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REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA

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**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SPORT**

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# **THE DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION NATIONAL REPORT OF SLOVENIA**

**2008**

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- *National Report of Slovenia on the Implementation of the Education and Training 2010 Work Programme*, Ministry of Education and Sport, 2007

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## 1. Identity card of education in Slovenia

Education in Slovenia starts with preschool education in public and private kindergartens. It is regulated by organic law and executive regulations.

Educational activities involve almost all Slovene families with children who go to kindergarten or schools, adults who are doing advanced studies or training for life and work, or older adults who are perhaps attending university of the third age. The official teaching language is Slovene.

**Preschool education** is carried out by public and private kindergartens. Kindergartens include children from the age of one until they enter school. Preschool education is not compulsory. Providing preschool education is one of the basic tasks of municipalities, which establish and fund kindergartens.

Compulsory **nine-year elementary school** falls into three-year cycles. Children enrol in nine-year elementary schools at the age of six.

In comparison with other European countries, Slovenia has well-developed basic music education in public and private music schools, which also offer ballet and dance.

Secondary education includes 98% of the population aged 15–19 in spite of being non-compulsory. It is divided into vocational and technical education, and general secondary education.

**Vocational and technical education** is the most diversified part of the educational system. Education planning, programming and implementation are regulated by principles of social partnership. Students can receive short-term vocational education (normally lasting two and a half years), secondary vocational education (normally three years in school or, in the dual system, alternately in school and at the place of employment), secondary technical education (four-year programme, or two years after completing a three-year programme, or a one-year vocational course after completing *gimnazija*) or post-secondary vocational education (two-year programme, at least 40% at the place of employment). Secondary technical qualifications can also be obtained by passing the master craftsman, foreman or shop manager exam at the Chamber of Craft or Chamber of Commerce.

**General secondary education** is carried out by *gimnazije* (general secondary schools) – general *gimnazija* (including the classical variant with Latin and Greek) and *gimnazija* with specialisation (technical, economics and art). *Gimnazija* finishes with the *matura* examination, which is a general condition for admission to university and also allows enrolment in post-secondary and higher education.

**Post-secondary vocational education** supplements or rounds off the range of studies in tertiary education. In the 1990s, post-secondary (or higher) vocational education in Slovenia was thoroughly reformed, since it no longer had a place in higher education institutions after the Higher Education Act came into effect in 1993. In 1996, the first new, two-year post-secondary vocational programmes comparable to European programmes were adopted on the basis of actual human resource requirements of the economy. Higher vocational education is defined as “short-term higher education” and

study programmes are predominantly practical. Vocational colleges provide training in those skills that do not require a higher education diploma.

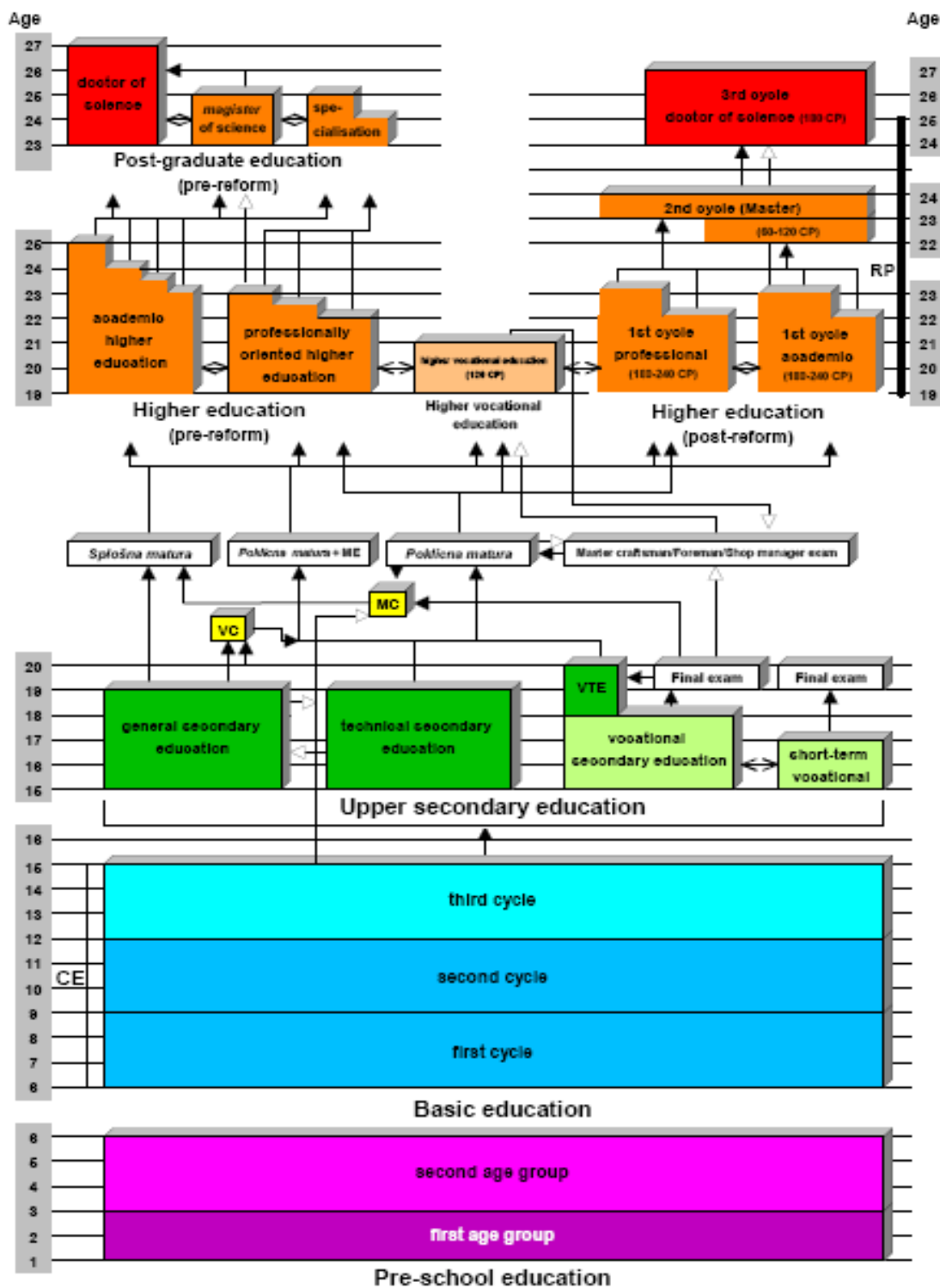
**Higher education** comprises three levels. The first level includes higher professional programmes and academic (university) programmes, the second level master's programmes and the third doctoral programmes. Until the Higher Education Act was changed in 2004, there were two levels of higher education, undergraduate and postgraduate level (pre-Bologna Declaration programmes). This change laid the foundation for the reform of programmes and their execution according to Bologna principles. The academic year 2006/07 offers parallel undergraduate and postgraduate programmes adjusted to the Bologna Declaration. The old system, which still prevails, is based on the binary structure of university and professional studies. Undergraduate university studies, which usually last four, four and a half, five or six years, are followed by two-year master study programmes based on research. A doctoral degree can be obtained in two ways: by entering four-year studies after the first degree, which includes theoretical subjects and individual research work, or by completing two-year master studies and two-year doctoral studies in the form of individual research work and mentor consultations. Professional studies, which last three to four years, continue with one- or two-year specialist studies. Direct progression from professional studies to master or doctoral studies is an exception.

Higher education falls within the competence of the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology.

**Adults** can be educated in special educational programmes for adults or in programmes for young people. Educational organisations adapt the time of classes, duration, assessment and promotion system to adults and also recognise previously acquired knowledge. The Republic of Slovenia has a network of peoples' universities, public educational organisations for adults, as well as a varied range of public schools and private organisations for adult education.

**In multi-ethnic areas** in Slovene Istria, members of the Italian ethnic group are provided education in Italian with obligatory Slovene lessons, while other schools in this area have compulsory Italian lessons in elementary and secondary school. In the multi-ethnic area where members of the Hungarian ethnic group live, instruction in elementary and secondary schools is bilingual, using Slovene and Hungarian.

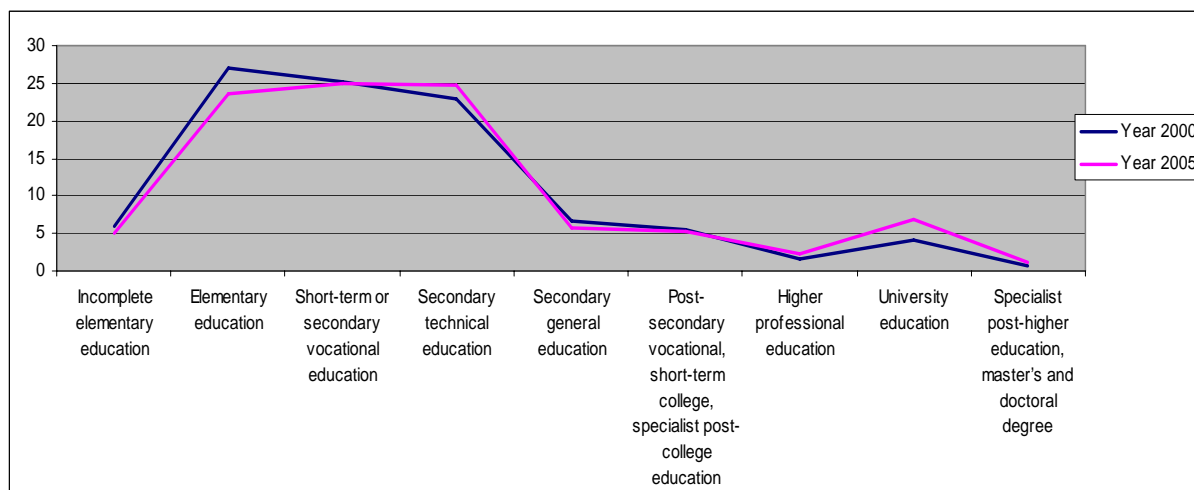
## The Structure of the Education System in Slovenia 2006/07



