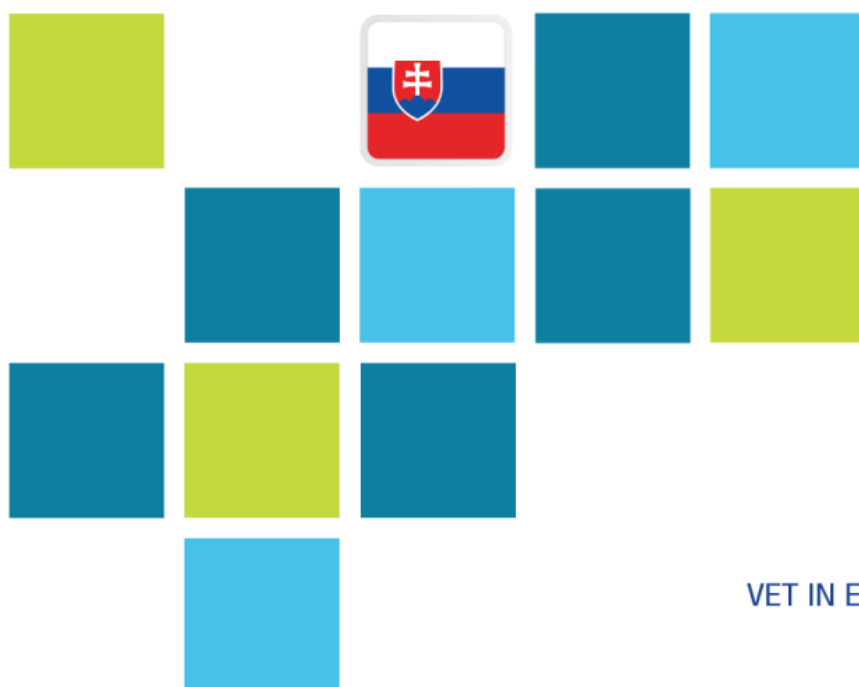

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION
AND TRAINING IN EUROPE

SLOVAKIA

SYSTEM DESCRIPTION



VET IN EUROPE 2023

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5 qualification in dance conservatory (tanečné konzervatórium); 6-year ISCED P 554 programmes leading to EQF 5 qualification in music and drama conservatory (hudobné a dramatické konzervatórium)..

- Lower secondary VET programmes (ISCED P 352) for SEN learners leading to EQF level 2 ([93]) (učebný odbor odborného učilišťa)..

- References.

CHAPTER 1.

Summary of main elements and distinctive features of VET

Summary of main elements

Despite growing interest in general education, secondary vocational education and training (VET) remains a strong pillar of the education system. In 2022, 68% of secondary education students graduated from VET; with 77.4% of them in programmes enabling continuation in higher education. In 2022/23, 440 approved VET programmes were available in secondary schools; including 24 regulated by health and interior ministries. The education ministry oversees initial VET (IVET). Secondary VET schools, typically maintained by self-governing regions, receive equal State funding, including private and church-affiliated ones. 'Dual VET' has been offered since 2015. From 2018/19, school-based and dual VET follow the same national curricula, opening the door for all secondary programmes to be offered in either format. IVET programmes at secondary level include:

- 4-year (occasionally 5-year) school-based programmes (150 in total; ISCED 354), mainly theory-focused leading to a *maturita* school leaving certificate confirming education level and VET qualifications;
- 4-year (occasionally 5-year) programmes (58 in total; ISCED 354) with extended practical training, leading to a *maturita* school leaving certificate, and a certificate of apprenticeship;
- 3-year (occasionally 4-year) programmes (106 in total; ISCED 353) leading to a certificate of apprenticeship;
- 2- or 3-year programmes (16 in total; ISCED 253) for low achievers without completed lower secondary education, potentially leading to a certificate of apprenticeship and the attainment of lower secondary education (ISCED 244).

Programmes at conservatories (31), specific arts and sports management programmes are not regulated by the Act on VET, despite offering VET qualifications. Special education schools also offer VET programmes tailored to SEN students.

Post-secondary non-tertiary VET programmes comprise:

- 2-year follow-up study programmes (ISCED 454) for graduates of the ISCED 353 VET programme leading to a *maturita* school leaving certificate (30);
- 2-year qualifying programmes (ISCED 454) leading to a second VET qualification certified by a *maturita* and sometimes, a certificate of apprenticeship (16 including refresher programmes);
- refresher programmes (ISCED 454) with a minimum 6-month duration ending with a post-*maturita* exam;
- 2-year specialising programmes and 3-year higher professional programmes (ISCED 554) leading to a non-university diploma and title DiS - *Diplomovaný špecialista* / certified specialist (33), or in the healthcare, titles with specific wording (1).

Some of follow-up and higher professional programmes are offered as dual VET.

Tertiary education currently lacks universities of applied science. However, the government's 2023 strategy plans to develop practice-oriented bachelor programmes, aiming to make up 10% of all bachelor programmes by 2025. (2) Continuing VET is semi-regulated: the Lifelong Learning Act requires programmes for adults who wish to start a business regulated by the Trade

Licensing Act to be approved by the education ministry's accreditation commission. Some qualifications are regulated by sectoral authorities, while many training programmes and adult education are not regulated. The labour ministry regulates labour market training via the central and district labour offices.

Distinctive features

Combining provision of general education and developing key competences with vocational skills within a broad variety of upper secondary programmes, predominantly school-based, is a result of tradition and historical development. The characteristic pattern of the education system, featuring a high share of secondary education and a low share of tertiary, has changed since EU accession. The share of population aged 15 to 64 with ISCED 3 to 4 levels of education was 68.7% in 2005 and 61.2% in 2022, while the data for the same cohort and years for ISCED 5-8 levels were 11.4% and 26.0%.

