

THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN SLOVENIA 1999



MINISTRY
OF EDUCATION AND SPORT

REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA



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GENERAL PRINCIPLES AND GOALS

In Slovenia we have striven to establish a comprehensive and **high quality system of education**, available to as many people as possible, at all levels, that provides the high standards expected of a developed country.

The basis for the present system of education and its future development was the *White Paper on Education in the Republic of Slovenia*, published in 1995 in Slovene and in 1996 in English, written in co-operation with many experts. The concepts proposed therein provided the basis for legislation a year later. The goals and solutions, defined in the *White Paper* and built into the legislation, were the result of professional contributions, research, and expertise from different disciplines. The *White Paper* goals were:

- to increase the possibilities of including pre-school children in pre-school education programmes;
- to link the present, compulsory one-year school preparation and the eight-year elementary school into the single structure of a nine-year elementary school and provide the mechanisms for successful completion of elementary school for all pupils;
- to encourage the largest possible proportion of the youth population to enrol in general or technical and vocational secondary education;
- to improve the possibilities of transferring between the categories of the education system;
- to improve functional and "cultural" literacy among adults and increase the scope of adult education;
- to organise additional activities for children from culturally and socially less encouraging environments;
- to ensure equal opportunities for both sexes, at all levels of the education system;
- to increase the opportunities for the care and education of children with special needs.

The new legal regulation of the present education system, based on the principles of democracy, autonomy and equal opportunities, was adopted in Slovenia in 1996. It includes a set of six acts: the Organisation and Funding of Education Act, Pre-school Institutions Act, Elementary School Act, *Gimnazije* Act, Vocational and Technical Education Act, and Adult Education Act, all adopted in February 1996. A special characteristic of the new legislation is the gradual introduction of changes with a simultane-

ous provision of material and personnel conditions, as well as financial resources, for its implementation.

The new legal regulation of the higher education system was introduced already at the end of 1993 and came into force at the beginning of 1994. The basic principles of the Higher Education Act are the autonomy of universities and other higher education institutions, deregulation in connection with the principle of autonomy, public accountability, equal opportunity, integrity of research and teaching, and open possibilities for the establishment of public and private higher education institutions. Slovene higher education is first and foremost oriented towards achieving the following goals:

- to establish a modern and unified higher education system comparable to other European systems, which would enable the introduction of international standards and a two-way flow of students, higher education teachers, and high-grade knowledge;
- to provide the environment for a dynamic system to encourage quality education;
- to widen admission to higher education for both full- and part-time study;
- to increase the number of students and graduates;
- to renew post-graduate studies and increase the number of post-graduate students;
- to enable a systematic link between research and teaching;
- to establish co-operation between higher educational institutions and the real economy, local communities and the general public.

ACHIEVEMENTS

Altogether 240 educational facilities **have been built anew** or reconstructed since 1992. **The share** of the gross domestic product allocated to education increased from 4.76% in 1992 to **6% in 1998**.

Increased enrolment in secondary and higher education and **improved educational performance** most vividly mark the recent period. The percentage of children taking part in pre-school education is growing. It increased from 50% in 1992 to 59% in 1999. Fully 98% of elementary school leavers now decide to continue their studies after the completion of compulsory education, and 84% of secondary school leavers

after their graduation from a four-year secondary school. The number of students enrolling especially in four-year secondary school programmes is increasing every year. There are twice as many students in higher education now than there were at the beginning of the nineties. The number of graduates is also growing: it increased by 50% from 1990 to 1998. Lifelong learning is also augmenting: a special project for the education of the unemployed for example, includes more than 6,000 participants (in 1999).

The three-year **renewal of curricula contents** spanning the levels from pre-school to secondary school education is winding up. **The new nine-year** single structure elementary school programme has been launched at 42 elementary schools. The implementation of the new pre-school education curriculum has also begun. **The in-service training of pre-school and elementary school teachers** started three years before the beginning of the compulsory education renewal. The preparation of teachers for new contents and teaching methods and resources is one of the priority tasks of in-service education and training. Special attention is paid to balancing the demands for teachers. **The dual (apprenticeship) schemes** of vocational education and **the new system of post-secondary vocational education** have successfully undergone their pilot period.