**Legend:** CE - compulsory education    RP - study programmes according to EU directives (regulated professions)    CP - credit points  
 ← general access    <— access under certain conditions    VTE - vocational-technical education    VC - vocational course  
 ↔ transfer    MC - matura course    ME - additional exam in one matura subject

## Educational level of the population

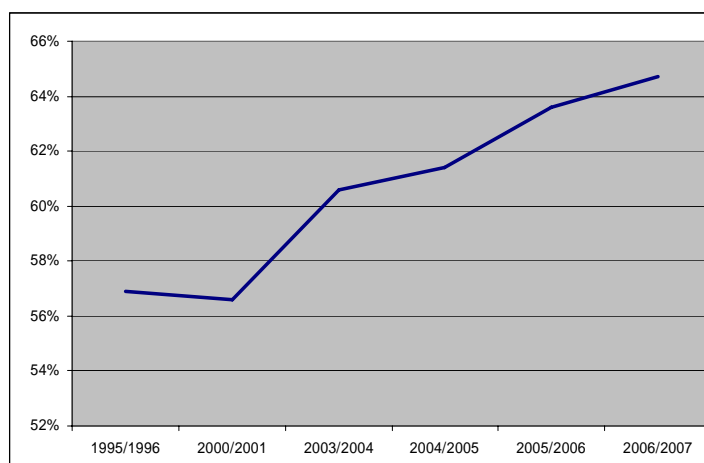
In Slovenia, the educational level of the population is rising, since the number of inhabitants with incomplete elementary school is 15% down on the year 2000 and the number with completed elementary school is only 12% lower.



(Source: Statistical Yearbook, 2001 and 2006, SURS)

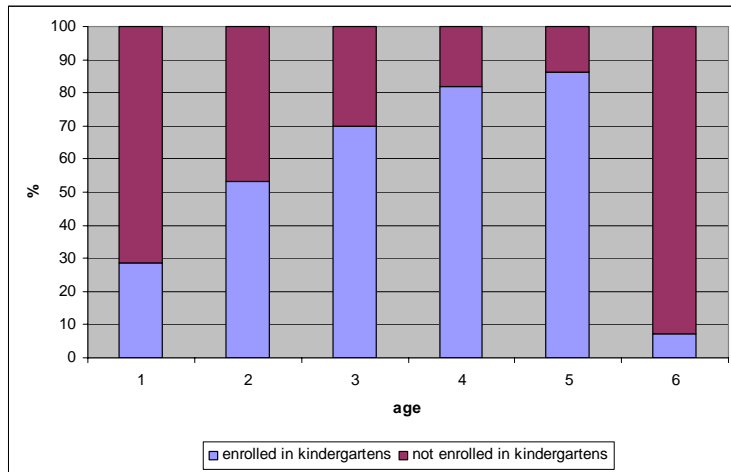
### 1.1. Preschool education

Kindergartens are established by municipalities. Enrolment in kindergartens is optional, but nine-year elementary school, which is entered at the age of 6, is compulsory. The share of children included in kindergartens in the 2004-2008 period increased by 4.1 percentage points or 6.3%.



The participation rate of children in kindergartens is growing. In the academic year 1991/1992, less than a half of all children of the appropriate age were included in preschool education, whereas in the academic year 2006/2007, almost two thirds, or 64.7%, of children of appropriate age were included.





In the academic year 2006/2007, preschool education programmes were carried out by 19 private kindergartens, which accounts for 2.4% of all kindergartens. They were attended by 975 children. (Source: *www.stat.s*)

## 1.2. Elementary school education

Elementary school education is carried out by elementary schools, elementary schools with adapted programmes and educational institutions for children with special needs. Elementary education for adults is organised in elementary schools for children and in peoples' universities. International schools are organised for foreign citizens. Elementary education is carried out according to the nine-year elementary school programme.

Compulsory elementary education is free for children and young people.

Elementary schools are established by municipalities.

Regarding kindergarten and school bodies, school councils have an important role in decentralising management. It consists of: three representatives of the founder, three staff representatives and three parents' representatives.

Among other things, the council is responsible for appointing and dismissing the kindergarten or school head teacher, approving kindergarten or school development programmes, the annual action plan and reports on its implementation, deciding on the introduction of above-standard and other programmes, etc.

The pedagogical leader and manager of a public kindergarten or school is the head teacher. A public kindergarten or school may appoint an assistant head teacher to help the head teacher with management and pedagogical responsibilities.

In a public educational institution where an organisational unit for implementing programmes for preschool children or an individual educational programme is formed, management activities may be performed by the director of the public educational institution, and the function of pedagogical leader of the organisational unit by its head teacher.

### *Educational cycles of elementary education*

Elementary school grades (unified structure of primary and lower secondary education)	9-year compulsory schooling
First cycle 1–3	Age: 6–8
Second cycle 4–6	Age: 9–11
Third cycle 7–9	Age: 12–14

In the first cycle, a class has one teacher for almost all subjects, and specialist subject teachers teach, in cooperation with class teachers, physical education, music, drawing, languages in multi-ethnic areas and an elective foreign language. In the first year there are two teachers in class at the same time, the second one being a preschool teacher or class teacher. In the second cycle, teaching is gradually taken over by specialist subject teachers, first by teachers of artistic and sport subjects, and foreign language teachers. The third cycle (7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade) is taught entirely by subject teachers. Since the academic year 2006/2007, some subjects (mother tongue, mathematics, foreign language in the last two years – 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade) may be taught by two teachers. Alternatively, streaming or differentiation may be introduced.

Children with special needs have the right to prolonged compulsory education (up to 3 years). Children who have met the requirements of compulsory education and completed at least seven elementary school grades may continue their education in short-term programmes of vocational education.

### *Elementary school enrolment*

Compulsory education is free for all children. The first grade is intended for children aged six in the calendar year of enrolment. By law, parents have the obligation and right to choose public school, private school or home tuition. The enrolment of children is the responsibility of the district school, and parents have the right to make the choice of the school, which must then give its consent. At the request of the parents, it is possible to assess a child's maturity for school and postpone his/her enrolment.

### *Duration of academic year, week and day*

The academic year comprises 175 to 190 school days (depending on holidays) and lasts from 1 September to 31 August of the next year. Classes are taught five days a week, and the minimum number of periods is 20 (first grade) to 30 (ninth grade) (or 32 in bilingual schools and schools with Italian as the teaching language), depending on grade and the number of elective subjects and extra-curricular activities. According to recent changes in legislation, the academic year is now divided into two assessment periods, but schools may keep the previous division into three assessment periods if preferred.

### *Class size*

In the academic year 2007/2008, the number of pupils per teacher (full teaching load, hereinafter: FTE) was 13.9 and the number of children with special needs 8.0. The average class size in the academic year 2007/2008 was 19.3 (the law allows a maximum of 28 pupils in one class). In schools with adapted programmes for children with special

needs, the average class has 6.1 children. All children in a class are usually of the same age; in smaller schools there may be children of different ages (single-class schools). The Rules on Norms and Standards allow a reduced number of pupils if a class includes Roma children or children with special needs.

### *National curriculum*

The national curriculum approved by the national Expert Council for General Education determines subjects and syllabuses. Teachers choose teaching methods and textbooks autonomously.

Compulsory school subjects are:

- in the first cycle of education: the mother tongue (Slovene, Hungarian and Italian in areas with these nationalities), mathematics, art, music, environmental studies, physical education; in the second cycle of education: the mother tongue (Slovene, Hungarian and Italian in areas with these nationalities), mathematics, foreign language, art education, music education, society, geography, history, natural sciences, natural science and technics, technics and technology, home economics, physical education, class community;
- in the third cycle of education: the mother tongue (Slovene, Hungarian and Italian in areas with these nationalities), mathematics, foreign language, art education, music education, geography, history, civic education and ethics, physics, chemistry, biology, technics and technology, physical education, optional subjects, class community;

The compulsory part of the programme also includes extramural activity days: culture, science, technical and sport days.

The extended programme offers children a choice of various extra-curricular activities (sport activities, sport competitions, school newspaper, chorus, etc.). Schools provide special lessons for very talented children, as well as those with learning difficulties. Special help is also provided for children with deficits in specific learning domains, and children with disabilities (deaf, blind and visually impaired, children with long-term illness or physical disability).

In addition schools organise morning care (before classes start) and after-school care classes, the content of which is determined in the concept of work in after-school classes.

### *Assessment, promotion and reports*

Teachers assess pupils on the basis of teaching objectives and standards of knowledge specified in curricula and in accordance with assessment procedure regulations. Assessment, oral and written, takes place during the academic year, and also includes all other work produced by the children. Grades are descriptive in the first cycle, descriptive and numerical in the second and numerical only in the third cycle. During the year, pupils and parents are regularly informed of the child's progress. At the end of the academic year, children receive a report with grades in individual subjects. At the end of the second and third cycle, pupils take national tests, which serve only as feedback for the school, parents and pupils. These tests at the end of the second and third cycle include the mother tongue and mathematics, and at the end of the third cycle an additional, third subject, determined each year by the minister. Since the academic year 2005/06, the minister, in consultation with the Expert Council for General Education, determines the

third subject to be tested in each school. The results are stated in the report separately and do not affect the overall final grade.

### 1.3. Secondary education

Public vocational schools, secondary technical schools, vocational colleges and student residential facilities are established by the state. Public *gimnazije* (general secondary schools) are as a rule established by the state but may also be founded by municipalities with the state's consent.

As in kindergartens and elementary schools, the school council of a secondary school has an important role in decentralising its management and has the same responsibilities. It likewise consists of nine members (three representatives of the founder, three of the staff and three of the parents).

The pedagogical leader and managing body of a public kindergarten or school is the head teacher. A public kindergarten or school may appoint an assistant head teacher.

In a public educational institution where an organisational unit for implementing an individual educational programme is formed, management activities may be performed by the director of the public educational institution and the function of pedagogical leader of the organisational unit by its head teacher.

At the beginning of the academic year 2006/2007, Slovenia had 142 secondary schools, 6 of which were private. In that academic year, public secondary schools were attended by 99 272 students, or 97.9% of all students.