Ties between VET schools and the business world loosened during the economic transformation in the 1990s. Since 2015, specialised legislation supports the involvement of companies in the provision of 'dual VET' via direct financing from the State budget; it explicitly sets the rights and duties of professional and employer organisations regarding VET. Stronger engagement of the business world in informing VET schools about skill needs via sectoral (skills) councils should help VET adjust better to a rapidly changing labour market.

A 10-year compulsory education generally guarantees that learners should attend at least 1 year of upper secondary education after completing 9-year integrated primary and lower secondary general education. Despite a negative trend, this contributes to preventing early leaving from education and training. While there has been a slight improvement in the indicator (from 7.8% in 2021 to 7.4% in 2022), it still exceeds the national benchmark of 6%. The improvement can be attributed to the provision of new programmes combining completion of lower secondary general and vocational education.

[1] In the case of healthcare, the [government regulation \(513/2011\)](#) specifies titles, such as 'dipl. f.' for graduates of the programme diploma physiotherapist or 'dipl. o.' for diploma optometrist.

CHAPTER 2.

Main challenges and policy responses

Several international indicators calls for action:

- PISA 2022 results across all three domains (reading, maths, science) shows a further decline compared to 2018; this challenges technical VET programmes, impacting the supply of technically skilled graduates;
- early leaving from education and training in Eastern Slovakia has surpassed the EU 2020 target of 10% since 2015, indicating the need for alternative pathways to qualifications alongside formal education;
- adult participation in learning, long-term well below the EU-27 average, increased dramatically to 12,8% in 2022, largely due to revised data collection methodology and massive ESIF support for labour market training. A voucher scheme piloted by labour ministry could be a game changer.

The 2020 Council country-specific recommendations advocated for strengthening digital skills and ensuring equal access to quality education. The shift to distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic renewed focus on inclusive education and the acquisition of digital skills within the [Recovery and resilience plan](#) (3). Introduced in 2021, the new position of school digital coordinator aims to support schools amidst ongoing digital transformation, bolstered by the National broadband plan's goal of gigabit connectivity for schools by 2030.

The pandemic also highlighted the inadequacy of digital educational content across all education levels, particularly in VET. There is a pressing need for well-organised repositories of open educational resources, suitable for offline learning. Retraining teachers to cope with the digital transformation and diverse learners needs is also a critical challenge (4).

[3] See European Commission (2021). [Proposal for a Council implementation decision on the approval of the assessment of the recovery and resilience plan for Slovakia](#). Annex. (Component 7). European Commission, Brussels, 21.6.2021, COM(2021) 339 final Annex.

CHAPTER 3.

External factors influencing VET

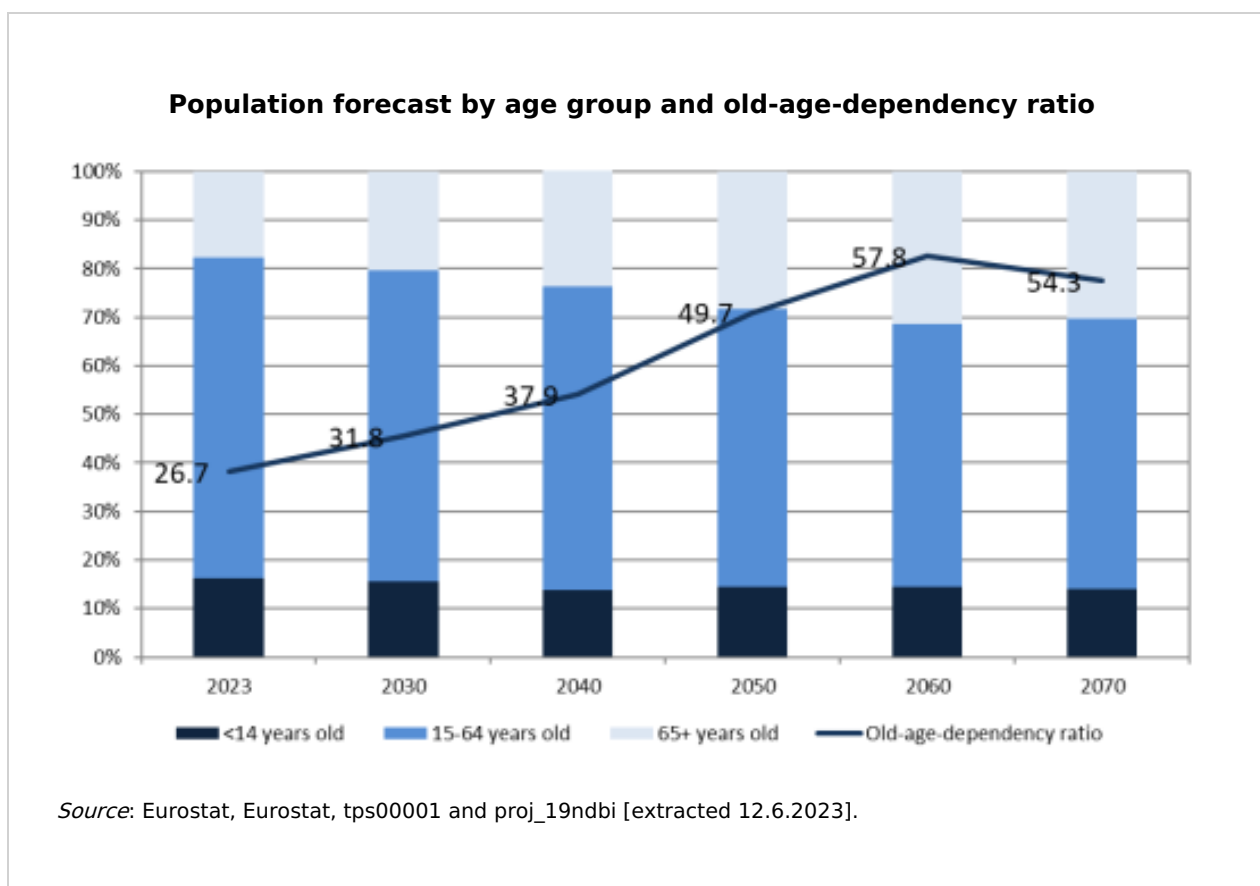
3.1 Demographics

Population in 2022: 5 434 712 (5).