The cluster of seven adopted acts concerning the levels from pre-school to university and adult education will be joined by three new ones: on **the matura examination** (external final examination), on **placement of children with special needs**, and on **music schools**. *Matura* examinations were offered in the mid-nineties. Their legal regulation will bring some new improvements in the system. In addition to offering examinations in two compulsory subjects, mathematics and a foreign language, at two levels of difficulty, *gimnazija* (general upper secondary school) will also provide a more suitable preparation for examinations in those subjects at two levels. Schools providing the education of children with special needs have been adapting to the latest findings in the profession by increased mainstreaming of such children and by introducing more differentiated and individualised forms of education. The new act will verify the changes that have already been implemented in practice. In a similar way, a legal framework for the dissemination of successful teaching practice and coordination with the renewal of the whole education system will be provided for music schools.

The future development of the Slovene education system will be primarily characterised by the **improvements to the system**. Amendments to the Higher Education Act have already been adopted in Parliament. They will **change the composition of the**

senates of higher education institutions so that not only full professors but also all the academic and academic support staff will be represented by the senate. **Lump sum funding**, which better suits the autonomous role of the university, will be introduced. **The transition from the secondary school** level to higher education will also be **liberalised**. The *poklicna matura* examination (a type of vocational final examination) will make it possible for graduates of technical secondary schools to enrol in university type and not only professional type of programmes if they pass a *matura* examination in an additional subject.

Changes have been and will continue to be gradual and based on **thorough consideration by teams of experts**. In implementing the new developments, we pay special attention to social security in the system. All new elements introduced in the school system are carefully and watchfully monitored and the outcomes regularly evaluated.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

The system of education in Slovenia includes:

- pre-school education
- basic education (single structure of primary and lower secondary education)
- (upper) secondary education
 - short-term vocational education
 - secondary vocational education
 - secondary technical education
 - secondary general education
 - post-secondary non-tertiary education
- post-secondary vocational education
- higher education
 - undergraduate education
 - professional type
 - university type
 - post-graduate education at levels:
 - *specializacija*
 - *magisterij*
 - *doktorat*

The system starts with **pre-school education**, which is not compulsory. It is carried out by **pre-school institutions** and pre-school units in elementary schools for children between the ages of 1 and 6. The one-year pre-school classes are offered for children who will attend the eight-year elementary school.

Basic education (which combines the primary and lower secondary levels of education) lasts eight years. It is compulsory. The eight-year basic education is divided in 2 four-year cycles. In order to enter the first class the children must be 6 years and 6 months old before the start of the school year (in exceptional cases 6 years). The gradual implementation of the nine-year basic education began in the 1999/2000 school year. It is divided into 3 three-year cycles. Children must be 6 years old to enter the first class. Successful completion of basic education enables pupils to proceed to an education in a choice of secondary school. Pupils who fulfil legal compulsory education requirement and successfully complete at least six classes in the eight-year elementary school or at least seven classes in the nine-year elementary school, can continue their education in a short-term vocational education.

(Upper) secondary education follows the compulsory general education. It is provided by vocational schools, technical schools and *gimnazije*.

Vocationally oriented schools provide various kinds of vocational and technical education. In principle, they end with a final examination and offer a variety of content and levels of difficulty.

Pupils who have successfully completed elementary school or who have completed a modified education programme for children with special needs and also pupils who have fulfilled the legal compulsory education requirement can enrol in **short-term vocational programmes**. These programmes last for two and a half years and finish with a final exam. The certificate of the final exam enables students to enter the labour market or to enter the first class at any other secondary school.

Pupils who have successfully completed elementary school can enrol in **3-year vocational programmes**. These programmes can be provided by vocational schools alone or in co-operation with employers as **dual system** of apprenticeship and in-school education. They typically last for three years and finish with a final exam. The certificate of the final exam enables students to enter the labour market or to continue education at a vocational-technical school.

Students who have completed the 3-year vocational programme can enter the two-year **vocational-technical programmes**, which end with a *poklicna matura*. Students

who have been employed for at least three years can take **examinations for master craftsman**. If they additionally pass examinations in general subjects of the *poklicna matura*, they can continue their studies in the post-secondary vocational education.