#### *Types of education*

<i>General secondary education – gimnazija</i>	15–18 years of age (4 years)
<i>Secondary technical education</i>	15–18 years of age (4 years)
<i>Secondary vocational–technical education</i>	15–19 years of age (3 +2 years)
<i>Secondary vocational education</i>	15–17 years of age (3 years)
<i>Short-term vocational education</i>	15–16 years of age (2 years)
<i>Matura course</i>	(one year)
<i>Vocational courses</i>	(one year)

(Source: *National summary sheets on education systems in Europe and ongoing reforms*, Eurydice, 2006, [www.eurydice.org](http://www.eurydice.org))

The **gimnazija programme** is the most general secondary educational programme and is preparatory to further studies.

The curriculum of the general *gimnazija* programme comprises three basic parts:

- four-year and compulsory subjects (fixed number, content and scope of subjects);

- unspecified periods of a certain number which must be completed by students, accounting for 14% of the entire programme; unspecified periods aim to broaden the students' knowledge in their chosen subjects and prepare them for *matura*;
- elective compulsory activities of fixed scope, amounting to 6.6% of the entire programme.

This programme segment differs in method and content. It involves fields of knowledge which school subjects do not (or just partly) cover and reflect students' individual preferences.

In the first three years, the educational programme lasts 38 weeks, 35 of which are weeks with classes. In the fourth year, classes are also organised over 35 weeks. One week is reserved for elective compulsory activities.

Compulsory four-year subjects are: Slovene, mathematics, first and second foreign language, history and physical education. Compulsory subjects are: geography, biology, chemistry, physics, music and art education, psychology, sociology, philosophy and information science.

In planning the programme, the key emphasis is on:

- achieving general education, and
- developing the knowledge, skills, abilities and habits necessary for further academic studies.

The balance among the three parts of the curriculum differs each year, i.e. the curriculum is entirely fixed in the first year, after which the number of unspecified periods grows every year.

In addition to the described general *gimnazija* programme, the relevant legislation is also introducing *gimnazije* with specialisations, notably: technical, art and economics. The programme in these *gimnazije* retains the curriculum structure characteristic of all *gimnazija* programmes, but the number of unspecified periods is smaller than in general *gimnazije*. Within the framework of compulsory subjects in specialised *gimnazije*, the curriculum includes subjects of specialisation.

The *gimnazija* programme also includes the classical *gimnazija*.

The field of **vocational and technical education** is a dynamic subsystem of education, offering educational opportunities to all through different programmes.

After completing elementary school, students may choose between **three-year vocational** and **four-year technical** education. Those who have not successfully completed elementary school can enrol in **short-term vocational education**, which aims to improve basic skills (functional, mathematical literacy and literacy in natural sciences) and train students for less demanding vocations. An important option has been introduced for students in vocational education, who can now make a transition to **vocational-technical programmes** (+ 2 years) and obtain secondary technical education. **Master craftsman and foreman certification examinations** have been reintroduced, which provide secondary technical qualifications and allow progression to **programmes of post-secondary vocational education**. **Vocational course programmes** are intended for *gimnazija* students who want vocational qualifications, and **matura courses** for students of technical schools who wish to sit for the general *matura* examination.

The varied range of programmes prepared in collaboration with social partners enables high mobility between programmes in secondary education, and in this respect Slovenia ranks high among the EU Member States.

The National Vocational Qualifications Act (2000) has opened the pathway to validating informally acquired knowledge and enabled adults without formal education but with appropriate knowledge and experience to validate their knowledge and obtain a valid qualification certificate.

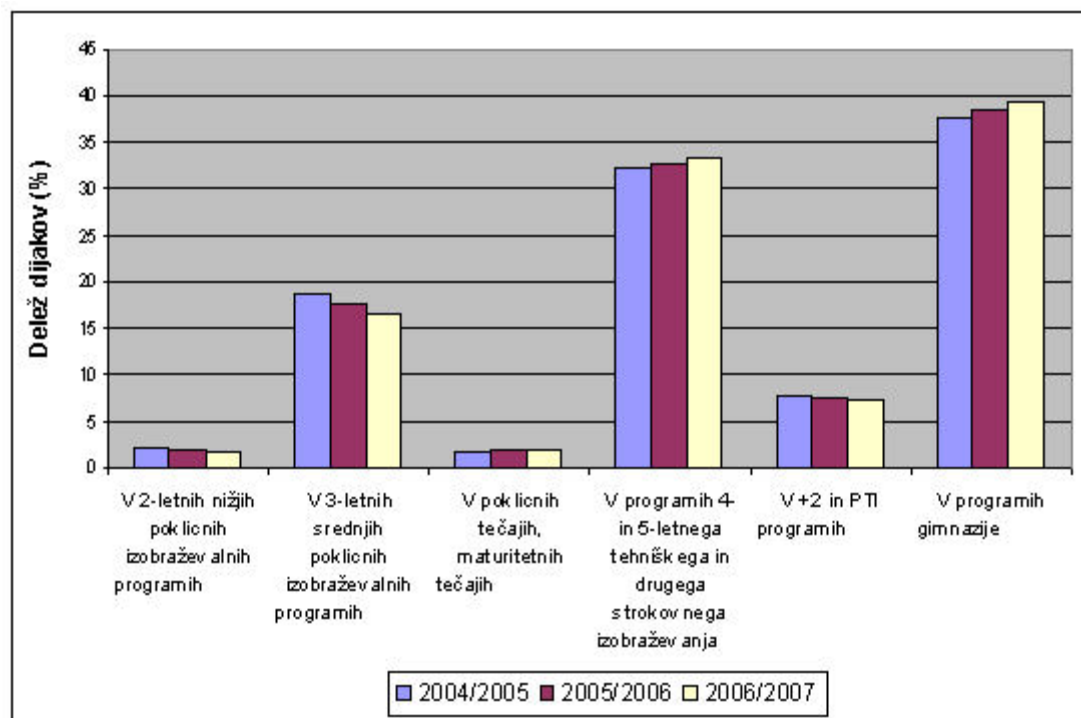
### Enrolment

Secondary education is free and aimed at students aged 15–19. Promotion from compulsory (elementary) to secondary school is regulated at the state level through a unified system of application.

In the academic year 2006/2007, 98% of students continued their schooling directly after completing compulsory education: 39.3% opted for *gimnazije*, 33.3% for technical and other professional education programmes, 16.5% for vocational education programmes, 7.3% for secondary vocational-technical programmes (3+2), 1.8% for vocational and *matura* courses, and 1.7% for short-term vocational programmes.

The completion of *gimnazija* or secondary technical school enables students a direct progression to higher education.

Students by type of educational programme, academic years 2004/2005, 2005/2006 and 2006/2007



### *National curriculum*

The Expert Council for General Education and the Expert Council for Vocational Education determine the weekly schedule of subjects and the curriculum. In general education, compulsory subjects (in individual programmes) account for 80–90% of the curriculum (Slovene, mathematics, two foreign languages, history, geography, physical education, biology, chemistry, physics, art, psychology, sociology, philosophy and information science). In secondary technical and vocational schools, the number of compulsory subjects depends on the type of school.

### *Assessment, promotion and reports*

General and technical secondary education concludes with an external examination, i.e. general or vocational *matura*. The general *matura* certificate allows students to enrol in all types of higher education, while vocational *matura* provides access to post-secondary vocational education. Finally, students who pass an additional *matura* examination may enrol in university programmes. General *matura* comprises examinations in five subjects (mathematics, mother tongue, foreign language and two elective subjects) and vocational *matura* comprises four subjects (mathematics, mother tongue and two elective subjects). After passing the examination, students get a special certificate of completed subjects and points achieved. Students who have completed vocational education take a final examination.

Master craftsman examinations are for students who have completed three-year vocational education and a minimum of three years of work experience. By sitting an additional examination they may continue schooling at a vocational college.

## **1.4. Post-secondary vocational education**

**Post-secondary vocational education** is carried out by vocational colleges with two-year programmes, which upgrade secondary technical and professional education and secondary vocational-technical education.

Post-secondary education is regulated by the Post-secondary Vocational Education Act. It provides that public schools be established by the state as public educational institutions or organisational units of an educational institution. A private school may be established by a domestic or foreign natural or legal person. It can be set up as an educational institution or commercial company, or organised as an organisational unit of an institution, commercial company or other legal person.

Schools which are organised as institutions have these bodies: school council, director, lecturers' assembly, professional working groups, study commission and quality monitoring and assurance commission.

A school organised as an organisational unit has these bodies: strategic council, head teacher, lecturers' assembly, professional working groups, study commission and commission for quality monitoring and assurance.

If a private school is organised as a commercial company, its bodies, apart from commercial bodies, are: strategic council, head teacher, lecturers' assembly, professional working groups, study commission and commission for quality monitoring and assurance.

The Post-secondary Vocational Education Act (2004) distinguishes post-secondary education from secondary education. It redefines the organisation of vocational colleges and clearly places them within the scope of tertiary education and, with the possibility of 120 vertical credits, creates a link to further professional studies at undergraduate level. Vocational colleges award diplomas stating the name of the completed programme and a supplement to the diploma in Slovene and one of the languages of the European Union. Joint study programmes are available.

The share of the population in continuing studies at the tertiary level grows every year. In the academic year 2006/2007, almost half (48.2%) of the entire population aged 19–25 participated in post-secondary or higher education. That amounts to 7.3 percentage points more than five years ago and 17.5 percentage points more than in 1997/98. (Source: [www.stat.si](http://www.stat.si))

### *Enrolment*

To enrol in a vocational college it is necessary to complete an appropriate four-year secondary vocational school or *gimnazija*. Students with appropriate three-year vocational education or three years of work experience who pass the entrance examination may also be admitted.

In the academic year 2006/07, tertiary education (i.e. higher and post-secondary vocational education) had an enrolment of 115 944 students.

In the same year, vocational colleges had an enrolment of 16 831 students, which is 10% more than the previous year and as much as 150% more than five years ago. A third of the students were full-time students, the rest part-time. Most students in vocational colleges were aged 20 to 22, but on the other hand many were over thirty (34.3%).