It decreased by 0.01% since 2017 (6).

As in many other EU countries, the population is ageing.

The old-age-dependency ratio is expected to increase from 26.7 in 2023 to 54.3 in 2070 (7).



Births fell significantly from 73 256 in 1993 to 50 841 in 2002, followed by a slight increase to 52 668 in 2022. Population decline resulted in a surplus of places in schools and caused intensifying competition among education providers. The number of secondary VET schools decreased from 506 in 2008/09 to 427 in 2022/23 (performing arts schools excluded).

A shift towards ISCED 354 programmes, permitting applying for higher education, to the detriment of ISCED 353 programmes, has led to a lack of skilled workers in some professions, and craftsmen in particular: only 21.4% of upper secondary VET graduates completed ISCED 353 programmes, while 78.6% completed ISCED 354 programmes in 2022.

The population is composed of Slovaks (83.8%), Hungarians (7.8%), Roma (1.2%) and other minorities (less than 1% each) (8). According to relevant research opinions about two thirds of ethnic Roma do not declare themselves as Roma on the census. The Hungarian minority is served by schools with Hungarian as the language of instruction, from kindergartens to higher education; provision of VET is limited compared to general education. In 2022, there were 427 VET schools, of which 370 had Slovak as the language of instruction, 25 had Hungarian and Slovak, 12 had Hungarian, 19 had English and Slovak, and 1 had German and Slovak.

3.2 Economics

As of 31 December 2022, 250 545 out of the 266 companies registered 583 in Slovakia were micro-sized (0-9 employees).

A quarter of the employees (25.2%) are employed in large enterprises, with 74.7% in other enterprises; 47.8% of employees are working in micro companies, 12.6% in small companies and 14.3% with medium-sized companies (9).

Main economic sectors (of all 2 214 400 employees in 2022):

- Manufacturing (574 600);
- wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles (270 800);
- public administration and defence; compulsory social security (209 600);
- education (218 100);
- health and social work activities (178 700);
- construction (143 100);
- transportation and storage (142 000);
- information and communication (89 000).

The Slovak economy is among the most open in the EU, heavily depending on exporting industry products, mostly automotive; the country is a world leader in manufacturing of cars per capita.

The strongest sector - manufacturing - is in decrease after a period of strong growth in the 2010s, while the information and communication sector continues to grow. All the other aforementioned sectors are growing compared to 2021, except public administration.

3.3 Labour market

There are 297 professions in Slovakia, according to the [EU regulated professions database](#).

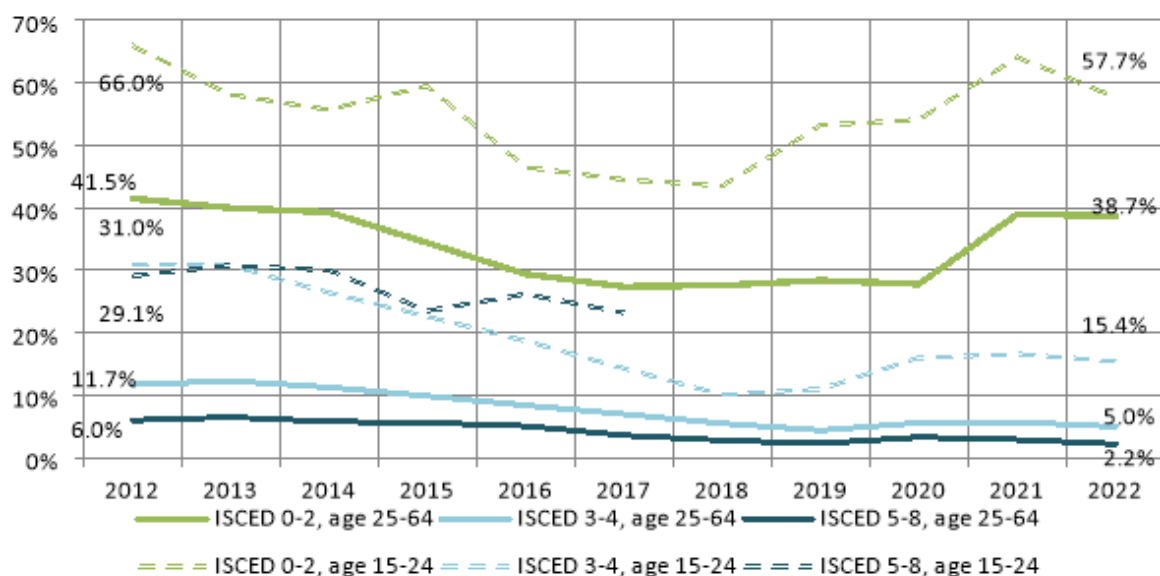
The Trade Licencing Act (455/1991) is relevant for secondary VET. It stipulates preconditions for starting a business via listing the crafts requiring a certificate of apprenticeship (or fulfilling other prescribed requirements) and a list of trades requiring a variety of certificates of proficiency, often in addition to formal education certificates.

There is also a variety of sectoral legislation prescribing requirements for entering respective working positions, sometimes set in cooperation with professional organisations.

A full list of regulated professions is available (in Slovak) at the [education ministry portal](#).

Total unemployment (10)(2022: 5.4% (5.4% in EU-27); it fell by 0.4 percentage points (pp) since 2018 (11).

Unemployment rate (aged 15-24 and 25-64) by education attainment level in 2012-22



NB: Data based on ISCED 2011; breaks in time series; low reliability for ISCED 5-8, age 15-24.

ISCED 0-2 = less than primary, primary and lower secondary education.

ISCED 3-4 = upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education.

ISCED 5-8 = tertiary education.

