

Preventing and reducing early leaving from education and training

POLICY DEVELOPMENT**PRACTICAL MEASURE/INITIATIVE****SLOVAKIA**

Timeline

**ID number 41663**

Background

A high unemployment rate of low-qualified and dramatically increasing share of early leavers from education and training that is above the national target of 6% since 2013 and over 10% in eastern Slovakia from 2015 make preventive and corrective interventions inevitable. Current measures, such as second-chance schools and F-type programmes (ISCED 253) offering pre-vocational training and (or) basic qualifications for low achievers in lower secondary general education are considered not effective enough.

Objectives

The National recovery and resilience plan (RRP) component on Accessibility, development and quality of inclusive education at all levels contains a reform on the Implementation of tools to prevent early school-leaving and adapt F-type VET programmes. The objectives of the Lifelong learning and counselling strategy for 2021-30 related to this component of RRP are:

- (a) increasing the permeability of the VET system by cancelling dead-end pathways currently represented by F-type programmes;
- (b) preventing dropping out from lower secondary general education;
- (c) improving second chance education.

Description

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:

- (a) transformation of former F-type programmes into 'combined' programmes that allow learners to complete lower secondary general education and earn at least an EQF level 2 VET qualification, enabling progression in initial VET;
- (b) allowing exceptional extension of lower secondary general education up to age 18 to open the way to ISCED 3 VET programmes;
- (c) introducing more flexible financing for second chance education in basic schools to

- better address individual learner needs and at the same time attract more adult learners;
- (d) introducing alternatives to obtaining an ISCED 2 general education certificate without requiring participation in formal education or VET through external testing or face-to-face exams.

The 2022-24 action plan for the strategy includes revising national curricula (state educational programmes) to transform current F-type programmes by 2022.

2021 Design

This initiative resulted from criticism of the passivity of national authorities in preventing early leaving. It was embedded into the Lifelong learning and counselling strategy for 2021-30, approved by the government on 24 November 2021, and in the National recovery and resilience plan (Reform 4 Implementation of tools to prevent early school leaving and adapt F-type study programme).

2022 Implementation

The lifelong learning and counselling strategy action plan 2022-24, approved by the government on 20 April 2022, and the interlinked National implementation plan (NIP) explicitly address early leaving from education and training. Specific Milestone C6R4M8 of the National RRP made this agenda a prerequisite for drawing from National RRP funds. The most important improvements include the elimination of a dead-end path in lower secondary VET. The education ministry decree No 287/2022 links F-type programmes with H-type programmes leading to a certificate of apprenticeship.

With effect from 1 January 2022, there are four alternative options for obtaining lower secondary (general) education in addition to completing the ninth year of basic school

- (a) Extension and completion of education in a basic school by the decision of a school director no later than by the end of the school year in which the learner reaches the age of 17 and by the education ministry by the end of the school year in which the learner reaches the age of 18;
- (b) External testing for obtaining lower secondary education in a basic school, which is appointed by the regional educational authority;
- (c) Specialised education programme for obtaining lower secondary education in a basic school, which is appointed by the regional educational authority;
- (d) Within the VET programme (combined F-type programme) after parallel successfully passing the commission exams by which the learner obtains lower secondary education. This also allows learners to study at the VET school where they were already admitted to complete the VET programme leading to a certificate of apprenticeship (ISCED 353), or to complete a programme entitling graduates to apply for higher education (ISCED 354).

The 2021 amendment to the Education act also introduces new rules on the continuous formative and summative assessment of learners with the aim of combatting the increase in the number of learners at risk of school failure and also prescribes procedures for reporting poor performance or misbehaviour. A newly adopted education ministry decree on secondary schools (224/2022) lays down rules on the frequency and recipients of information to prevent early leaving.

2023 Implementation

Implementing the aforementioned activities to support increasing the permeability of the VET system and improving second-chance education is in progress.