The number of institutions which implement effective higher and post-secondary vocational programmes is growing every year. In recent years, the number of vocational colleges has been growing even faster than the number of higher education institutions. Between the academic years 2000/01 and 2006/7, 33 new institutions were founded.

In the academic year 2006/07, 50 vocational colleges – of which more than half are private – offered 22 study programmes. (Source: [www.stat.si](http://www.stat.si))

### *Completion of studies*

Studies at vocational colleges finish with a diploma examination, which consists of a diploma project and its oral presentation. Graduates can be employed in a specific vocational area. Since the academic year 1998/99, it has been possible to continue studies in the second year of higher professional programmes.

In 2006, 2834 students graduated from post-secondary vocational programmes, that is, 21.6% up on the previous year, representing 16.5% of all graduates. Most of the graduates (as many as 60%) finished business secretary or commercialist programmes.



Moreover, in comparison with 2001, the number of graduates has increased by almost 600%.

In 2006, 17 145 students graduated at the tertiary level, or 8.6% more than the year before. The same year, post-secondary vocational, higher professional or university programmes were completed by 5.4% of the population aged 23 to 26. This share was 0.6% percentage points less in 2002.

### **1.5. Music education**

Music and dance education at the basic level is regulated by the Music School Act (2000), which covers basic and secondary music education. Basic music education, which consists of a lower and upper level, does not replace the programme of compulsory elementary school education, as it does not include the content of compulsory general education. Secondary music education, on the other hand, is part of secondary education, since students completing such education obtain secondary education qualifications.

The main goals and tasks of education in basic music schools are discovering and developing the talent for music and dance; providing suitable knowledge and experience for joining amateur ensembles, orchestras, choruses and dance groups; providing skills for further music and dance education; developing artistic experience and expression; and promoting personal development of the students according to their ability and stage of development.

Enrolment in the first year of instrumental performance, singing, ballet or modern dance takes place after passing the entrance examination, while enrolment in preschool music school and preparatory music and dance schools requires no entrance examination.

At the beginning of the academic year 2006/2007, basic music and dance education included almost 24 000 children and young people, which is 1.6% more than the year before.

Basic music and dance programmes are carried out by public and private music schools registered at the ministry.

After completing music school and passing an entrance exam, talented musicians and dancers can continue their education at the secondary level in a music or dance course at *gimnazije* specialised in the arts.

### **1.6. Adult education and training**

Secondary schools for teenagers have an important role in adult education as well.

Among the institutions organising education for adults wishing to obtain qualifications, educational units for adults are most common in schools. More than a half of secondary schools for teenagers have a unit for adults. Slightly less than a quarter of education for adults is organised by peoples' universities and the smallest part by specialised adult education organisations which, however, organize most of the informal education.

All types of education for young people, from elementary and secondary school to university studies, are also available to adults. Peoples' universities and certain other

educational institutions provide education and further training exclusively for adults. The most widespread are language schools for adults. In-service training for adults is also provided by companies in the form of courses carried out by contractors.

At the secondary level, adults can take a *matura* course preparatory to the general *matura* exam. Furthermore, they can take a vocational course and vocational *matura*.

The system of assessing and certifying national vocational qualifications (2000), prepared by the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs in collaboration with social partners, is particularly important in the field of adult education. Adults can validate their informal or any type of knowledge and obtain national vocational qualifications on the basis of national catalogues of standards. The assessment and certification procedure for obtaining national vocational qualifications is carried out on a case-by-case basis.

The emphasis is on acquired knowledge regardless of how such knowledge, skill or experience was gained. This experience could have been acquired through various modes of informal learning, lifelong learning, work experience or formal education.

The participation rate of adults in Slovenia is above the planned goal of the European Union (12.5%) and was 17.8% in 2005 (source: EUROSTAT).

### **1.7. Formal and informal education**

Systematising various types of education, formal, informal and occasional education is one of the more dynamic areas of education. Specific strategies and measures in this area also observe the professional groundwork laid in the European Union.

In 2006 the National Vocational Qualifications Act was adopted, providing a foundation for linking formal and informal education. The Act also serves as a basis for the transfer of achievements and competences (credit system) between different fields and levels of education and training, and ensures transparent and systematic procedures of certification.

In 2006, a model for credit allocation to learning outcomes in secondary education and post-secondary vocational programmes was prepared. In the last two years, reform of secondary education programmes, which will be allocated credits, has been underway. There are plans to harmonize the model of credit allocation to programmes in the area of vocational and professional education with the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET).

### **1.8. Teachers**

Preschool teachers must have a three-year higher professional education (first level programme according to the Bologna Declaration) and preschool teacher assistants secondary education.

Elementary and secondary school teachers must have at least a four-year university education (second level according to the Bologna Declaration).

Teachers in the first three-year cycle of elementary school can be class teachers, and in the second cycle, class teachers or specialist subject teachers; in the third cycle only specialist subject teachers can teach.

In the academic year 2005/2006, elementary schools implementing regular programmes employed 17 713 teachers, elementary schools with adapted programmes 856 teachers, and educational institutions carrying out programmes for adults 475 teachers.

Depending on the institution and subject, teachers in vocational and secondary technical schools must complete university or higher professional education (first or second level) or have the highest possible qualifications in their field, and have completed pedagogical training of at least 30 credits of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). Furthermore, at least three years of work experience is required.

Teachers in vocational colleges (lecturers and senior lecturers) must have a university degree and be experienced experts (experts in practical training) or university teachers (with a doctoral degree).

In 2006, 1653 people with different teaching loads taught in vocational colleges, of which 532,5 had FTE.

Teachers in the public sector have the status of public employees.

Educational workers are organised into professional bodies.

The professional bodies in public kindergartens are the teachers' assembly and professional working group.

The professional bodies in a public school are the teachers' assembly, class teachers' assembly, class teacher and professional working groups.

The professional bodies in a public vocational college are the lecturers' assembly, professional working groups and study commission.

## 2. Major advances in the educational system in the period

Development of education was based on the following aims and starting points.

### **In the area of preschool education:**

- providing conditions for wider inclusion of preschool children, specifically 40% of children of the first age group and 90% inclusion of the second age group;
- providing financial aid to parents paying for kindergartens (the state pay for the second and all additional children in a family, all of which are in kindergarten);
- developing various forms of preschool education;
- providing parents' rights to a varied range of preschool programmes;
- assessing and ensuring quality in preschool education.

### **In the area of elementary school:**

- developing more flexible organisational forms of educational activity;
- assessing and ensuring the quality of teaching and learning;
- raising the level of student achievement, particularly in the field of key competences;
- achieving more efficient integration of all social groups into education;
- a more systematic incorporation and implementation of the role of upbringing on the part of schools (upbringing school plan) and the participation of parents in preparing the upbringing plan.

### **In the field of secondary education:**

- assessing and ensuring the quality of teaching and learning;
- developing a model of student achievement evaluation;
- developing various didactic strategies of teaching;
- training students for further education and involvement in various forms of lifelong learning;
- developing various organisational forms and possibilities for education;
- developing educational programmes with a modular and open structure which will enable a rapid response to new demands of the labour market and a wider range of options, while enabling adults to obtain NVQ and step-by-step education;
- reducing academic failure, particularly the dropout rate in vocational and technical education;
- developing systems for the validation of informal and non formal knowledge, and connecting the school and certificate system in light of lifelong learning and the national qualifications framework;
- strengthening the connection between research, teaching practice and school policy.

### **In the field of adult education:**

- improving the education level of the population;
- developing models for recognizing informal and ad hoc education;
- developing various forms of adult education.

The text below presents certain changes in individual areas of the educational system in the Republic of Slovenia in the period 2005–2007.

## 2.1. Education organisation and financing

There have been trial changes introduced in the organisation of educational activities basing on a modified conception of knowledge, assessment of all student achievements (not just within school subjects), introduction of the credit system (easier transfer between various parts of the formal system), and more flexible organisation of education (educational organisation by grades or years is no longer determined at the national level). Such projects will be co-financed with European structural funds.

In 2004, the ministry started to modernise the system of funding and administrating secondary education (MOFAS), which is based on lump sum financing (per capita), allows schools greater professional and financial autonomy and a faster response to the demands of the labour market and environment, and at the same time charges them with greater responsibility for educational results and encourages them to seek solutions leading both to improved quality and internal economy. This involves the estimation of programme costs per student, which also gives schools more autonomy in distributing funds and binds them to carry out an ongoing process of self-evaluation. This is a pilot project, broadening every year. In the academic year 2006/07 it involved 31 vocational and technical schools and in the next year around 50. Under the bill for the Education Organisation and Funding Act, all secondary schools should be financed according to the MOFAS system by the year 2012/13.

## 2.2. Accessibility and equal opportunity

The share of children included in kindergartens in the 2004-2008 period increased by 4.1 percentage points or 6.3%.

The share of secondary education students in relation to the generational cohort also increased in this period to 98%. Enrolment in *gimnazije* and secondary vocational and technical programmes has been evenly increasing in the last three years, and enrolment in vocational courses and the matura course has been slowly increasing as well. Enrolment in lower and secondary vocational programmes has been decreasing. Enrolment in vocational-technical educational programmes is unchanged. Those who are unable to successfully complete vocational education may obtain a *national vocational qualifications (NVQ)* certificate that enables them to enter the labour market.

Share of the population, who continues with the studies on a tertiary level, is higher every year. In the academic year 2006/2007 almost half (48.2%) of all population aged 19–23 was included in post-secondary vocational or higher education. This is an increase by 3.7 percentage points compared to the year 2004.

In the beginning of the academic year 2006/2007, 23 786 children and young people were included in basic music and dance education.

Since 2004, funds for subsidising school meals and transport have been increasing and textbook funds are showing results. However, there is still a correlation between the socioeconomic status of students and their choice of certain types of education.

In 2005, Resolution on the national nutritional policy programme 2005–2010 was adopted which regulates the field of nutrition.

