

Lifelong learning and counselling strategy for 2021-30

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

STRATEGY/ACTION PLAN

 SLOVAKIA

Timeline

2021 **Approved/Agreed** 2022 **Implementation** 2023 **Implementation**
2024 **Implementation** 2025 **Implementation**

ID number 42193

Background

Strategy documents had been developed for the period until 2020. There was a need to elaborate new strategy papers, one of which is the Lifelong learning and counselling strategy for 2021-30 (LLCS 2030).

Objectives

LLCS 2030 focuses on the most urgent topics that were not or were only partly covered by the National recovery and resilience plan. It also paves the way for the replacement of the obsolete Lifelong Learning Act (568/2009) with new legislation.

Description

LLCS 2030 focuses on four thematic areas: the qualification system; basic skills and civic education; lifelong learning, counselling, and motivation of citizens for lifelong learning; and building a system of skills management and identification of lifelong learning needs. It proposes 51 measures divided into 13 thematic units corresponding to topics in need of urgent intervention:

- (a) second chance education and 'F-type programmes' (ISCED 253) for low achievers in lower secondary general education;
- (b) increasing the attractiveness and quality of VET - Centres of excellence;
- (c) a national skills improvement initiative and pilot intervention programmes;
- (d) the Slovak Qualifications Framework and National Qualifications System;
- (e) a system for the recognition of non-formal and informal learning;
- (f) increasing the flexibility of the qualifications system by 'smaller' qualifications and micro-qualifications (micro-certificates);
- (g) short-cycle tertiary programmes at the Slovak Qualification Framework level 5;
- (h) creating a comprehensive system for graduate tracking;
- (i) support for the sustainability of the sector council management system with a focus on the transfer of innovation processes and labour market requirements to lifelong learning;
- (j) support for adult civic education;

- (k) harmonisation of the lifelong guidance system;
- (l) development of professional counselling services within employment services;
- (m) individual learning accounts as a tool for individualised support in persons' further education (retraining) and a pilot scheme for strengthening the motivation of adult participation in education.

The labour ministry and the Alliance of Sectoral Councils are responsible actors, while the education ministry is a supporting partner for measures related to two thematic units, i) and l). All other 11 thematic areas contain measures where the education ministry is a responsible actor, and in only one case (measure aimed at improving digital skills under unit c)) the responsibility lies with the Ministry of Investment, Regional Development and Informatisation, while the education ministry is among supporting partners.

2021 Approved/Agreed

LLCS 2030 was approved by the government on 24 November 2021. It contains a non-binding annex with estimates of the costs required for the implementation of the measures. A subsequent action plan for 2022-24 prioritising measures for the next three years, and specifying State budget-related requirements in addition to ESIF and the National recovery and resilience plan funding, was under development.

2022 Implementation

The Lifelong learning and counselling strategy action plan 2022-24 was approved by the government on 20 April 2022. It contains a roadmap of activities related to 45 out of 51 measures identified by the strategy that are relevant for the next three years. Each measure includes output indicators, the institutions involved in the implementation and estimated costs to draw from national and EU sources.

The amendment of the Act on employment services (5/2004) of 6 December 2022 redefined the Alliance of Sectoral Councils (ASC). The ASC and respective sectoral councils were assigned new important responsibilities in the field of initial VET and lifelong learning and are also expected to contribute to fulfilling some of the activities of the 2022-24 action plan. The new architecture of VET governance is also addressed by the National implementation plan (NIP).

Some of the 2022 activities were linked to the adoption of a new act on lifelong learning, which was still pending as the draft law had only been submitted for internal debate within the education ministry and invited experts.

2023 Implementation

Implementing LLCS 2030 is strongly interrelated with implementing NIP and launching respective Programme Slovakia 2021-27 national projects. The year 2023 was substantial for preparing projects addressing four out of 13 thematic units listed earlier (b, h, i, m). Additionally, a project funded by the Swiss-Slovak Cooperation Programme covers Thematic unit g.

The education ministry focused on interlinking the LLCS 2030 with funding opportunities. Therefore, activities related to legislative changes involving a high share of stakeholders, originally planned for completion by 2023 as per the action plan, were postponed. These delays impacted for example the establishment of the Government Council for Lifelong Learning to replace the National VET Council, the establishment of the National Forum for Adult Education as a standing working group under the Government Council for Lifelong Learning, setting up the National Forum for Lifelong Guidance as another working group under the Government Council for Lifelong Learning, and the establishment of regional lifelong guidance centres in eight self-governing regions.

