

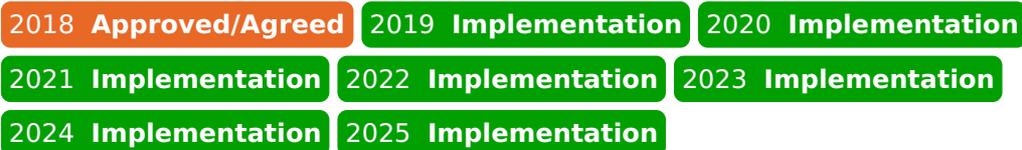
National programme for the development of education

POLICY DEVELOPMENT

STRATEGY/ACTION PLAN

 SLOVAKIA

Timeline



ID number 28566

Background

The strategy paper Learning Slovakia was published by the education ministry in September 2017, following consultation with all relevant stakeholders. Proposals included in the strategy were considered in the preparation of the 2018 amendment of the Act on VET (209/2018). Some were included in the national programme, adopted by the government, that also identified priorities of VET-related measures and estimation of financial means envisaged for implementation.

Objectives

The objective of the national programme was to identify priorities for reforming the education system, including VET, and to quantify expenditures for respective measures.

Description

On 27 June 2018, the government approved the National programme for the development of education (NPDE). The NPDE was adopted, with 106 measures to be fulfilled until 2027. Some measures related to regional schooling and higher education are relevant also to VET. Measures directly aiming to align VET to labour market are as follows:

- (a) increasing the quality of dual VET through the funding of professional and employer organisations involved; they will receive approximately EUR 1 million annually during 2018-27;
- (b) raising dual VET attractiveness by reducing the administrative burden for participating SMEs, and by earmarking EUR 20 million and EUR 32.5 million respectively, for direct payments from the State budget to SMEs and larger enterprises involved in dual VET during 2019-27;
- (c) abolishing the demotivating measure of cutting the funding of schools involved in dual VET; it is estimated that during 2018-27 schools funding will increase by a total of EUR 77 million;
- (d) carrying out a demand-driven ESIF-funded project (EUR 30 million) aiming to align secondary education with labour market needs;

- (e) improving career guidance and counselling, by introducing counsellors at district and regional levels; a total of EUR 18 million is earmarked for 2019-27;
- (f) expanding the provision of post-secondary VET, including alternative ways to achieve a bachelor title;
- (g) promoting in-company internships for VET teachers and trainers as a form of initial and in-service training;
- (h) carrying out a higher education graduate tracking survey, based on the experience from the Cedefop project on skills governance;
- (i) developing and carrying out professionally oriented bachelor programmes; these will be supported by demand-driven ESF projects (total cost of EUR 15 million in 2018);
- (j) introducing new legislation to promote dual VET in tertiary education and financial incentives for employers; this should be in place in 2022.

2018 Approved/Agreed

2019 Implementation

In 2019, most VET-related activities of the NPDE were implemented.

Funding of professional and employer organisations involved in dual VET was in progress; however, there was not yet a reliable quality assurance mechanism in place for both performance of the organisations involved and provision of in-company training per se.

In 2019, companies involved in dual education received EUR 1 139 983.12 based on a State aid scheme aiming to support dual education. A total of 60 large companies received 60% coverage of their eligible real costs and 155 SMEs received 70% coverage. The total estimated amount of this State aid for the years 2019-22 is EUR 20 million, of which EUR 11.5 million will go to large companies and EUR 8.5 million to SMEs.

The amendment of the Act on VET (209/18) abolished cutting of per capita funding of schools offering dual programmes, introduced in 2015 by the finance ministry. Now, schools receive the same per capita contribution from the State budget for dual and non-dual learners.

A call Linking secondary education and practice, was launched in August 2019 for demand-driven ESF projects allowing VET schools to fund additional activities, such as afternoon clubs, to improve performance of students in PISA domains, ICT, financial literacy and foreign languages. There was an allocation of EUR 28.5 million for less developed regions and EUR 1.5 million for the Bratislava region. Four rounds of project evaluation were envisaged, with the final deadline on 17 March 2020.