On the basis of the Resolution, the Ministry of Health in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Sport prepared the Guidelines of healthy nutrition in educational institutions in 2005. They represent a professional basis to ensure appropriate nutrition in relation to health in kindergartens, schools, institutions, and residence halls for students. It has to be harmonised with the healthy nutrition principles for children and young people as well as the principle that meals have to consist of recommended combinations of various types of foods from all food groups.

In 2008 the Subsidized Secondary School Students Meals Act was adopted, which should systematically regulate the nutrition of secondary school students in a similar manner as it is already regulated for higher education students. The Act defines the secondary school students meals in a broader manner than ever before. It is important that every secondary school student receives a warm meal during classes and normally within school premises.

Share of pupils included in the textbook fund has been increasing every year, in 2007 it was already 91%, and an increase is expected in the future as well.

In 2006, pupils from 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> grade could borrow textbooks for free, in 2007 students from 1<sup>st</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> grade could borrow textbooks for free, and in 2008 for the first time in the history of the country all **elementary school** pupils could borrow textbooks for free from textbook funds.

In 2005, the Resolution on the National Programme for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men 2005–2013, which also includes goals and measures in the field of education, was adopted. Its main aim is the systematic integration of equal gender opportunities into curricula and syllabuses, textbooks and other study materials, as well as education and training of professional workers. By 2013 the European Social Fund will help us co-finance projects in kindergartens and schools, which will include, apart from education for gender equality, equal and responsible parenting, prevention of violence against women, sexual abuse, etc. Moreover, specific initiatives for the elimination of stereotyping “female” and “male” professions will have to be developed so that students will choose both to an equal degree, thus decreasing gender segregation in the labour market.

### **2.3. Introducing the concept of learning outcomes**

Since 2005, national assessment in elementary school has served as feedback on students' results (study of development) and is voluntary for 6<sup>th</sup> grade pupils and compulsory for 9<sup>th</sup> grade pupils (in 2006 it was taken by 98% of all students). The tests are designed to facilitate analysis of achievement in terms of curriculum goals and taxonomic levels.

In the field of vocational and technical education, the new national framework curricula have a modular structure, are competence-based and rated in credits. Twenty percent of the curriculum is open for local requirements. Learning outcomes are determined in the sense of acquired professional competences (linking theory and practice, training in companies) and upgrading key competences and general knowledge. New programmes enable easier vertical and horizontal transfer of students, and adults' certificates of informally acquired knowledge will be recognised in their further education.

The foundation for programmes of vocational and technical education, national vocational qualifications and certification of informally acquired knowledge are vocational standards based on identified economic requirements for new skills and competences. This strengthens the interaction between education and the labour market, and improves the

practical value of programmes. In the future, more attention will have to be devoted to the methodology of setting standards.

General and technical secondary education concludes with an external examination, i.e. general or vocational *matura*.

Databases of learning outcomes serve to guide policies at school and national levels. Since the academic year 2005/06, we have been developing a model of added value for more effective use of these databases. The results of the project are in particular meant to facilitate greater objectivity in assessing the effect of the quality of school activities on student achievement.

#### **2.4. Systems of quality assessment and assurance**

Recent years have seen the development and introduction of various systems of quality assessment and assurance. In Slovenia, mechanisms of quality assessment have been introduced at the national level, specifically by joining international studies (international studies such as PISA, TIMSS, PIRLS are underway), with national examinations of knowledge (national examinations at the end of elementary school, and general and vocational *matura*) and national quality indices. At the same time, various mechanisms of self-evaluation and internal quality assurance have been developed and introduced.

Evaluation of educational programmes and syllabuses is directed by the Evaluation Council, whose tasks are: to coordinate the monitoring of effective new programmes, define the strategies and procedures of evaluation in more detail, identify fundamental evaluation issues, and monitor the execution of evaluation studies.

Evaluation of educational programmes in Slovenia involves: the Educational Research Institute, the National Institute for Vocational Education and Training, the Slovene Institute for Adult Education and the National Examinations Centre.

External system evaluation is carried out by the Inspectorate of the Republic of Slovenia for Education and Sport. School inspection includes supervision of the implementation of laws and other regulations and acts regulating organisation, allocation of public funds and performance of educational activities carried out by kindergartens, elementary schools, music schools, short-term and secondary vocational schools, secondary technical schools, *gimnazije*, vocational colleges, institutions for education and training of children and young people with special needs, and organisations for adult education and private persons enrolled in applicable programmes. School inspection also involves supervision of the implementation of laws and other regulations and acts which regulate residential facilities for elementary and secondary school students.

#### **2.5. School cooperation within environment**

School cooperation within the environment is developed through various projects (UNESCO Schools, Healthy Schools, student research work, culture).

New curricula in the field of vocational and technical education, which are 20% open, promote intensive cooperation of schools in the general environment and local companies. European Social Fund has helped establish centres for human resources

development at a national level, which include employers, schools, regional development agencies and chambers.

Slovenia also has centres for lifelong learning, which work with social partners (employees), schools providing adult education, regional developmental agencies and counselling and self-education providers. Similarly, the models for adult education information and counselling centres, and youth information and counselling centres (ISIO and ISM) involve cooperation with local partners towards establishing a network of as many providers or educational and counselling services for adults as possible in order to ensure quality, comprehensive and coordinated operation of all subjects.

## **2.6. Updating curricula and assessment systems**

In the last 2 years, trial implementation of flexible schedules of subjects has been introduced in elementary schools. Moreover, programmes for vocational and technical education have been reformed. In the field of vocational and technical education, the new national framework curricula have a modular structure, are competence-based and have been allocated credits. Twenty percent of the curriculum is open for local requirements.

Since 2005, the updating of elementary school and *gimnazije* syllabuses has been underway, embodying the concept of key competences.

In the last three years much attention was devoted to assessment systems (New Culture of Assessment and Examination project). Models have been developed for monitoring student progress with a portfolio (e.g. language portfolio).

## **2.7. Teacher education and training**

The key focus is on initial teacher training (pedagogical study programmes are being adjusted to the Bologna reforms) and modernising pedagogical adult education training. Descriptions of teaching competences and a proposal for criteria in accrediting pedagogical study programmes have been prepared.

With the help of European Social Fund, the years 2005/06 have seen the introduction of professional teacher training, which now involves more forms and is more goal-oriented on competences a teacher should nowadays have. Teachers are thus able to choose from programmes of in-service training and programmes of professional training. The former are aimed at meeting requirements for obtaining a licence and the latter at providing high professional qualifications for teaching in a specific subject field (knowledge of expertise development) and familiarisation with effective pedagogical practices.

Several projects were prepared for systematic upgrading of required teaching competences, mostly co-financed by European Social Fund: team planning and implementation of the school curriculum, counselling and support for individuals in acquiring new knowledge (individualised educational plans, portfolio), introduction of project and problem-solving work, learning study skills, using information and communication technology, literacy, introduction of e-learning, networking schools, companies and teachers, development of the TNet network (Teacher Training Network). Furthermore, programmes of cooperation between schools and business have been



developed and carried out, focusing on training teachers and mentors of practical training.

## **2.8. Increasing the accessibility and opportunities for adult education in underprivileged groups**

To improve accessibility and opportunities for the education of adults in underprivileged groups (unemployed, disabled, Roma and persons with difficulty finding employment), various activities have been developed in recent years:

- *Training for Life Successfulness (TLS)*

TLS programmes are effective programmes for raising the level of literacy in adults, intended for less educated vulnerable groups in the labour market. The essential core of all the programmes is the acquisition and development of basic skills related to literacy (reading, writing, arithmetic), social skills, principles of lifelong learning and active citizenship and computer skills. Specific programme content is shaped by the educational needs and interests of individual target groups; programmes are adjusted to five different groups of less-educated adults.

- *Project Learning for Young Adults*

This effective programme of informal education is aimed at young people aged 15 to 25 who for various reasons have left school early and are without any education, making it difficult for them to find employment in the labour market. The primary goal of the programme is to help young people gain experience and knowledge which could bring them success in further education or a chosen career. Other essential goals are acquiring functional knowledge, which develops general education, breadth and flexibility of mind, gaining positive learning experiences, a clearly thought out vocational vision and developing critical and problem-solving thinking.

- *Institutional training programmes*

These programmes aim to increase employability through acquiring skills and knowledge. The programmes are mostly intended for unemployed persons without suitable qualifications and work experience, and unemployed persons in redundant professions.

- *National Vocational Qualifications*

The NVQ programme enables participants to obtain a public certificate establishing their national vocational qualifications, which states their acquired knowledge and skills required for performing an occupation or certain tasks within an occupation. The programme is aimed at all unemployed persons, including underprivileged groups.

- *On-the-job training*

The goal is to accelerate the employment and work reintegration of persons whose existing knowledge, skills and work experience are unfavourable to immediate employment or keeping a job. The programme is aimed at all unemployed persons, including underprivileged groups.

- *Programme of education of unemployed persons*

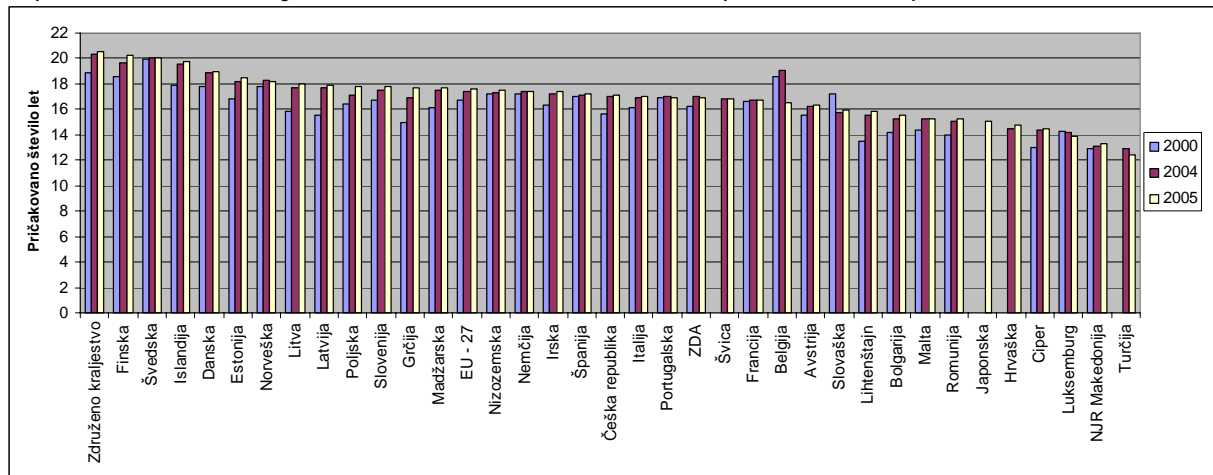
The goal of the programme is to decrease structural discrepancies in the labour market, increase employability and flexibility of unemployed people in the labour market, raise the level of education and qualification of the unemployed, and motivate young people to resume education or find employment. This would lead to an improved general education, development of a vocational identity and social and cultural involvement. The target groups are unemployed people without a vocation or professional qualifications, unemployed persons wishing to obtain a different vocation, particularly in technical or natural-science fields, unemployed people who cannot find employment in these fields and unemployed people under 26.