Pupils who have successfully completed elementary school can enrol in **technical programmes**. These programmes last for four years and end with a *poklicna matura*. Students who have completed the secondary technical school can enter the labour market or continue their education at the post-secondary vocational or professional type of higher education level. Students who wish to enrol in university type of programmes can take a **matura course** and pass the *matura* examination. According to amendments to the Higher Education Act, these students will have the opportunity to pass the *matura* examination in one additional subject and continue their studies in university type of programmes and not only in professional type, as they have so far. *Matura* courses are also designed for those who dropped out of their fourth year of *gimnazija* and interrupted their schooling for at least one year.

Poklicna matura is partly externally prepared and internally assessed school-leaving examination in four subjects, which has been introduced in the 1998/99 school year. It will be taken by students who enrol in restructured or renewed technical programmes from that school year on. Up to the introduction of the *poklicna matura*, students will have taken internal final examination (*zaključni izpit*).

Upper secondary general education is provided by **gimnazije**. Pupils who have successfully completed the elementary school can enrol in *gimnazija* programmes. *Gimnazija* programmes finish with an external *matura* exam. The *gimnazija* prepare students for study at university level. Students who do not pass the *matura*, or wish to enter the labour market, have other options. They can obtain vocational education by completing a **vocational course** (*poklicni tečaj*), which lasts for up to one year and finishes with a final examination *poklicna matura*.

Post-secondary vocational education was introduced by the Vocational and Technical Education Act in 1996. In its content and transfer options it differs from the former short-term higher education programmes offered by universities prior to the adoption of the Higher Education Act. It is provided by **vocational colleges** (*višje strokovne šole*), which are considered as separate from higher education. One of the following admission requirements has to be met for enrolment in vocational colleges: *matura*, *poklicna matura* or final examination, respectively, or the general part of the *poklicna matura* in combination with the master craftsman examination. Post-secondary vocational education lasts for two years and ends with a *diploma* exam. A stu-

dent who has successfully passed a *diploma* exam receives a *diploma* with the name of the programme and the title of the vocational qualification. A post-secondary vocational *diploma* enables students to start work in specific occupations. Since the academic year 1998/99, vocational college graduates have had the possibility to enrol in the second year of professional type of higher education programmes if the higher education institution providing this type of studies makes such an arrangement possible.

Higher education has a binary structure: academically oriented university type of studies and professional type of studies. Faculties and art academies, which are members of universities, and single faculties established as private institutions, offer both types of programmes, while professional colleges provide only the professional type of programmes. The study is organised at two levels. At the undergraduate level students obtain a *diploma* and the first of the degree titles. At the post-graduate level students get either the second degree title, of a *specialist*, or the academic title of either a *magister znanosti* (comparable to master) or *doktor znanosti* (comparable to a Ph.D.).

The basic admission requirement for a **university type of study programmes** is a *matura* exam. University study programmes last between four and six years and end with the *diploma* exam. A successful student receives a *diploma* with a professional title naming the field of study. A university *diploma* enables students to start work or to continue their studies at post-graduate level.

The admission requirement for **professional type of study programmes** is either a *matura* exam or final exam or *poklicna matura* after completing a four-year secondary technical education programme. Professional type of study programmes last in principle three, exceptionally four years, include practical training and end with the *diploma* exam. A successful student receives a *diploma* with a professional title naming the field of study. Students can enter the labour market or continue their study at the post-graduate level leading to a specialist degree - *specializacija*.

Under certain conditions, the transfer between professional type and university type of study is possible in both directions. Candidates transferring to university type of study must have passed a *matura* exam or have achieved a sufficiently high average grade (GPA of at least 8).

At the **post-graduate level** study programmes lead to degrees: *specializacija*, *magisterij* and *doktorat znanosti*.

The admission requirements for **post-graduate study programmes leading to specializacija** is either a university degree or professional higher education degree. These programmes last between one and two years and end with the defence of a thesis. A student who has successfully defended a thesis gains a *specializacija* degree with the professional title of *specialist* in a specific field of study. *Specializacija* leads to employment in a certain profession.

The admission requirement for **post-graduate study programmes leading to magisterij** is a university degree. These programmes last for two years and end with the defence of a thesis. A student who has successfully defended a thesis gains the academic title of *magister znanosti* (Master) in a specific field of study. *Magisterij* leads either to employment or to doctoral study.