On 27 December 2018, a call to support the development of professional bachelor programmes was launched with an allocation of EUR 13.5 million for less developed regions and EUR 1.5 million for the Bratislava region. Progress is slow, with no projects in implementation by February 2020. Only EUR 4.1 million were requested by applicants after the second round of submission closed on 31 October 2019.

In two cases there was only limited progress.

New legislation supports hiring career guidance counsellors in schools and respective supporting institutions by explicitly including this profession in the officially recognised positions. However, improving career guidance and counselling might be hampered by a lack of experienced professionals.

A specialised working group has prepared a draft paper analysing local experiments and interesting practice abroad, to expand the provision of post-secondary education. Currently, the provision of post-secondary EQF 5 programmes by VET schools seems to be more promising (good practice example being a chemical industry). Interlinking of this programme with achieving a bachelor's degree is addressed, but still open.

No significant progress is visible in three items:

- (a) there was no scheme or systemic support yet for in-company internships for VET teachers and trainers as a form of initial and in-service training;
- (b) there was no progress in creating building blocks for 'larger' qualifications;
- (c) there was no progress in promoting dual VET in tertiary education through legislation. Nevertheless, current legislation allows for long-term periods, e.g. one year of practice in the case of a four-year bachelor programme specialising in the automotive industry.

2020 Implementation

The new government, appointed in March 2020, presented their reforms in two documents:

- (a) the 2020 Government Manifesto;
- (b) the 2020 National integrated reform plan (NIRP) published by the finance ministry.

The latter offers detailed measures with specified goals, timelines and costs. It was presented as a menu of ideas for priorities to be covered from the Recovery and resilience fund and a new programming period of European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF). There are no contradictions between the National programme for the development of education (NPDE) and these two documents, though there are differences between priorities that translate into changes in timelines and allocations of means as set by the NPDE.

The NIRP declared a commitment to better linking education and the labour market by making the qualifications system more flexible by the provision of 'smaller' qualifications. It also mentions the support of modularisation of programmes of secondary VET schools. Both 'smaller' qualifications and training modules have the potential to be used as building blocks for 'larger' qualifications. A substantial reform of higher education has been announced, within which professional bachelor programmes and better alignment to labour market needs should be emphasised. However, legislation supporting the creation of universities of applied science is still missing.

2021 Implementation

The new government, appointed in March 2020, immediately faced the challenges caused by the pandemic. Although the new policy priorities partly referred to the strategic documents Learning Slovakia and the National programme for the development of education (NPDE), the National recovery and resilience plan can be currently seen as replacing both earlier strategies in terms of the priorities of reforms and funding. Elaboration of a new comprehensive education strategy to replace the NPDE has been initiated.

2022 Implementation

The government elected in 2020 originally intended to develop a new comprehensive education strategy but decided to update the previous National programme for the development of education (NPDE). The current revision of NPDE effective from November 2022 reflects all relevant strategy papers and international commitments following the adoption of the NPDE in 2018. Relevant parts of the EU and national documents are summarised before defining a vision, strategic objectives, and intervention logic. Following the Council Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond (2021-2030) and its 5 general strategic priorities and 7 strategic objectives, the NPDE sets five additional objectives. Thus, the NPDE aims to achieve the first five benchmarks by 2030 and the last two by 2025:

- (a) Less than 15% of low-achieving 15-year-olds in reading, mathematics and science;
- (b) Less than 15% of low-achieving eight-graders in computer and information

- literacy;
- (c) At least 96% of children between the age of three and the age of entry into compulsory primary education participating in early childhood education and care;
- (d) Less than 9% of early leavers from education and training;
- (e) At least 45% of 25–34-year-olds with tertiary educational attainment;
- (f) At least 60% of recent graduates from VET benefiting from exposure to work-based learning during their vocational education and training;
- (g) At least 47% of adults aged 25-64 participating in learning in the past 12 months.

NPDE sets the following five additional objectives:

- (a) Increasing the attractiveness of the teaching profession;
- (b) Increasing support for the development of quality youth work at local, regional, national and European levels, including policy development in this area, training of youth workers, creation of legal frameworks and sufficient allocation of resources;
- (c) Reducing the share of higher education students studying abroad;
- (d) Achieving, within desegregation, a target of less than one in five Roma learners attending a school where the majority of children and pupils are Roma;
- (e) Increasing the share of learners engaged in physical exercise and sports at schools by 10% compared to 2022.