### 3. Meeting the EU criteria of success

#### 3.1. At least 85% of 22-year-olds in the European Union should have completed secondary education

In Slovenia the percentage of 22-year-olds with completed secondary school education has been around 90% for several years, which is more than the target value in the EU by 2010. An interesting data is also that in Slovenia the expected participation time in formal education has been extending, because increasingly more citizens continue with education after completed secondary school.

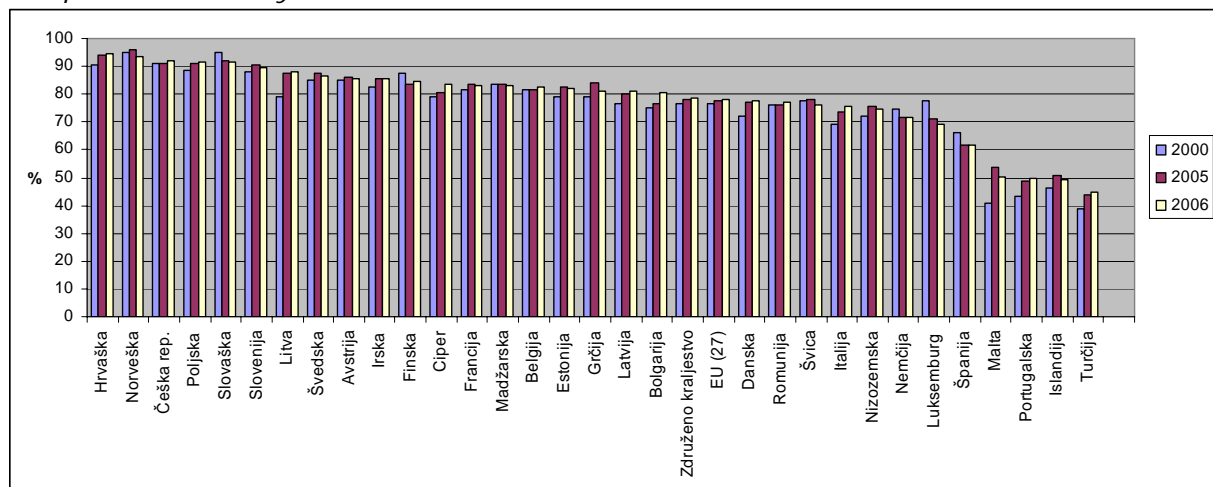
*Expected number of years of formal education that a person can expect in their lifetime*



(Source: Eurostat)

Among the citizens in the age group of 25-64, in 2006 Slovenia had 89.4% of persons with completed secondary school education which was above the EU average (77.8%).

*Completed secondary school education*



(Source: Eurostat)

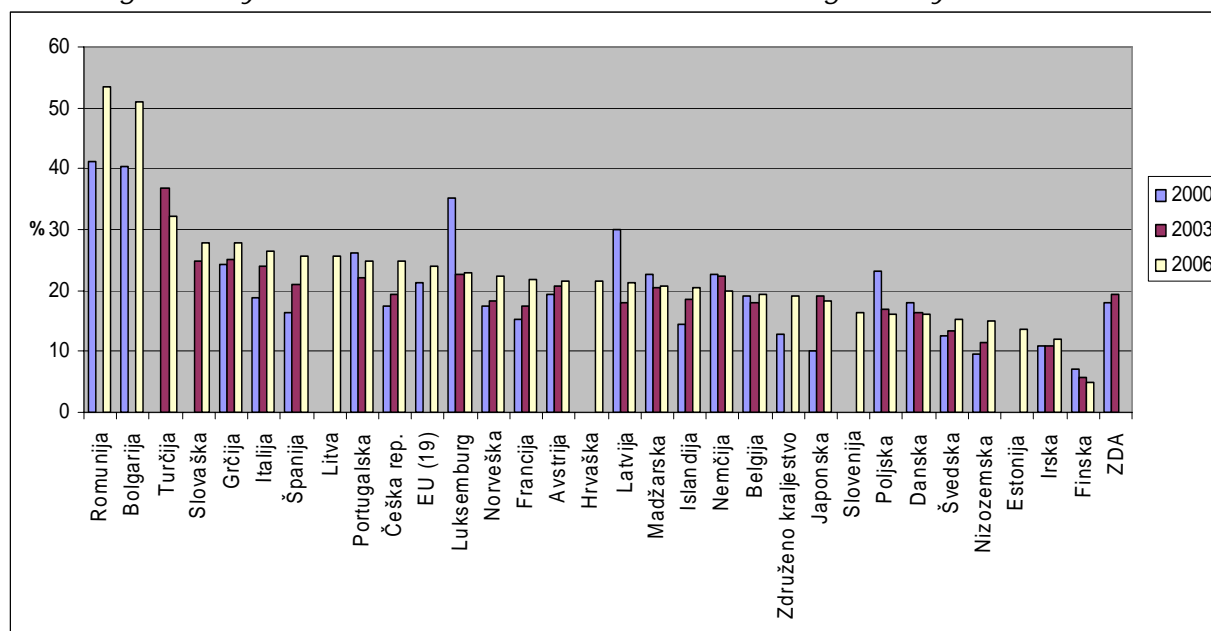
### 3.2. Percentage of 15-year-olds who achieve low results in reading literacy in comparison to the year 2000 should lower to at least 20%

The data show that Slovenia has achieved the target value – percentage of 15-year-olds who achieve low results in reading literacy is lower than the target value.

It should be added that in 2005 the Ministry of Education and Sport (MES) adopted the systematic participation plan in international studies, with the help of which it is possible to obtain internationally comparative data on pupils' achievements and other parameters that are important for school policy planning. This way Slovenia became a participant of the PIRLS survey, which measures reading literacy of pupils. The results show that our pupils in comparison to the last such survey (in addition to the pupils from Russia) progressed the most.

To improve the general level of literacy MES encouraged the creation of the **National Literacy Strategy** in the field of education, which was adopted in 2006. The first measures have already started to be implemented. The first funds for implementation of measures from the previously mentioned document were provided from the funds of the 2004-2006 European Social Fund. The new 2007-2013 Programming Period ensured additional financial resources to implement the strategy concerned. In the 2006-2008 period within the framework of the National Education Institute, the project of updating the elementary school and *gimnazija* curricula, in the frame of which special attention was paid to the implementation of the National Strategy competences and objectives.

Percentage of 15-year-olds who achieve low results in reading literacy



(Source: OECD (PISA))

### 3.3. Total number of graduates in mathematics, natural science, and technology should gradually increase by at least 15%, the imbalance between the genders should lower

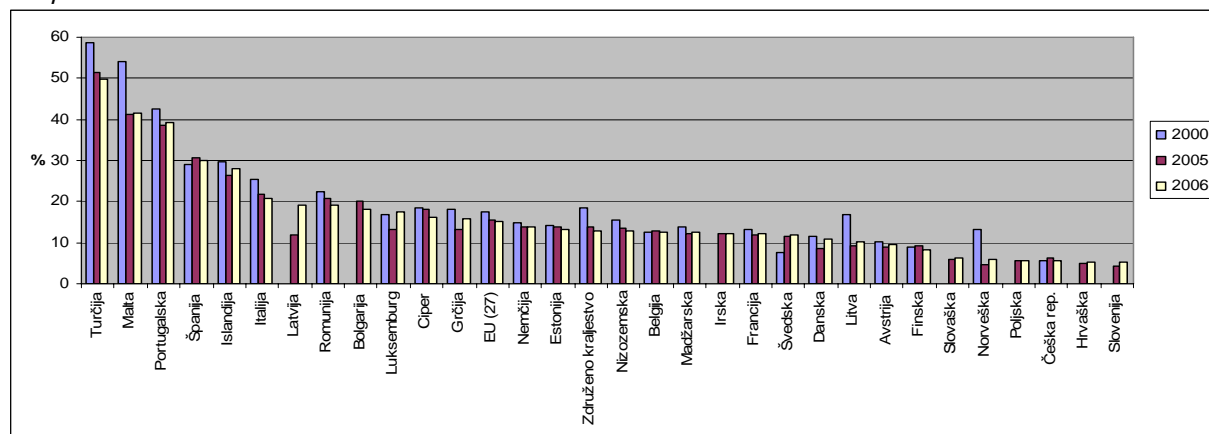
The data on the number of secondary school students who choose natural science subjects for *matura* and who enrol in natural science studies in the last two years show that the situation in this field has been improving. In the 2004-2008 period several measures to improve the situation were adopted (updating of curricula and syllabuses, financing of projects for natural science promotion). In the 2007-2013 Programming Period, 3 million Euros have been ensured for the implementation of projects that should help the development of didactics in the field of natural science and therefore increase the interest in natural science. In 2008 additional funds were provided for the implementation of experiments that would bring closer knowledge in the field of natural science in an entertaining manner.