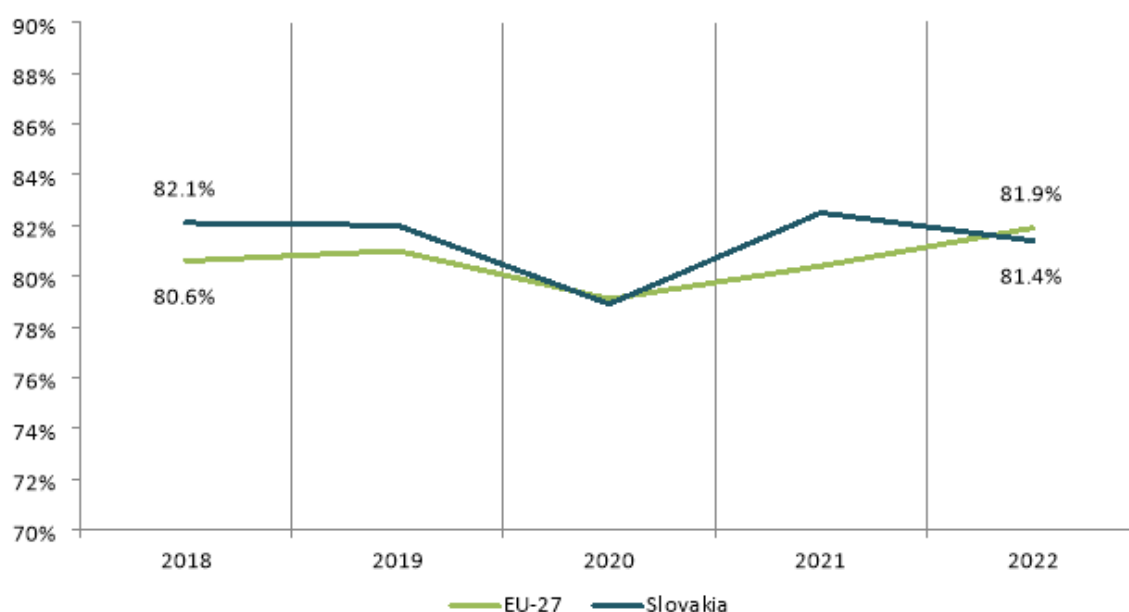
Source: Eurostat, Ifsa_urgaed [extracted 12.10.2023].

Unemployment of the low-qualified is extremely high compared to the medium- and high-qualified. In the pandemic times it increased to 38.7% in the age group 25-64 and extremely to 64.1% in the age group 15-24. The impact of the pandemic on unemployment was stronger for younger than older and for lower qualified than more qualified.

Many low-skilled Roma living in segregated communities of low living standard struggle to escape the poverty trap without specific interventions. Emerging new VET programmes offering completion of lower secondary general education, together with VET qualification for early leavers from general education and social enterprises for adults, are policies now targeting disadvantaged groups, backed by the Recovery and resilience plan and the National implementation plan.

After an earlier steep increase, the employment of VET graduates aged 20 to 34 remained almost stable during 2018-22 and higher compared to all graduates in the same age group. Despite a notable rise from 73.8% in 2014 to 81.4% in 2022, the employment rate of VET graduates aged 20 to 34 slightly trails behind the EU-27 average of 81.9%.

Employment rate of VET graduates (20 to 34 years old, ISCED levels 3 and 4)



NB: Data based on ISCED 2011; breaks in time series.
 ISCED 3-4 = upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education.
 Source: Eurostat, edat_ifse_24 [extracted 12.6.2023].