The admission requirements for **post-graduate study programmes leading to doktorat znanosti** are either a university degree or a *magisterij* degree. Doctoral study programmes after a university *diploma* last for four years. Doctoral study programmes after a *magisterij* degree last for two years. Students who have completed a *magisterij* degree can continue their study for an additional two years to obtain their doctoral degree. Students who have enrolled in four-year doctoral studies can interrupt them and complete their studies at the *magisterij* level instead.

Adult education is provided by the so-called *ljudska univerza* (peoples' university), educational centres and study centres, schools and higher education institutions, as well as companies, administrative bodies, organisations and associations. Programmes of adult education include school and out-of-school education, formal, non-formal education, distance learning and self-education.

Education and training of children with special needs is provided as mainstream education with additional professional assistance, by special classes offering modified curricula in pre-school institutions and schools, or by special schools and institutions for the education and training of children with special needs.

Music education runs parallel to basic and secondary education. After having completed their basic education and parallel music education, students may either proceed with music education within the parallel scheme at the secondary school level or else enrol in an art *gimnazija*.

STATISTICAL DATA

The area of Slovenia is 20,273 km² and the population approximately 2 million.

The unemployment rates for the last four years were (according to the Labour Force Survey in compliance with the International Labour Organisation guidelines; mid-year situation):

in 1995	7.4 %
in 1996	7.3 %
in 1997	7.1 %
in 1998	7.7 %

In 1998, 11% of the labour force was employed in agriculture, 39% in industry, and 50% in the tertiary sector.

Labour force by educational attainment in years 1995 - 1998

Levels of education	1995	1996	1997	1998
No formal education	4.3	3.7	3.1	3.2
Basic education	20.1	19.5	21.2	18.8
Upper secondary education	59.6	62.2	61.6	61.6
Higher education - undergraduate level	14.7	13.8	13.4	15.6
Higher education - post-graduate level	0.7	0.8	0.7	0.8

INSTITUTIONS, STUDENTS AND STAFF IN EDUCATION

PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION 1998/1999

	public	private	total
Pre-school institutions	265	13	278
Children of whom:	62,111	579	62,690
- in the first age groups (1-3 years)	8,959	79	9,538
- in the second age groups (3-6 years)	43,685	333	44,018
- in mixed groups	3,445	96	8,541
- in childminders families	228	-	228
- classes for children with special needs	232	-	232
- in half-day classes	4,413	-	4,413
- pre-school classes	2,130	71	2,201
Instructional, professional support and management staff*	7,213	68	7,281
- of whom pre-school teachers and assistants	6,954	58	7,012

Data source: Ministry of Education and Sport

* *Instructional, professional support and management staff* - source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia

The data have been collected as per 1 January 1999. The list of pre-school institutions includes all public pre-school institutions (101 main institutions with branch units and 164 pre-school education units in elementary schools) and 13 private pre-school institutions. Private pre-school institutions are all those that have been founded by private entities: three private institutions offering the "national" pre-school curriculum, two private Waldorf pre-school institutions providing pre-school education based on special educational principles, one private institution offering pre-school education in English, and seven Catholic pre-school institutions. The data on the number of children cover all children attending pre-school education, including children with special educational needs in mainstream and special classes and children cared for by childminders families.

The data include all instructional, professional support and management staff in all units listed, with the exception of childminders families. They are counted regardless of the type of their contracts: full-time or part-time contracts.

BASIC EDUCATION 1998/1999

	Public	Private	Total
Elementary schools of which:	814	1	815
- central schools	201	-	201
- branch schools	370	-	370
- single site schools	243	1	244
Pupils of whom:	193,727	187	193,914
- in classes for pupils with special needs	3,361	-	3,361
Instructional, professional support and management staff* of whom:	16,170	24	16,194
- in classes for pupils with special needs	883	-	883

Data source: Ministry of Education and Sport

* *Instructional, professional support and management staff* - source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia

The data on basic education cover the situation on 15 September. The list of elementary schools includes all public elementary schools and the one private school carrying out programmes based on special educational principles - the Waldorf school. Elementary schools are either single site schools (operating in one location only) or split site schools with a central school and one or more branch schools in various locations. The data on the number of pupils include elementary school pupils from grade 1 to grade 8 and the pupils with special needs enrolled in special classes offering modified curricula.