The respective educational standards for obtaining lower secondary education are effective from 1 September 2023. According to this document, learners should acquire the competences necessary for continuing education and/or applying for a job in the labour market, in particular:

- (a) an adequate level of communication skills and the ability to react in various life situations;
- (b) the ability to cooperate effectively;
- (c) the ability to adopt and use effectively learning strategies in accordance with their real possibilities;
- (d) the ability to search, through the use of new ICT, new and/or necessary information and be able to process and use it;
- (e) the ability to understand the contemporary world;
- (f) the ability to take a position on rights and obligations in civil and working life;

through in detail set educational standards of relevant subjects.

Preparations for the RRP priority aimed at introducing an early warning system were underway as part of a national project under Programme Slovakia 2021-27.

2024 Implementation

The Research Institute of Child Psychology and Pathopsychology runs the 2024-27 project titled Developing and verifying an early warning system for learners at risk of early school leaving (ESL) and targeted support for learners in the counselling and prevention system, with a budget of about EUR 7.67 million. The project is divided into four phases. The first phase will map the causes of early school leaving. The second phase includes the development of the early warning system itself. In the third phase, the system will be tested in 20 pilot schools in the Košice, Prešov, Bratislava and Trnava regions, where regional coordinators will work to provide support to school staff. Finally, in the 2027/28 school year, the knowledge gained from the pilot schools will be transformed into practical methodologies, training and education for teachers and staff members in the counselling and prevention system. This project addresses the issue of about 14 thousand early leavers annually, who face low employability. The reasons for failure are not identified yet which makes it difficult to set up targeted interventions. The project therefore also aims to:

- (a) map the causes and contributing factors of ESL;
- (b) deliver informational seminars, develop methodological materials on the prevention of ESL for schools, and to retrain 1 000 school staff members;
- (c) train staff in the counselling and prevention system aimed to implement the early warning system and set up support for learners at risk of ESL;
- (d) elaborate systemic recommendations for national authorities.

2025 Implementation

Since September 2025, 31 schools have been piloting the early warning system, each supported by two coordinators: one with a teaching background and one experienced in field or community work. One pair of coordinators serves three pilot schools. The activities of coordinators and those taking place directly at schools were set up after detailed research. More than 360 interviews were conducted, including 109 research interviews with school directors and 200 interviews with pedagogical or professional staff at schools. Furthermore, external experts from the Centre for Educational Analysis conducted 27 research meetings with principals and focus groups with teaching and professional staff in selected schools. Interviews with young people with an early school leaving history and their families were also conducted. This research contributed to the identification of relevant activities for piloting, such as mapping work with students at risk of early school leaving, mentoring by external experts, and networking with relevant stakeholders in the schools' wider environment.

Bodies responsible

- Ministry of Education, Research, Development and Youth
- Government Office of the Slovak Republic
- Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport (until 2024)

Target group

Learners

Learners in upper secondary, including apprentices
Young people (15-29 years old)
Young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs)
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)

Thematic categories

Modernising VET offer and delivery

Modernising VET standards, curricula, programmes and training courses
Acquiring key competences

Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation

Ensuring equal opportunities and inclusiveness in education and training

European priorities in VET

VET Recommendation

Flexibility and progression opportunities at the core of VET

VET promoting equality of opportunities

Osnabrück Declaration

Resilience and excellence through quality, inclusive and flexible VET

Establishing a new lifelong learning culture - relevance of continuing VET and digitalisation

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

Decree of the education ministry No 224/2022 on secondary school

Decree of the education ministry No 287/2022 on the system of education branches and on institutional responsibility towards branches

Education act No 245/2008 as amended as amended by the Act No 415/2021

Project Developing and verifying an early warning system for learners at risk of early school leaving and targeted support for learners in the counselling and prevention system

Programme Slovakia 2021-27

Related policy developments

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

Lifelong learning and counselling strategy for 2021-30

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.

 SLOVAKIA

Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET 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

Amendments to the Education Act (245/2008)

In January 2021, the education ministry submitted to public discussion an extensive amendment of the Education act (245/2008), which provoked a heated debate with more than 1 000 comments, of which more than 680 were fundamental.

 SLOVAKIA

Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

IVET

“ ... ” **Cite as**

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<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/timeline-vet-policies-europe/search/41663>