by the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology. The group has prepared two proposals for the national qualifications framework which have been made available for public discussion and consultation.

The National Higher Education Quality Assurance Agency was established and began to operate in May 2010.

For more detailed information on education systems in Europe, you may consult the EURYDICE data base, EURYBASE (<http://www.eurydice.org>)