The data on instructional, professional support and management staff include all teachers at the first and second stage, teachers of after-school classes, teachers of children with special needs, management staff and other pedagogical and social support staff (counsellors, librarians and others) employed either full- or part-time.

(UPPER) SECONDARY EDUCATION 1998/1999

	Public	Private	Total	Per cent
Secondary schools	138	6	144	
Students of whom:	105,487	1,482	106,969	100
- in vocational programmes	32,764	245	33,009	31
- in technical programmes	44,368	-	44,368	42
- in vocational courses	65	-	65	..
- in gimnazije	27,789	1,237	29,026	27
- in matura course	68	-	68	..
Instructional, professional support and management staff*	8,649	167	8,816	

Data source: Ministry of Education and Sport

* *Instructional, professional support and management staff* - source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia

The data on upper secondary education cover the situation as per 15 September. The list of secondary schools includes all public and private schools and secondary schools for students with special needs providing youth education programs leading to state approved qualifications at the secondary school level. Private secondary schools are those that have been founded by private entities and offer state approved programmes on the basis of a concession, as well as Catholic schools.

The data on the number of students include full-time students and 437 students enrolled in six schools for students with special needs. Adult students are not included. The 433 students enrolled in music schools and in another secondary school at the same time, are counted just once.

The data on instructional, professional support and management staff include all teachers, teachers of children with special needs, management staff and other pedagogical and social support staff (counsellors, librarians and others) employed either full- or part-time.

POST-SECONDARY VOCATIONAL EDUCATION 1998/1999

	public	private	total
Post-secondary vocational colleges	5	1	6
Students of whom:	1,326	152	1,478
- youth	817	-	817
- adults	509	152	661
Instructional staff given as FTE	64	6	70

Data source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia

Data on post-secondary vocational education are collected in November for the beginning of the academic year.

The list of post-secondary vocational education institutions includes all public vocational colleges and the college which has been founded by the ELES public company and which provides a state approved programme. The data on the number of students include youth and adult students. The data on instructional staff include vocational college lecturers, instructors for practical work, laboratory assistants and physical education teachers.

The number of instructional staff has been converted into the full-time equivalent (FTE) according to the following formula: the number of full-time employees + (the number of part-time employees/conversion coefficient). The conversion coefficient is the number of part-time employees adding up to one full-time employee. The conversion coefficient for instructional staff at vocational colleges is 2.2429.

HIGHER EDUCATION 1998/1999

	public	private	total	per cent
Higher education institutions	39	7	46	
UNIVERSITIES consisting of:	2	-	2	
- faculties	29	-	29	
- art academies	3	-	3	
- professional colleges	4	-	4	
- associated member	1	-	1	
SINGLE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS				
- faculties	-	2	2	
- professional colleges	-	5	5	
Undergraduate students	71,828	2,814	74,642	100
- full-time	51,052	1,098	52,150	
- part-time	20,776	1,716	22,492	

	public	private	total	per cent
Students in short-term programmes	2,449	-	2,449	3
- full-time	1,292	-	1,292	
- part-time	1,157	-	1,157	
Students in professional type of programmes	28,418	2,814	31,232	42
- full-time	14,317	1,098	15,415	
- part-time	14,101	1,716	15,817	
Students in university type of programmes	40,961	-	40,961	55
- full-time	35,443	-	35,443	
- part-time	5,518	-	5,518	
Post-graduate students*	2,541	43	2,584	
- leading to <i>magisterij</i>	2,286	43	2,329	
- leading to <i>specializacija</i>	255	-	255	
- leading to <i>doktorat znanosti</i>	
Academic and academic support staff given as FTE	3,457	87	3,544	
- teachers	1,789	50	1,839	
- assistants	1,654	37	1,691	
- researchers	14	-	14	

Data source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia

*Post-graduate students in 1997/98

Data are collected in November for the beginning of the academic year.

The list consists of 46 higher education institutions. This total number includes the two universities with their member institutions and single higher education institutions:

- University of Ljubljana with 20 faculties, 3 art academies and 3 professional colleges,
- University of Maribor with 9 faculties and 1 professional college,
- 7 private single higher education institutions of which two faculties and five professional colleges,
- 1 professional college, which is a state higher education institution governed by the Ministry of the Interior and is at the same time an associate member of the University of Ljubljana.