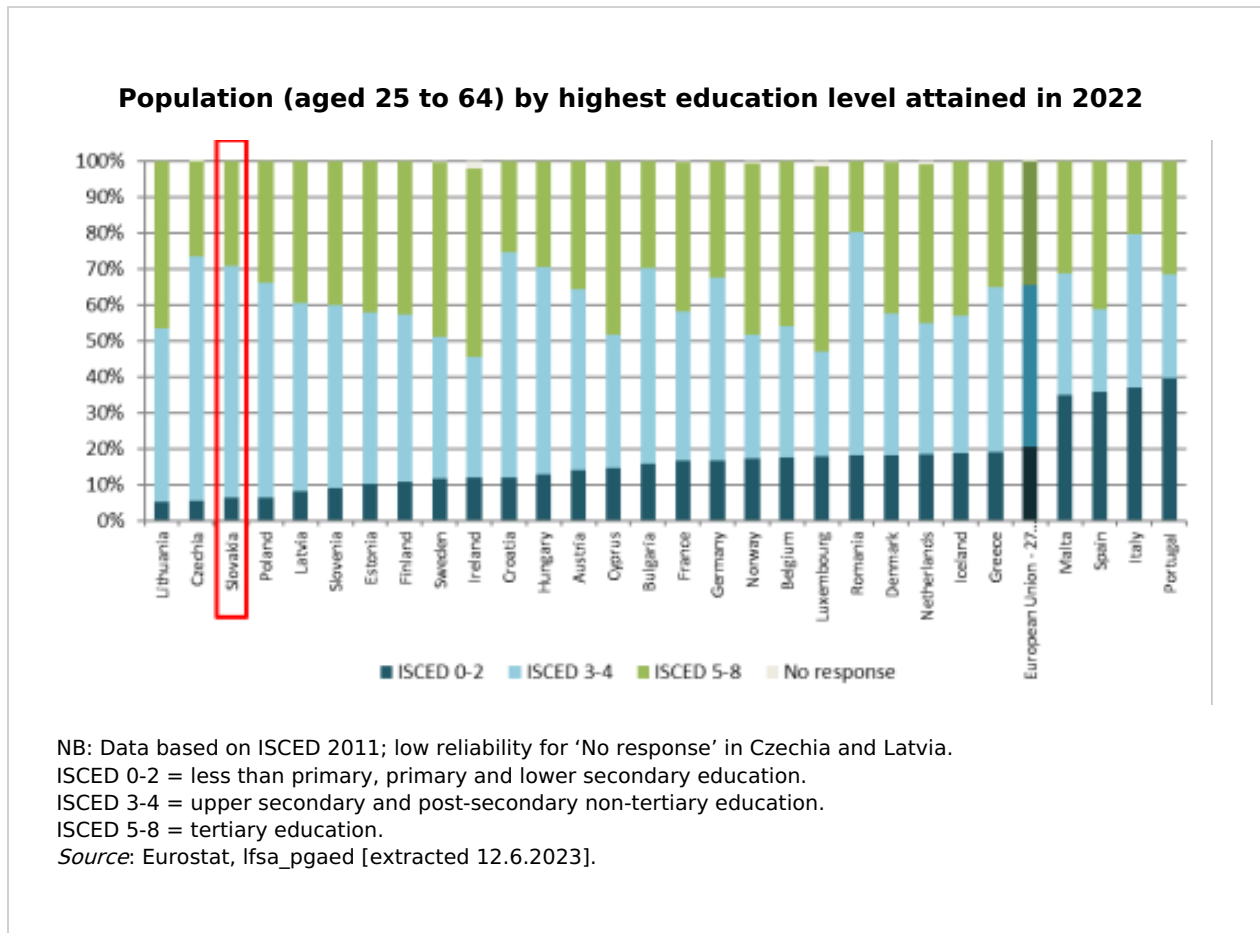
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- [5] NB: Data for population as of 1 January. Eurostat table tps00001 [extracted 12.6.2023].
 - [6] NB: Data for population as of 1 January. Eurostat table tps00001 [extracted 12.6.2023].
 - [7] Old-age-dependency ratio is defined as the ratio between the number of persons aged 65 and more over the number of working-age persons (15-64). The value is expressed per 100 persons of working age (15-64).
 - [8] Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic, 2021 Census. Collecting statistical data based on ethnicity is forbidden. According to the 2021 Census, 67 179 inhabitants claimed to have solely Roma nationality, while 88 985 claimed to have Roma nationality alongside another nationality, totaling 156 164. However, according to the estimate of the [Atlas of Roma communities from 2019](#) there are about 440 000 ethnic Roma.
 - [9] Slovak Business Agency (2023). *Malé a stredné podnikanie v číslach* [Small and medium-sized enterprises in numbers]. Bratislava: SBA.
 - [10] Percentage of active population, 25 to 74 years old.
 - [11] Eurostat table une_rt_a [extracted 12.6.2023].

CHAPTER 4.

Education attainment

4.1 Share of high, medium and low level qualifications

Eurostat data show that in Slovakia the share of medium-level educated population in the age group 25 to 64 is the second highest in the EU in 2022 (64.5% compared to 45.2% in EU-27), while the share of low-educated is the third lowest (6.3% compared to 20.5% in EU-27). Despite a high share of young tertiary educated people comparable with the EU-27 average and an extreme growth in the share since 2000, the share of high-educated is the fifth lowest (29.2% compared to 34.2% in EU-27 in 2022).



4.3 VET learners by level

Share of learners in VET by level 2017-21

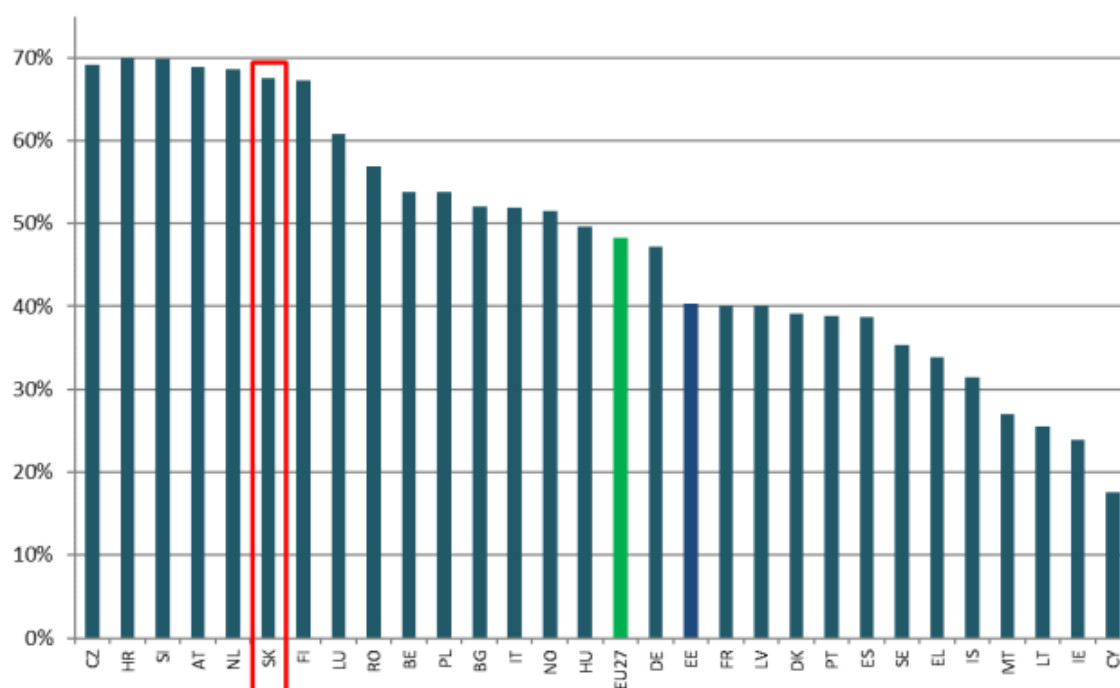
	Lower secondary	Upper secondary	Post-secondary

2017	2.6%	68,9%	100.0%
2021	2.4%	67,6%	100.0%
Change 2017-21	-0.1 pp	-1,3 pp	0.0 pp

Source: Eurostat, educ_uoe_enrs01, educ_uoe_enrs04 and educ_uoe_enrs07 [extracted 12.6.2023].