2023 Implementation

Three of the seven aforementioned strategic objectives are directly relevant to VET.

In December 2023, a draft proposal was prepared for a national project to be run by the Research Institute of Child Psychology and Pathopsychology, aimed at developing an early warning system. It is noted that there are about 10 thousand unemployed early leavers annually. In addition to the already implemented revision of ISCED 253 VET programmes, which allows for continuation in a VET programme leading to a certificate of apprenticeship, the introduction of microcredentials offering qualifications demanded by the labour market contributes to making the qualification system more flexible. Additional preventive measures must be introduced based on a detailed analysis of factors contributing to early leaving.

Monitoring the implementation of the National programme for the development of education (NPDE) concerning work-based learning (WBL) indicated that there are no substantial supporting measures currently in place. Despite strong promotion of dual VET, only a slight increase of dual learners is expected in the future unless administrative measures, such as transforming existing WBL programmes in the health sector into dual VET, are taken. A sound expansion of dual VET is hampered by administrative burdens (related to signing contracts) that limit its share to about 10% of VET learners. Additionally, the expansion of WBL offered outside the dual form is hampered by a lack of support for direct cooperation of schools and companies, which currently relies only on commercial contracts. In contrast to dual VET, WBL based on direct cooperation of schools and companies is not financially supported by the State budget. A systemic change is needed to achieve the benchmark of 60% of learners participating in WBL.

A systemic change concerning the participation of adults in learning is expected from the act on adult education in the pipeline provided that the envisaged individual learning accounts (ILAs) prove sustainable, and that microcredentials increase the attractiveness of lifelong learning, including upskilling and reskilling required by the labour market. The education ministry considered the current participation target too low and proposed a target of 50% by 2030. In the light of the Adult education survey data, which show participation rates of 46.1% in 2016 and 54.8% in 2022, this target can be seen as achievable. However, the participation of adults in learning is very sensitive to costs, thus, public funding and household incomes.

2024 Implementation

In February 2024, the education ministry submitted the 2024-26 Implementation plan of the National programme for the development of education (NPDE) for public comment, followed by a public consultation on 11 March 2024. This process resulted in:

- (a) producing a missing strategic policy framework for 2024-26 requested by the European Commission, which was a precondition for drawing from the Programme Slovakia 2021-27; and
- (b) the need to create a new strategy to better interlink the National recovery and resilience plan, Programme Slovakia 2021-27, and address new challenges (such as the impact of the pandemic, the war in Ukraine and the anticipated restructuring of the national economy).

Currently, 40 projects initiated by the education ministry are underway to reflect the new government's manifesto. All these projects are supervised independently, with established project teams, external partners, budgets, key milestones and timelines. In September, an independent monitoring body was created that elaborated a monitoring report to the European Commission assessing projects directly linked to the Implementation plan of the NPDE.

Among these 40 projects is an initiative called Education for the 21st century, which aims to create a new strategy that will replace the NPDE.

2025 Implementation

Work on the same 40 government manifesto-related projects continues, with some resulting in changes in legislation adopted by the parliament on 21 October 2025. Four acts, including the Act on VET (61/2015), have been substantially amended, and three acts have been newly created – on financing schools and school establishments, and on school governance (both affecting VET governance), and a new higher education act with an impact on the provision of tertiary VET.

The education ministry decided to prepare a new education strategy titled 'Educated Slovakia 2035: National programme for the development of education', which is intended to become the main strategic framework replacing the current NPDE. After a wide consultation process with stakeholders, it was submitted for discussion to the members of the Curricular Board (an advisory body to the education minister) in November 2025. The strategy has analysed the current system, and identified three 'root causes' of weaknesses

- (a) insufficient inclusiveness and outdated provision of lifelong learning;
- (b) shortage of educational professionals, their low status, and insufficient support in society;
- (c) inefficient governance, hampered by a lack of data, and low and inefficient financing, not motivating the provision of quality education.