The data on undergraduate students include full- and part-time students of all years of study and 10,570 candidates for graduation having student status. Candidates for graduation are students who have completed all the courses required for graduation and are allowed to retain their student status in principle for another year, during which they may take the examinations, fulfil other requirements (e.g. practical work) and write a *diploma* paper.

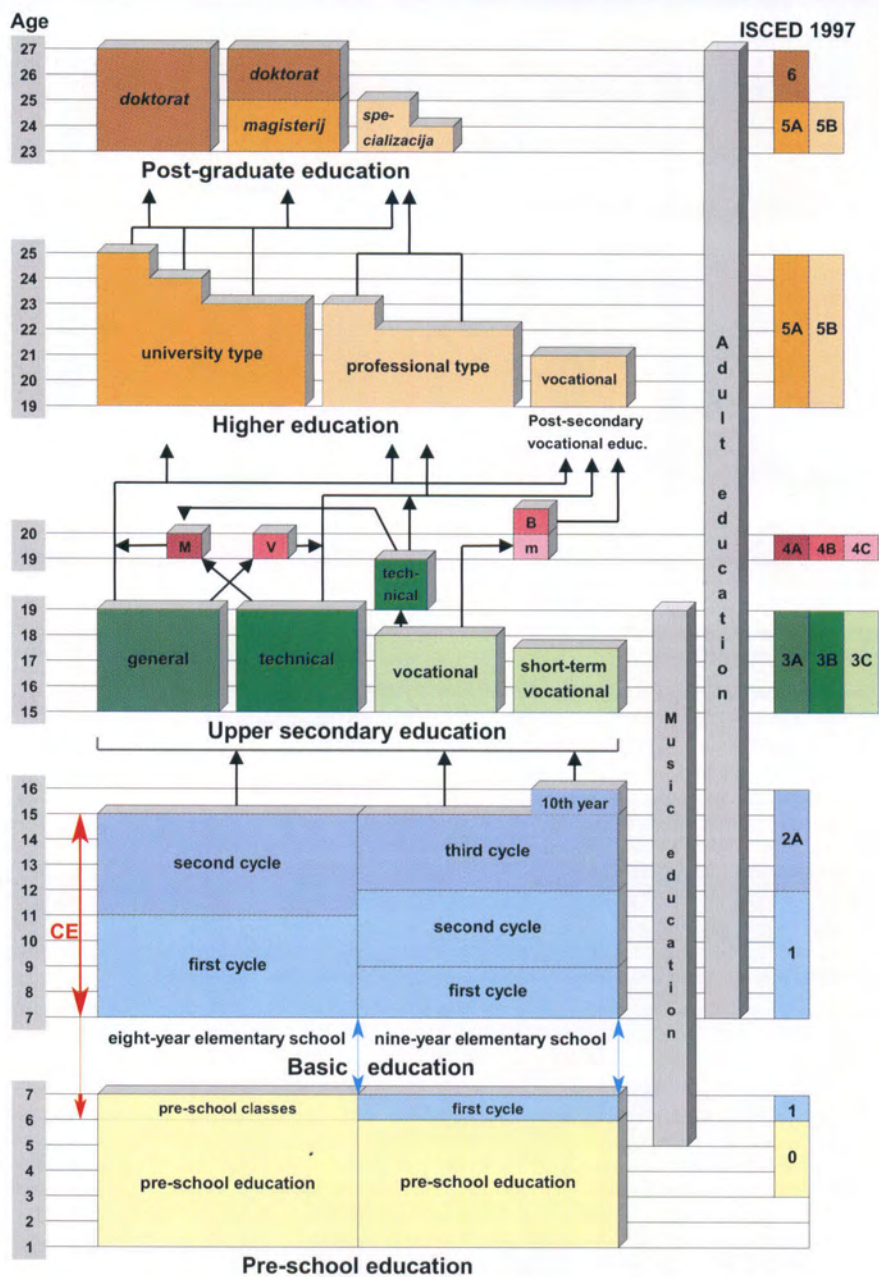
Students in doctoral programmes are not included in the data on post-graduate students because they register at the end of courses. The data on *magisterij* and *specializacija* degree studies are given for the preceding year, due to different registration deadlines during the academic year.