The share of learners in VET decreased slightly compared to 2017, but substantially compared to 75% in 2005. Due to a population decline, the numbers of both VET learners and general education learners fell compared to 2005. The fall was more severe in VET than in general education. This translates to a gradual decline in the share of initial VET learners in the comparison across EU countries, to sixth place in 2021.

Share of initial VET learners from total learners at upper-secondary level (ISCED level 3), 2021



NB: Data based on ISCED 2011.

Source: Eurostat, educ_uoe_enrs04 [extracted 1.11.2023].

4.4 Female share

In 2021, 45.3% of full-time upper secondary VET learners were females; in part-time programmes females accounted for 50.6%. The share of part-time learners in all upper secondary VET learners is however marginal (2.9%). 41.3% of full-time post-secondary VET learners were females; in part-time programmes females accounted for 75.0%. The share of part-time learners in all post-secondary VET learners is comparably higher (51.4%) (12).

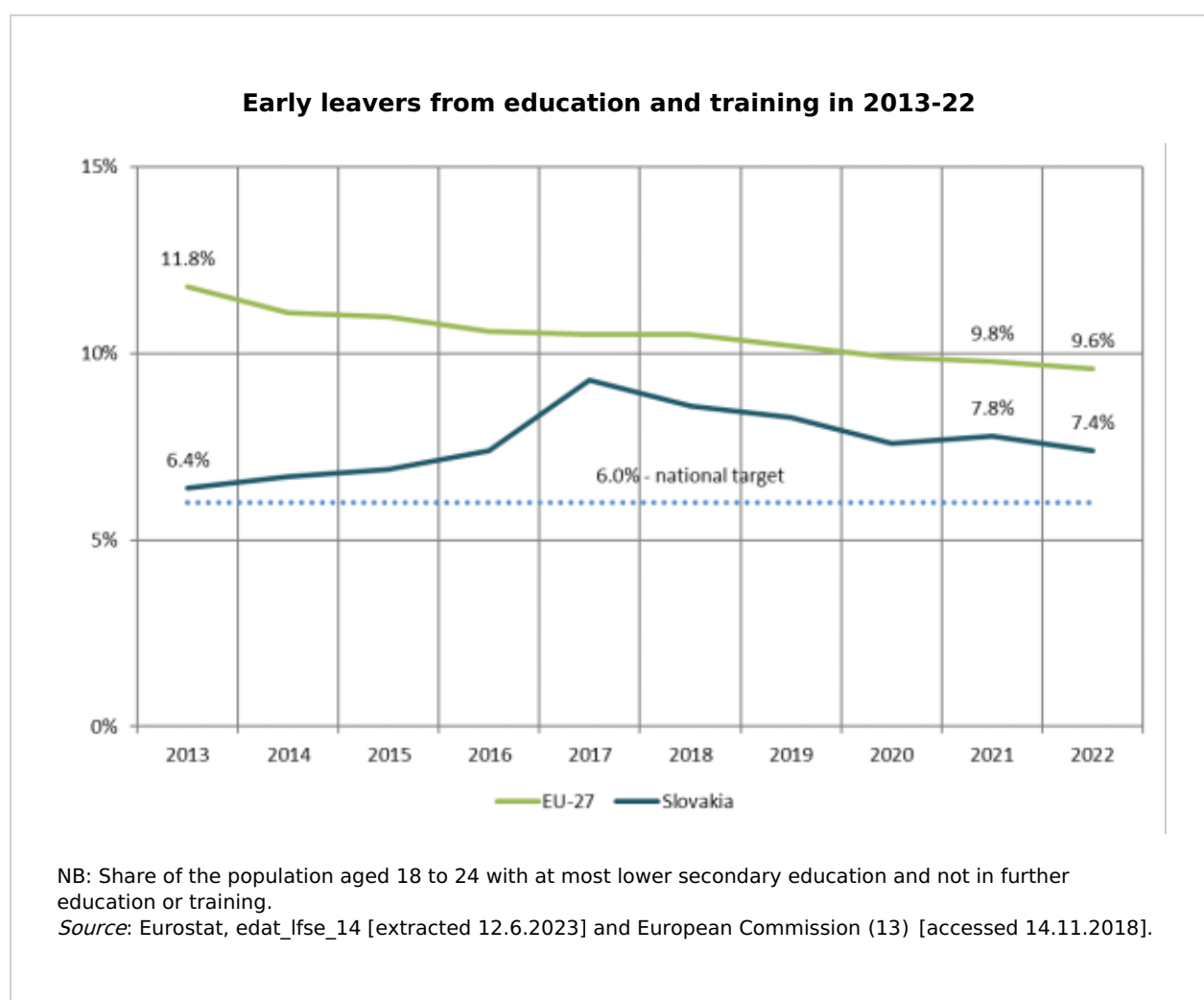
In textile and clothing, and teacher training (including child and social care) full-time programmes

more than 90% of learners are females, while in healthcare and veterinary females are more than 80%. In technical studies, such as mechanical engineering, electrical engineering, wood-processing and ICT, more than 90% of learners are males, while in construction more than 80% are males.

77.2% of part-time learners participate in healthcare, teacher training and economics and organisation programmes, which are programmes that females chose more often. Professions related to these studies are also more strictly regulated compared to others.