Certain activities that relied solely on the education ministry's intervention have been successfully completed. The national database of qualifications from the further education platform (Information System of Further Education, ISDV) has been

interlinked with the Europass portal. However, the full integration of the national qualifications register remains pending and will depend on cooperation with the Sector Councils Alliance that will take over responsibility for creating the National Qualifications System. Redefining the role and status of the National Qualifications Register and Slovak National Qualifications Framework (SKKR) has also been postponed due to the need to clarify the role of the Sector Councils Alliance with the labour ministry.

The implementation of the first thematic unit (a) is already underway, supported by legislative changes and piloting in schools. Former lower secondary VET programmes (ISCED 253), known as F-type VET programmes have been transformed into new combined F-type programmes. These reforms introduced alternative pathways for achieving lower secondary (general) education, including external testing, and face-to-face exams. These programmes have been interlinked with programmes offering an ISCED 353 certificate of apprenticeship, removing a former dead-end pathway in the VET system.

2024 Implementation

On 30 October 2024, the parliament approved the Act on adult education (292/2024), instead of the originally envisaged act on lifelong learning. Nevertheless, this legislation addresses the system of lifelong education (§ 3) and introduces many lifelong learning-related terms (§ 2). This act reflects the thematic units (d, e, f) of the LLCS 2030.

The progress in activities within the 2022-24 action plan Theme 1.6 Increasing the flexibility of the qualification system with microcredentials remains limited. The terminology introduced by the act is largely bound to national discourse and differs from the European definitions. Strict regulations on the introduction of individual learning accounts and microcredentials, along with the introduction of quality assurance requirements in adult education raise questions about their compatibility with the efforts to strengthen the motivation of adult participation in education. Adult education providers must obtain certification before submitting programmes for accreditation, and internal quality assurance procedures are mandatory for certification. While these measures aim to prevent unqualified providers from accessing public funding, they risk overregulation, potentially stifling small providers and new entrants. If this proves to be the case, it would contradict the LLCS 2030 goal of increasing system flexibility and the declared aim of expanding adult education opportunities.

The preparatory phase for launching projects under thematic units (b, h, i, m) has been completed and implementation of related projects is in progress.

The National Coordinator of the European Agenda for Adult Learning launched a campaign to inform stakeholders and education providers about the intention to support networking among providers delivering basic skills education. This campaign was aimed at creating a Pact for Basic Skills in Slovakia. In December 2024, the State Institute of Vocational Education sent the application to enter the Pact for Basic Skills to the European Commission outlining respective activities.

A financial scheme with a total allocation of EUR 6 million funded by Programme Slovakia 2021-27 was introduced as part of a national skills improvement initiative (Thematic unit c). This scheme is also expected to support adult civic education (unit j). The call for project proposals titled Development of basic skills of adults - the path towards inclusion and employability, launched in October, addresses 16 to 65-year-olds.

2025 Implementation

All but one thematic unit - item 'j' (support for adult civic education) from the 'Description of the policy development' - saw progress, fully complying with the strategy intentions. Interested adult education providers are in the process of obtaining certification, which is required by the Act on adult education (292/2024) as a

prerequisite to offer microcredentials. A manual issued by the education ministry explains procedures that entitle educational institutions to issue microcredentials, resulting in their obligatory registration in the register of microcredential providers at the Information system of adult education (ISVD) portal. Microcredentials must be at least 25 lesson hours long. A webinar explaining the concept, regulation of microcredentials, and the application procedure was held on 10 November 2025, marking an official start to introducing microcredentials into practice.

Bodies responsible

- Ministry of Education, Research, Development and Youth
- Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family
- Ministry of Investments, Regional Development and Informatisation
- Alliance of Sectoral Councils
- Sector Councils Alliance
- Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport (until 2024)

Target group

Learners

Learners in upper secondary, including apprentices

Young people (15-29 years old)

Learners at risk of early leaving or/and early leavers

Adult learners

Low-skilled/qualified persons

Learners from other groups at risk of exclusion (minorities, people with fewer opportunities due to geographical location or social-economic disadvantaged position)

Education professionals

Teachers

Trainers

Adult educators

Guidance practitioners

Entities providing VET

Companies

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)

VET providers (all kinds)

Other stakeholders

Social partners (employer organisations and trade unions)

Thematic categories

Governance of VET and lifelong learning

Coordinating VET and other policies

Establishing and developing skills intelligence systems

Modernising VET offer and delivery

Expanding VET programmes to EQF levels 5-8

Supporting Centres of vocational excellence (CoVEs)

Transparency and portability of VET skills and qualifications

Comprehensive national qualification frameworks

Developing and applying qualifications smaller/shorter than full

Learners' possibilities of accumulation, validation and recognition of learning outcomes acquired non-formally and informally

Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation

Providing for individuals' re- and upskilling needs

Lifelong guidance

Ensuring equal opportunities and inclusiveness in education and training

European priorities in VET

VET Recommendation

VET agile in adapting to labour market challenges

Flexibility and progression opportunities at the core of VET

VET as a driver for innovation and growth preparing for digital and green transitions and occupations in high demand

VET as an attractive choice based on modern and digitalised provision of training and skills

VET promoting equality of opportunities

Subsystem

IVET CVET

Further reading

[Lifelong learning and counselling strategy for 2021-30 \(in Slovak\)](#)

[Lifelong learning and counselling strategy for 2021-30 \(in English\)](#)

[Lifelong learning and counselling strategy action plan 2022-24 \(in Slovak\)](#)

[Lifelong learning and counselling strategy action plan 2022-24 \(in English\)](#)

[Proposal for a Council implementing decision on the approval of the assessment of the National recovery and resilience plan for Slovakia](#)

[The National recovery and resilience plan summary of reforms and investments](#)

[Act No 5/2004 on employment services](#)

[Programme Slovakia 2021-27](#)

[Pact for Skills Charter](#)

[Pact for Basic Skills Slovakia web page](#)

Related policy developments

2025 **Approved/Agreed**

Tertiary VET reinforcement

The education ministry reflected the 2023 Government manifesto by elaborating 40 projects and creating related project teams.

 SLOVAKIA

Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 **Implementation**

Individual learning accounts

Reflecting the LLCS 2030 recommendations the State Institute of Vocational Education prepared a comparative study focusing on new European policies, ILAs and microcredentials.

 SLOVAKIA

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

CVET

2025 **Implementation**

Act on adult education (292/2024)

The education ministry initiated new legislation instead of the originally proposed law on lifelong learning, which was previously recommended by the Lifelong learning and counselling strategy for 2021-30 and approved by the government.

 SLOVAKIA

Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

CVET

2025 Implementation

Sector Councils Alliance

The amendment to the Act on employment services established the Sector Councils Alliance (SCA) as the interest association of legal entities.

 SLOVAKIA

Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 Implementation

Swiss project in support of VET

The main activities of the project comply with the three aforementioned objectives and six measures.

 SLOVAKIA

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 Implementation

National implementation plan: Slovakia

Eight priority areas were identified in relation to the achievement of the objectives, five of which explicitly target VET, two target lifelong learning in parallel with VET ((f) and (h)) and one targets interlinking general education and VET (e):

 SLOVAKIA

Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 Implementation

Creation of centres of excellence in VET

The creation of CoVEs is determined by the Lifelong learning and counselling strategy for 2021-30 adopted by the government on 24 November 2021.

 SLOVAKIA

Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 Implementation

Preventing and reducing early leaving from education and training

The Lifelong learning and counselling strategy for 2021-30, approved by the government on 24 November 2021, addresses early school leaving in the section 'Second chance education and F-type programmes'. It suggests four measures aimed at:

 SLOVAKIA

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 Implementation

National basic skills improvement initiative

The following five measures are set by the Lifelong learning and counselling strategy for 2021-30:

 SLOVAKIA

Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

CVET

2025 Implementation

National recovery and resilience plan

The National recovery and resilience plan sets out a package of reforms and public investments to be implemented by 2026.

 SLOVAKIA

Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 Implementation

VET graduate tracking

The Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (public employment service) coordinates the national project Prognosis of labour market development, which is carried out under the supervision of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family.

 SLOVAKIA

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET

2025 Implementation

Promoting key competences of adults

Don't BE disQUALIFIED (*NedisKVALIFIKUJ SA!*) is the motto of a 2016 call for projects launched by the education ministry, focusing on key competence development and enhancing/upgrading skills. Project topics include continuing VET.

 SLOVAKIA

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

CVET

2025 Implementation

Slovak national qualifications framework

The development of the SKKR has been a lengthy process. It progressed in parallel to the wider reform of VET and involved various stakeholders.

 SLOVAKIA

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 Implementation

Flexible routes to labour market relevant qualifications

The so-called ‘shortened studies’ (ISCED 353) were put in place in 2015/16 in line with the Act on VET (61/2015). They target young people and adults who want to broaden or deepen their qualification or acquire another one to improve their employability.

 SLOVAKIA

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 Implementation

Guidance for young people

The ESF project Dual education and increasing attractiveness and quality of VET launched in 2016 and run by the State Institute of Vocational Education (ŠIOV) aims at improving career guidance and counselling services for learners in VET and those who consider entering this field.

 SLOVAKIA

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET

“ ... ” Cite as

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