These three root causes are complemented by three strategic areas with four strategic lines of change for each area. The paper identified key steps necessary for improvement. A set of measurable indicators and 2035 targets for each of the three strategic areas have been suggested, and an implementation framework based on five principles has been set. A strong stress is put on feedback data and evidence-based policymaking, which is the most important of these principles. Monitoring via action plans for two-year periods with specific measures is envisaged. The strategy was approved by the education ministry and published on its web portal.

Bodies responsible

- Ministry of Education, Research, Development and Youth
- 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
Learners with disabilities
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
School leaders
Adult educators
Guidance practitioners

Entities providing VET

VET providers (all kinds)

Thematic categories

Governance of VET and lifelong learning

Coordinating VET and other policies
Engaging VET stakeholders and strengthening partnerships in VET
Further developing national quality assurance systems

Modernising VET offer and delivery

Reinforcing work-based learning, including apprenticeships

Teachers, trainers and school leaders competences

Systematic approaches to and opportunities for initial and continuous professional development of school leaders, teachers and trainers

Supporting lifelong learning culture and increasing participation

Permeability between IVET and CVET and general and vocational pathways, academic and professional higher education
Lifelong guidance

Subsystem

IVET CVET

Further reading

[Cedefop ReferNet Slovakia \(2018\). National programme for the development of education](#)

[National programme for the development of education \(in Slovak\)](#)

[Modern and successful Slovakia: national integrated reform plan \(in Slovak\)](#)

[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](#)

[Council Resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond \(2021-30\)](#)

[National programme for the development of education update \(in Slovak\)](#)

[Government manifesto 2023-27 \(in Slovak\)](#)

[Programme Slovakia 2021-27](#)

[2024-26 Implementation plan of the National programme for the development of education \(in Slovak\)](#)

[Educated Slovakia 2035: National programme for the development of education \(in Slovak\)](#)

Related policy developments

2020 Completed

Modern and successful Slovakia: national integrated reform plan

The finance ministry was responsible for preparing the National integrated reform plan (NIRP).

 SLOVAKIA

Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 Implementation

System of verifying qualifications

The project System of verifying qualifications, run by the State Institute of Vocational Education, started in 2019 and is expected to be completed on 1 February 2023.

 SLOVAKIA

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

CVET

2020 Completed

Cedefop country review on skills anticipation and matching

Slovakia participates in Cedefop's country reviews on Governance of EU skills anticipation and matching systems.

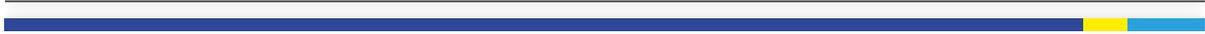
 SLOVAKIA

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

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

Professional standards for pedagogical staff and experts

The 2016 government manifesto also aimed at further changing the system of career development. It envisaged certification in line with professional standards for pedagogical staff and experts employed by regional schools.

 SLOVAKIA

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET



2025 Implementation

Raising teacher salaries

Pay rises were awarded in 2016 and 2017 (4% plus a further 6%).

 SLOVAKIA

Type of development

Practical
measure/Initiative

Subsystem

IVET CVET

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

2018 Completed

Learning Slovakia strategy paper

In September 2017, the education ministry published the Learning Slovakia strategy paper, following a public discussion on a draft version from March 2017.

 SLOVAKIA

Type of development

Strategy/Action
plan

Subsystem

IVET CVET

2025 Implementation

Incentives for companies to offer dual VET

To encourage enterprise involvement in dual VET, the VET Act (61/2015) had introduced corporate tax reliefs for training companies:

 SLOVAKIA

Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

IVET

2025 Implementation

Introducing dual VET

The Act on VET was amended in March 2015 (61/2015). Its main objectives were to introduce a dual VET scheme and tax incentives for enterprises to provide training. The reform entered into force in September 2015 and made available upper secondary VET delivery in three forms:

 SLOVAKIA

Type of development

Regulation/Legislation

Subsystem

Cite as

Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). National programme for the development of education: Slovakia. In Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2026). *Timeline of VET policies in Europe* (2025 update) [Online tool].

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/timeline-vet-policies-europe/search/28566>