### 3.4. By 2010 the European average of less than 10% of drop-outs should be reached

Slovenia belongs in the very top of the countries (on the 4<sup>th</sup> place of all OECD countries – publication Education at Glance) with regard to population participation in education aged 15-19. The data from the European Commission Joint Report on implementing the objectives of the Education and Training programme from 2007 show that Slovenia is among the countries with the smallest dropout and early school leaving rate. The extent of dropouts has been stable for several years and was troublesome in particular at a level of lower and secondary vocational education. That is why in the years between 2004 and 2006 we ensured, also with the help of the funds from the European Social Fund, **renewal of more than 100 secondary school programmes** in the field of vocational and technical education.

Despite good results we maintained a continuous **monitoring of school successfulness**. An extensive analysis of causes was performed in 2006. In the 2004-2006 period the project on prevention of school dropout was financed, implemented by the National Institute for Vocational Education and Training. The project results were also used as the basis to amend normative acts in this field (Vocational and Technical Education Act, Rules on assessment...).

#### Drop-outs

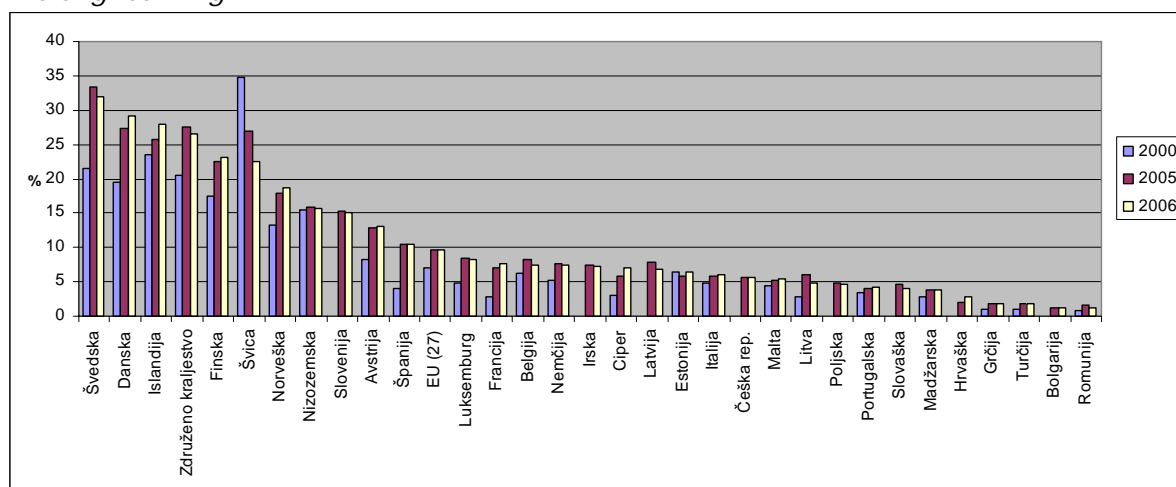


(Source: Eurostat)

### 3.5. Participation in lifelong learning of adult population aged 25-64 should be at least 12.5%

Even though Slovenia reached this target value already in 2006, the data show that special attention was paid to lifelong learning of adults. In 2006 the document **Lifelong Learning Development Strategy** was created and adopted at the expert councils for general, vocational and technical education and education of adults, which should provide for a more systematic care of lifelong learning implementation.

#### *Lifelong learning*



In addition to the stated five target values, monitoring of another two significant indicators has strengthened since 2006, namely the participation of pre-school children in pre-school care and foreign language skills.

### 3.6. To ensure pre-school education for at least 90% of children aged 3 or older and at least 30% of children younger than 3 years

Slovenia has achieved this objective by children younger than 3 years, and by children older than 3 years it has been getting closer to the objective every year.

The data show that the participation share of children of the first age period in 2007 was 40.8% and is therefore above the mentioned European objective, while the participation share of children of the second age period is 79.5%.

The objective of 90% participation of children of the second age period (3-5 years), which is realisable also in our country under the condition that the current increasing trend, which was in average 1.1%, would rise to 3% per year, could be reached in 2010/11.

The increase is expected due to the measures adopted in 2008 and written in the Act amending the Kindergarten Act. These are:

- in 2008, exemption from kindergarten payment for the second and every other child who visits the kindergarten together with the older child;

- in 2010, in addition to that parents shall be exempt from 50% of the payment for every five-year-old child in the kindergarten;
- in 2012, in addition to that parents shall be exempt also from 50% of the payment for every four-year-old child in the kindergarten;
- in 2014, in addition to that parents shall be exempt also from 50% of the payment for every three-year-old child in the kindergarten.

### 3.7. To improve the fundamental skill and achieve that children would learn at least two foreign languages from early childhood

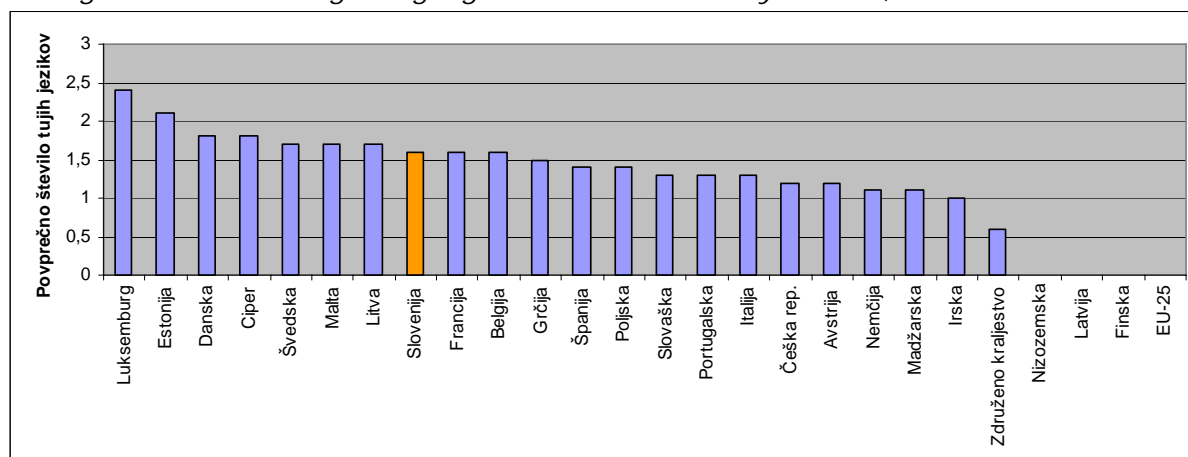
Learning of foreign languages is one of the most important target values of the joint programme in the EU. Slovenia is listed high in the figure below, especially because of the fact that *gimnazija* students are learning two foreign languages in the compulsory part of the programme. Pupils in the nine-year elementary school also had the option to learn a second foreign language as an optional subject in addition to the compulsory first foreign language since the implementation of the nine-year elementary school.

In Slovenia in 2005, the **Language Education Policy Profile** study was made within the framework of Council of Europe studies, which includes an analysis of the situation and recommendations. Council of Europe experts participated in the creation of the study. Recommendations also refer to providing the option of teaching several languages. Part of recommendations from this document was implemented by the amendment to the **Elementary School Act (2007) and implementation of learning of two foreign languages as compulsory subjects.**

European Social Fund 2007-2013 has also been provided for the implementation of foreign language teaching in **the first educational cycle of the nine-year elementary school and within the framework of pre-school education.**

Foreign language teaching is one of the important objectives of the common European policy. Formation of indicators to monitor language policy shall be one of the significant indicators of implementing the common policy objectives in the future.

Average number of foreign languages learnt in secondary schools, 2005



In the mentioned period Slovenia translated the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and provided funds for project implementation which will analyse foreign language proficiency levels.

## 4. Inclusive education

### **4.1. Education of Roma pupils**

The majority of Roma live in the north-eastern part of Prekmurje and in the south next to the border with Croatia.

Preschool Roma children are included in approximately 40 kindergartens in Slovenia, mostly in the Dolenjska, Posavje, Bela Krajina and Prekmurje regions.

In the academic year 2005/2006, elementary schools had an enrolment of 1 608 Roma students, all in regular classes.

The state offers the following benefits to schools that include Roma pupils: for individual work and school work with groups including Roma, the state provides additional funds, determines lower norms for classes with Roma pupils, and increases the funds for costs such as school meals, textbooks, excursions, etc. Every Roma student is entitled to a scholarship for teacher training. Besides additional professional help, the ministry, if necessary, also provides more permanent work posts in the area of advisory work, cooking and cleaning. The ministry provides all schools that include Roma students increased funds for subsidising school meals and covering the expenses (for each Roma pupil) of study equipment, transport and admission fees for cultural, fieldwork and sports days, etc.

In 2004, three Expert Councils in the field of education adopted the Strategy for education of Roma pupils in the Republic of Slovenia, which lays down the groundwork, principles, goals and fundamental solutions for better inclusion of Roma pupils in education at all system levels. Every year, a national programme for the concrete implementation of these strategic goals is adopted.

Since the adoption of the Strategy for Education of *Roma* in 2004 there have been no special departments for Roma pupils. Every year the Ministry together with the **Roma** representatives **prepares an action plan with concrete measures to implement the solutions in the Strategy:** in 2005 the Roma culture syllabus was prepared, in the period 2008-2013 various projects for more successful inclusion of Roma pupils will be co-financed by the funds from the European Social Fund, among them also the implementation of Roma assistants in kindergartens and schools.

### **4.2. Education in multi-ethnic areas**

The rights of the Italian and Hungarian minorities are provided by the Constitution and other regulations which entitle them to special rights.

They have the right to education and schooling in their own language. Education in areas where Slovene citizens live together with members of the Italian or Hungarian minority and are defined as multi-ethnic and multi-lingual areas is part of the unified educational system in the Republic of Slovenia.

In multi-ethnic and multi-lingual areas in Prekmurje, children attend bilingual preschool institutions, elementary schools and secondary schools where the teaching languages are Slovene and Hungarian.



In the multi-ethnic and multi-lingual area of Slovene Istria, members of the Italian ethnic group can enrol in schools using Italian as the teaching language.

The curriculum is adapted so as to enable members of ethnic minorities not only to learn their mother tongue but also to learn about the history and culture of both nations.

Members of the Italian and Hungarian minorities actively participate in the educational process in accordance with school legislation.