The number of the academic and academic support staff in higher education includes all the staff teaching in full-time courses at the undergraduate level, given as full-time equivalent (FTE): academic staff (full professors, associate professors, assistant professors, senior lecturers and lecturers), academic support staff (assistants, lecturers, holders of other titles in compliance with the rules of higher education institutions, instructors) and research staff (research advisers, senior researchers and researchers). The number of the academic and academic support staff has been converted into the FTE according to the following formula: the number of full-time employees + (the number of part-time employees/conversion coefficient). The conversion coefficient is the number of part-time employees adding up to one full-time employee. The conversion coefficient for the academic and academic support staff in higher education is 1.2647.

Symbols:

- not applicable
- ... missing or unavailable data
- .. data is smaller than 1.

The structure of the education system in Slovenia



Legend:
 CE - compulsory education M - matura course V - vocational courses
 m - master craftsman preparatory course B - bridging exam for admission to post-secondary vocational education

Classification of educational programmes by stages and levels according to ISCED 1997

Stages and levels of education	Age	Duration	ISCED-97
Pre-school education*	3 - 6		0
Basic education; first cycle	7 - 11	4 years in 8-year elementary school	1
Basic education; the first two 3-year cycles	6 - 12	6 years in 9-year elementary school	
Basic education; second cycle	12 - 15	4 years in 8-year elementary school	2A
Basic education; the third 3-year cycle	13 - 15 (16)	3 years in 9-year elementary school (plus the non-compulsory tenth year of schooling)	
Short-term vocational education	15 - 17.5	2.5 years	3C
Secondary vocational education	15 - 18	3 years	3C
Secondary technical education	15 - 19	4 years	3B
Vocational-technical education	15 - 20	3 + 2 years	
General secondary education	15 - 19	4 years	3A
Vocational courses (<i>poklicni tečajji</i>)	19 and above	1 year	4B
<i>Matura</i> course	19 and above	1 year	4A
Education leading to master craftsman examinations	22 and above	not determined	4C
Post-secondary vocational education	19 - 21	2 years	5B - short programmes
Short-term higher education**	19 - 21/22	2 to 3 years	5A - short programmes
Professional type of higher education	19 - 22/23	3 or 4 years	5B - long programmes
University type of higher education	19 - 23/25	4 to 6 years	5A - long programmes
Post-graduate education - <i>specializacija</i>	22 and above	1 to 2 years	5B - second degree
Post-graduate education - <i>magisterij</i>	23 and above	2 years	5A - second degree
Post-graduate education - <i>doktorat znanosti</i>	23 and above	4 years	6
Post-graduate education after <i>magisterij</i> - <i>doktorat znanosti</i>	25 and above	2 years	6

* In Slovenia, pre-school education is not classified as part of education by stages.

** The Higher Education Act (1994) abolished short-term higher education programmes. The last cohort of students enrolled in the academic year 1995/96. Students who had enrolled before had the right to complete their studies, therefore they still appear in the educational statistics for 1998/99.

THE INTERNATIONAL STANDARD CLASSIFICATION OF EDUCATION

ISCED is a multi-purpose system designed for the comparative analysis of education systems, whatever the respective structure of the national education systems and whatever the stage of economic development of individual countries. The ISCED levels stand for broad steps on the educational ladder from very elementary to more complex experiences; the more complex the programme, the higher the level of education. The notion of the "level of education" is related to the degree of complexity of curriculum contents. Classification by levels, however, cannot be based directly on educational contents because the contents of educational programmes cannot be directly assessed and compared in an internationally consistent way. Curricula are far too diverse, multi-faceted and complex to permit unambiguous determinations that one curriculum belongs to a higher level of education than another. International curricula standards that are needed to support such judgements do not as yet exist.

The ISCED empirically assumes that there exist several criteria which can help point to the level of education into which any given education programme should be classified. These may be admission criteria, possibilities for the continuation of education, typical age of participants, teaching staff qualifications, etc. The level of the programme is determined by applying such criteria.