4.5 Early leavers from education and training

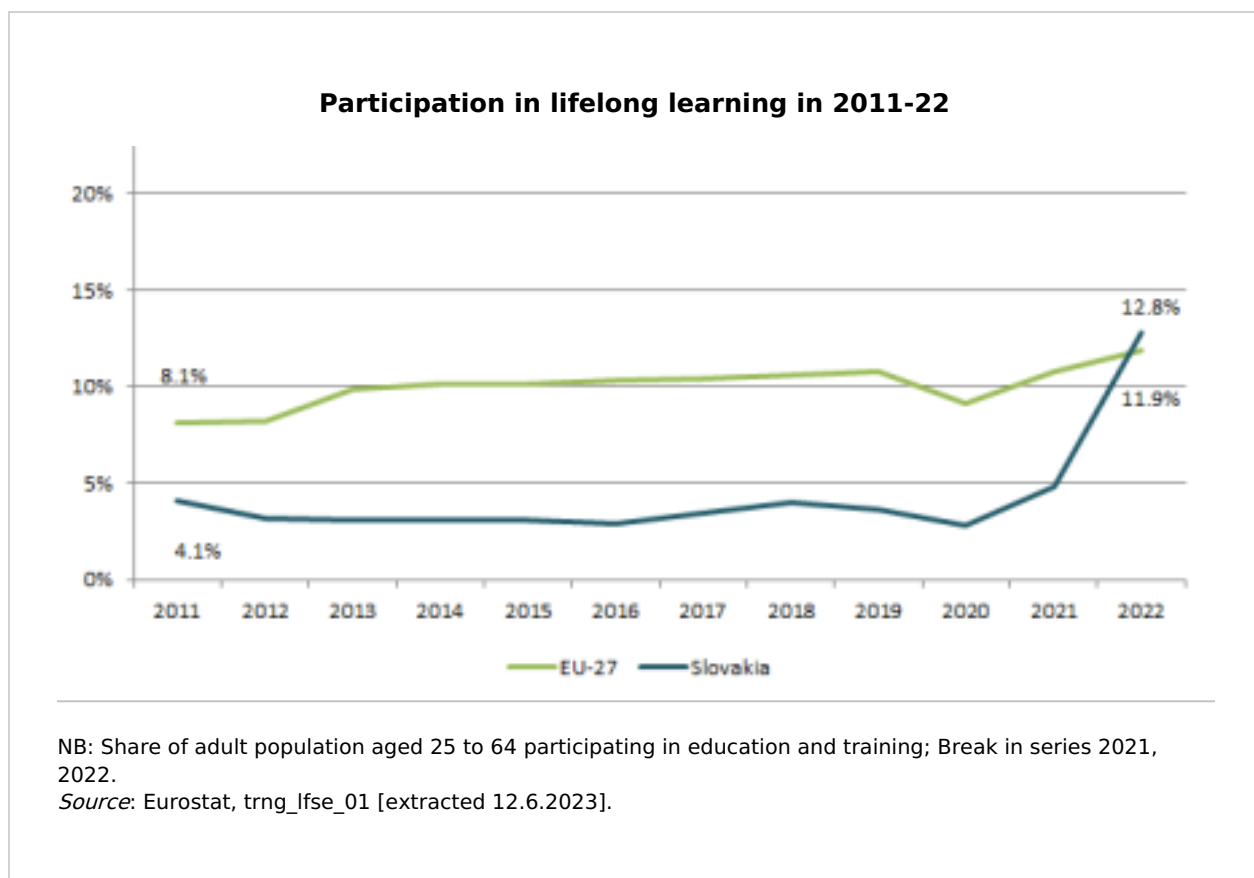
The share of early leavers from education and training has increased from 4.9% in 2009 to 7.4% in 2022. Although it is still better than the EU-27 average of 9.6%, it is above the national target of 6.0%.



Early leaver data deteriorate from West to East. Long-term figures for central Slovakia slightly exceed the national target of 6%; long-term figures for eastern Slovakia are over the EU target of 10% despite improvement in 2022 (10.9%, while 10.8% in males and 10.9% in females) compared to 2021 (14.4%, while 16.1% in males and 12.6% in females) (14).

For more information visit [Cedefop project page on tackling early leaving](#) and the interactive toolkits: [Cedefop VET toolkit for tackling early leaving](#) and [Cedefop VET toolkit for empowering](#)

4.6 Participation in lifelong learning



Participation in lifelong learning in Slovakia has remained stable, but very low in the past decade, well below the EU average and EU target of 15%. In 2020, it declined to 2.8% compared to 9.2% in EU-27 but it dramatically increased since then to 12.8%. This can be attributed to two factors - massive labour market retraining at the end of ESIF programming period and more precise collection of data in LFS.

4.7 VET learners by age

Share of ISCED 2 to 5 VET learners by age groups (%)

Age group	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
0-19	44.8	31.4	31.2	30.9	30.2	29.2	28.3	27.7	27.6	27.5
20-24	94.0	95.4	94.6	93.8	94.2	93.7	92.7	93.5	92.6	93.3
25+	95.3	97.1	96.8	96.4	96.9	97.0	97.4	97.5	97.6	98.4

Source: Slovak Centre of Scientific and Technical Information data, tabled by ReferNet Slovakia.

While the share of VET learners in the youngest age cohort has fallen, it is only slightly changing in other age cohorts as a result of the structure of post-secondary education, within which only vocational education programmes are offered. Adults prefer VET over general education, or enter tertiary education.

- [12] Eurostat, educ_uoe_enrs04 and educ_uoe_enrs07 [extracted 9.10.2023].
- [14] Eurostat LFS edat_ifse_16 [extracted 9.10.2023].

CHAPTER 5.

VET within education and training system

The education and training system comprises:

- pre-school education (ISCED 0);
- integrated primary (4 years, ISCED 1; EQF 1) and lower secondary general education (5 years, ISCED 2; EQF 2), (nationally referred to as basic education);
- lower secondary VET (ISCED 2; EQF 2);
- upper secondary general education (ISCED 3; EQF 4);
- upper secondary VET (ISCED 3; EQF 3 and 4);
- post-secondary non-tertiary VET (ISCED 4 and 5; EQF 4 and 5);
- academic higher (tertiary) education (ISCED 6 to 8; EQF 6 to 8).