In multi-ethnic areas, students of the (Slovene) majority must learn the minority (Italian or Hungarian) language as the second language at preschool, elementary and secondary school levels. The aim is for children of both ethnic groups to be proficient in their mother tongue and to acquire communication skills in the other language.

In the area of the Hungarian ethnic community there are five bilingual elementary schools, three branch schools and one secondary school.

In the area of the Italian ethnic community there are three elementary schools with instruction in Italian, five branch schools and three secondary schools.

#### **4.3. Children of immigrants**

The Elementary School Act provides that all children who are foreign citizens or persons without citizenship residing in Slovenia have the right to compulsory elementary education under the same conditions as citizens of the Republic of Slovenia.

The Act also provides that children of Slovene citizens who live in the Republic of Slovenia and whose mother tongue is other than Slovene shall have lessons in their mother tongue and culture organised in accordance with international agreements. Additional Slovene language lessons are also organised.

Children of immigrants who so request (or rather their parents) have the right to lessons in their mother tongue. Lessons take place once a week and last three to five periods. Their language is taught by native speakers. The Ministry of Education and Sport and the National Education Institute together provide organisational and professional help in training teachers teaching the first language as the second/foreign language.

The year 2007 saw the adoption of the Strategy for Inclusion of Immigrant Children, Elementary and Secondary School Students in the Slovene education system. Yearly national action plans for implementing this strategic document will be prepared.

#### **4.4. Special education**

The basic act, which determines the placement of children with special needs in appropriate forms of education, has been adopted in the year 2000, amendments in 2007. **The Placement of Children with Special Needs Act** regulates procedures for the placement of children with special needs into appropriate educational programmes. Depending on the children's psychological and physical status, the Act enables their integrated education at all levels, from pre-school to secondary education, based on the assumption that additional help from experts and adaptation of the implementation of

programmes will help children to achieve a comparable standard of knowledge. Children with severe disorders still have the opportunity to attend special forms of education in schools for children with special needs, and institutions for education and training of children with severe developmental difficulties.

Most of the children with special needs are included in regular schools where they receive additional professional assistance determined by the Commission for Placement of Children with Special Needs. The assistance may be in the form of additional hours of classes to overcome the impairment, obstacles or disorders (for example: the deaf get the assistance from a surdopedagogue), or as homework and study help intended for acquisition of knowledge in a particular subject. Pupils with severe physical impairments can have a permanent or part-time escort in relation to the level of physical impairment who will help them during classes and other activities during school time.

Pre-school children have the option to be included in kindergartens with specially adapted programmes for different impairments in specialised institutes, but they can also go to regular kindergartens where they will receive assistance of an appropriate expert. For pre-school children with more severe impairments, development departments of kindergartens are organised which in practice proved to be very effective. In these departments, in addition to a defectologist, there are also a physical therapist, occupational therapist, and occasionally a psychologist who participate in an integral treatment of these children. The normative for a department is maximum six children with two professional workers present at all time.

Pupils with special needs have the option to have elementary education at home. This form of education has to provide a child with an equal educational standard that is provided by the public school programme.

Amendments to the Elementary School Act (1996; last amendments in 2007) implemented certain novelties for the education and schooling of children and young people with special needs. The following is important:

- extending of schooling for pupils who attend adapted educational programmes for three years, that is by the age of 18 years;
- extending of schooling for pupils who attend a special educational programme for six years, that is by the age of 21 years;
- transition between programmes of pupils with special needs who attend the programme with lower educational standard to the elementary school programme in particular subjects.

### *Curriculum in specialised institutes*

Specialised institutes carry out nine-year elementary school programmes with equal educational standard for the deaf and hard of hearing, the blind and visually impaired, physically impaired children, and children with speech and language difficulties. Curriculum for children in this programme does not differ from the curriculum in regular schools. Organisationally classes are carried out in smaller groups and with adaptations in relation to impairment type. Pupils in these programmes have special subjects that enable them easier overcoming of their impairment. Such subjects for the deaf and hearing impaired are computer science and communication, and for the blind and visually impaired computer science, communication, social skills learning, and orientation and mobility. Specialised institutes also carry out programmes with lower educational

standard for the deaf and hard of hearing, children with speech and language difficulties, the blind and visually impaired, and physically impaired children.

The education and schooling programme with lower educational standard and special education and schooling programme for pupils with mental disorders and pupils with several disorders are carried out in schools with an adapted programme. In addition to the compulsory subjects, these pupils also have computer science from 4<sup>th</sup> grade onwards and from 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> grade an hour of social skills learning. In the first three years they have between 19.5 and 21.5 hours, in the second cycle between 23 and 25 hours, and in the last three years 30 hours of lessons.

All pupils who are included in specialised institutes and schools with an adapted programme will be included in the extended education and schooling programme. Additional lessons are intended for pupils who require additional assistance or can handle additional knowledge. Pupils participate in various leisure activities where their strong fields are emphasised. Parents have the option to include the pupils in the extended school care departments until the 9<sup>th</sup> grade of elementary school. Payment of the parents for extended school care is minimal.

The special education and schooling programme intended for children with severe mental disorders and children with several disorders differs by the content of the curriculum. The programme includes three levels: the compulsory part, which lasts three years and may be extended for another three years, the continuation part, and the third part entitled training for life and work. The basic subjects of the programme are the following: development of independence, general education, exercising and sport, art education, and work education. The programme lasts 22 hours per week in the first three years, 26 hours in the second three years, and 30 hours in the last three years.

In the field of vocational and technical education, secondary school students with special needs are included adapted educational programmes with equal and lower educational standard. In these programmes, the curriculum and duration of education are adapted, as well as organisation, assessment method of knowledge, advancement and time schedule of lessons, and individual examination part.

### *Teaching methods and materials*

Teachers in specialised institutes and schools with adapted programme develop certain skills in addition to using various adaptations in the teaching process. For the deaf this skill is use of Slovenian sign language while using the total approach and the verbotonal method in children with a cochlear implant.

Main institute for the blind prepares textbooks in an adapted technique for the blind and visually impaired pupils, that is in Braille writing, or on CDs.

For the development of pupils' social competences in special institutions it is also important to work with parents and provide assistance to them. To this end, these pupils also have the option to participate in leisure activities in afternoon hours and be included in the extended school care, which relieves a family with a SEN child.

Special attention in the frame of leisure activities is paid to the access to new information technologies.

### *Progression of pupils*

In accordance with the Elementary School Act, pupils are assessed by their teachers. In the first three years the assessment is descriptive, and in the second and third educational cycle numerical grades are used. This applies to adapted programmes with equal educational standard.

In adapted programmes with lower educational standard the teacher in the first and second cycle uses descriptive grades in all subjects and describes progress of every pupil in relation to the achievement of objectives or knowledge standards defined in the syllabuses. In the third cycle the teacher uses numerical grades in all subjects. If a pupil with special needs transfers from an adapted elementary school programme into a regular elementary school programme in particular subjects, his or her knowledge of these subjects shall be graded in the same manner as for other pupils.

For pupils who visit adapted educational programmes and have several disorders, the guidelines defined in an individualised programme shall be used to assess their knowledge, namely in the manner, in which most grades will be based on assessment of written papers.

In a special education and schooling programme which is intended for pupils with severe impairments, the teacher prepares a descriptive grade of progression by individual fields at the end of the school year.

All pupils with special needs advance into the next grade regardless of their achievement of knowledge standards in the first and second cycle. In the third educational cycle, pupils will advance to the next grade only if they receive a positive grade in all subjects at the end of the year. Pupils in the special education and schooling programme advance regardless of their achievement of expected knowledge.

### *Educational/vocational guidance, education/employment links*

Pupils and students with special needs receive guidance from school counselling services already during their education.

At the end of schooling (at a secondary and vocational school level) the school counselling services cooperate with local labour offices and social work centres. Already in the formation of an individualised programme during elementary school education, the school counselling services observe an individual's possibilities for further inclusion in education, training, or occupational activity centres and social institutes.

In the event of more difficult cases in occupational orientation, specialised institutes contact the central state institution, the Institute for Rehabilitation, where the department for occupational orientation and rehabilitation operates.

Often, occupational orientation and employment search did not show satisfactory results, which is why in 2001 active employment policy measures were adopted at the state level. These measures include disabled persons with a severe level of disability and by who the medical board determined to be at a disadvantage in the labour market under standard conditions. Active employment policy measures encourage employers to employ disabled persons who are first-time job seekers, which is why they receive financial

incentives from the state. In 2007 the quota system was implemented in Slovenia, which determines that under prescribed conditions all employers have to employ at least a certain number of disabled persons in relation to the total number of employees.

### *Certification*

Pupils with special needs receive an elementary school certificate with grades for every completed grade of the education and schooling programme they visited. These certificates are publicly valid documents for education and schooling programmes which were adopted by the state highest professional authority in the field of education and schooling. The elementary school issues certificates with descriptive grades to pupils from 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and certificates with numerical grades to pupils from 4<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade. In the 9<sup>th</sup> grade pupils receive an elementary school leaving certificate with numerical grades from the school in which the pupil's grades from 9<sup>th</sup> grade and the pupil's achievements on the national test at the end of the third cycle are entered.

At the end of the second and third cycle the knowledge of pupils is also tested with the national (external) test. The external test consists of three subjects. In the last educational cycle the national test is obligatory. The achievements on the national test provide additional information to the school, pupils and their parents on gained knowledge of the pupils. The test is carried out for the pupils, who visit the adapted programme for the deaf, the blind, the physically impaired, and children with speech and language difficulties and the adapted educational programme with lower educational standard. Pupils with special needs have the right to an adapted national test with regard to the type and degree of their impairment. For the pupils, who visit the education and schooling programme with lower educational standard, the national test is not obligatory.

At the end of an academic year, pupils who are included in a special education and schooling programme receive an attendance certificate of the special programme with a descriptive grade of the pupil's progress in individual areas. Pupils who are included in a special education and schooling programme and occasionally participate in adapted educational programmes shall have a note thereof written in the attendance certificate of the special programme.

Students with special needs receive in all secondary school programmes the same certificates as their peers, even if they attended school in a specialised institute.