0 PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION

Programmes at level 0 are designed for children aged at least 3 and up to the age limit depending on the typical age for entry into primary education. Pre-primary education is distinguished from child-care by staff qualification requirements (pedagogical and para-medical, respectively).

1 PRIMARY EDUCATION OR FIRST STAGE OF BASIC EDUCATION

Programmes at level 1 are designed for children, the legal age of entrance being not younger than 5 years or older than 7 years. This level covers in principle six years of full-time schooling. Programmes are organised in projects rather than by subjects. In countries where primary education is part of "basic education", only the first stage should be included in level 1. If "basic education" is not officially divided into stages, only the first six years should be classified as level 1.

2 LOWER SECONDARY OR SECOND STAGE OF BASIC EDUCATION

Programmes at this level are designed to complete the provision of basic education, which began at ISCED level 1. Children having completed approximately six years of primary education enrol in education at this level. The level ends after some nine years of schooling since the beginning of primary education. The end of this level often coincides with the end of compulsory education. Often, at the beginning of this level, several teachers start to conduct classes in their field of specialisation. ISCED level 2 programmes can be sub-classified according to the type of subsequent education or career destination and the programme orientation (A – general, B – pre-vocational, C – vocational). In countries where primary education is part of “basic education”, the second stage of “basic education” should be included in level 2. If “basic education” is not officially divided into stages, the years after the sixth should be classified as level 2.

3 (UPPER) SECONDARY EDUCATION

For those countries which have a system of compulsory education, this level typically begins at the end of full-time compulsory education. The typical entrance age to this level is 15 or 16 years. The entrance qualification for this level is the completion of approximately nine years of full-time education or other minimum entrance requirements. Programmes can be sub-classified by the type of subsequent education or destination, programme orientation, and cumulative theoretical duration of education since the beginning of level 3.

- ISCED 3A: programmes providing direct access to higher education at universities (level 5A and level 6)
- ISCED 3B: programmes providing direct access to professional higher education programmes (level 5B)
- ISCED 3C: programmes not designed to lead directly to post-secondary or higher education programmes but either directly to the labour market or to level 4 or other level 3 programmes.

4 POST-SECONDARY NON TERTIARY EDUCATION

ISCED 4 includes programmes that straddle the boundary between upper secondary and post-secondary education from an international point of view, even though they might clearly be considered as upper secondary or post-secondary programmes in a national context. They are often not significantly more advanced than programmes at

level 3, but they do serve to broaden the knowledge of participants who have already completed a programme at level 3. Typical examples are programmes designed to prepare students for studies at level 5, who, although having completed level 3, did not follow a curriculum which would allow entry to level 5. The students are typically older than those in upper secondary programmes. Programmes can last from six months to two years. They can be sub-classified by the type of subsequent education or destination, cumulative theoretical duration since the beginning of level 3, and the programme orientation.

- ISCED 4A includes programmes that prepare for entry to level 5A and 6 programmes.
- ISCED 4B includes programmes primarily designed for direct entry to level 5B.
- ISCED 4C includes programmes designed for labour market entry.

5 FIRST STAGE OF TERTIARY EDUCATION

The following criteria are relevant for the definition of this level: entrance requirements (successful completion of level 3A or 3B or 4A or 4B); the cumulative theoretical duration of these programmes must be at least two years from the beginning of level 5. Subdivision permits classification by the type of programmes (theoretically or practically based), the cumulative theoretical duration, and the position in the national degree or qualification structure (first, second or further degree).

- ISCED 5A programmes are tertiary programmes that are largely theoretically based and provide entry into advanced academic programmes. They have a minimum cumulative theoretical duration of at least three years, although typically they are of four or more years. If three years are required for a degree, it is usually preceded by at least 13 years of previous schooling. For systems in which degrees are awarded by credit accumulation, a comparable amount of time and intensity is required.
- ISCED 5B programmes are typically shorter than those in 5A and focus on occupationally specific skills geared for entry into the labour market, although some theoretical foundations may be covered in respective programmes.

6 SECOND STAGE OF TERTIARY EDUCATION

This level includes tertiary programmes that lead to the award of an advanced research qualification. Programmes are therefore devoted to advanced study and original research, and are not based on lectures only. This level prepares graduates for faculty posts in institutions offering ISCED 5A programmes and research posts in government, industry, etc.