Pre-school education starts at the age of three, with obligatory participation one year before entering primary education from 2021. The legal right for a place in a kindergarten should be gradually guaranteed from September 2024 for 4-year old children and from September 2025 also for 3-year old children. The increased demand can be offered by regular kindergartens, via home schooling under the supervision of the kindergarten, or by those offering childcare services as regulated by the labour ministry, provided they registered with the education ministry confirming compliance with pre-primary educational standards. A certificate on completion of compulsory pre-primary education is awarded from the 2021/22 school year.

Compulsory education starts at the age of six and includes 9 years of basic education (integrating 4 or 5-year primary and 5 or 4-year lower secondary education) and at least 1 year of upper secondary education. An amendment to the Education act (245/2008) in 2023 introduced flexibility in the duration of primary education in the light of the ongoing curricular reform. This reform introduces three cycles: a 3-year first cycle, a 2-year second cycle, which together provide primary education, and a 4-year third cycle offering lower secondary general education. 39 schools piloting the curricular reform as set by the [new state education programme \(national curricula\)](#) adhere to the 3-cycle organisation (3+2+4), while all the other basic schools follow the old state educational programme prescribing a 2-level organisation (4+5) until the 2026/27 school year, at which point a mandatory curricular change applies to all basic schools. An additional obligatory year in upper secondary education is intended to prevent leaving education early, as learners usually continue their education at the upper secondary level beyond the mandatory first year.

Upper secondary general education is primarily pursued through a 4-year programme following the completion of basic education (with bilingual programmes spanning 5 years), while an 8-year programme that starts after completing grade five of basic education represents a less common route (15). Upper secondary general education graduates receive the *maturita* school leaving certificate allowing access to higher education.

Higher (tertiary) education comprises bachelor, master (or integrated bachelor and master) and PhD programmes. Labour-market-oriented bachelor programmes emerged, supported by the ESF. Professional bachelor studies in mechanical engineering started in 2017/18. Tertiary educational attainment in the age group 30-34 is rising steeply; it has almost tripled since entering the EU: from 12.9% in 2004 to 39.7% in 2020.

Special programmes cater for learners with special education needs. Furthermore, a curricular

reform piloted from 2023/24 in primary education also focuses on inclusive education. Instruments in support of inclusive education such as a [catalogue of support measures](#) and [guidance and counselling quality standards](#) are also valid for initial VET.

The Slovak education and training system is still based on the 1970s model aimed at providing all learners with at least upper-secondary education, mainly through school-based VET. In addition to work-based learning backed by school-company contracts, 'dual' VET providing work-based learning in companies based on contracts with individual learners was introduced in 2015 (16).

VET at lower, upper and post-secondary levels is delivered by secondary VET schools (*SOŠ, stredná odborná škola*). VET schools, similarly to general education schools, are highly regulated through legislation and detailed curricula, although they are legal entities and are also obliged to adjust their curricula within the limits set by the national curricula. Most VET schools are public.

VET can currently be offered as:

- school-based programmes with practical training (mainly) in school workshops;
- dual VET, where learners (or their legal representatives) have contracts with enterprises for provision of in-company training, while companies and schools have agreements on provision of dual VET specifying in detail duties of both partners;
- mixed scheme, with school-based learning along with training provided by a company within the framework of school-company contract specifying numbers of trainees and a share of training performed by the company.

Most VET programmes are provided at upper secondary level. Most secondary VET graduates receive the *maturita* school leaving certificate, allowing access to higher education. There are programmes with extended component of practice that offer the *maturita* school leaving certificate and a certificate of apprenticeship.

3-year VET programmes, regardless of whether school-based or offered in cooperation with companies, offer a VET qualification (nationally referred to as certificate of apprenticeship). Graduates of these programmes can enter a 2-year programme to receive a *maturita* school leaving certificate.

[15] From 2019/20, only 5% of respective age cohort is allowed to enter this programme. Shares may differ among regions based on a decision of the education ministry.

[16] [Act on VET 61/2015 amended in 2021](#).

CHAPTER 6.

Apprenticeship

Dual VET was introduced in 2015/16. Companies can sign individual training contracts with learners for in-company practical training, complemented by an institutional contract between secondary VET schools and companies. Learners are considered VET students and not employees. Training in dual VET is offered by company instructors in specific company training premises. It can also be complemented by training in school workshops or other companies' premises.

Companies participating in dual VET are expected to contribute to respective school educational programme development. Although enrolment in dual VET has been gradually increasing, its overall share is still low. As of 15 September 2022, there were 9 347 contracted learners in dual VET (7.39% of 126 500 VET programme full-time learners). 18% of these 9 347 learners entered programmes offering a *maturita* school-leaving certificate only, and 61% programmes offering both *maturita* school-leaving certificate together with a certificate of apprenticeship. Only 19% are ISCED 353 learners in programmes offering a certificate of apprenticeship. The remaining 2% are learners in programmes of lower and higher qualification levels. Out of contracted dual learners, 8 044 were offered training in premises of companies (practical training workplaces), 98 in other forms of work-based learning, 1 163 in school premises and the rest 42 were not yet obliged to participate in practical component of VET (17).

[17] According to the calculation of ReferNet Slovakia based on the education ministry primary data. Disregarding all schools and programmes not eligible for entering dual VET by law (as a consequence of stakeholders), a share of dual learners is slightly higher - 8.46% compared to 7.39%. Conservatories and special schools were disregarded.

CHAPTER 7.

VET governance

Institutions of VET governance

A new VET governance architecture was created in 2009 and revised in 2015, 2018 and 2022 (18). It consists of the following coordinating and advisory bodies:

- the [National VET Council](#) is the coordinating body affiliated to the government that discusses VET policy, such as regional and sectoral strategies. 19 working groups covering selected study fields support adjustments in VET programmes, better matching them to labour market needs. A working group for the verification of labour market needs focuses on assessing self-governing regions' activities related to secondary VET regulation. It is envisaged to transform into the Council of the Government of the Slovak Republic for Lifelong Learning with expanded competences as proposed by the [2030 Strategy of lifelong learning and counselling](#);
- regional VET councils are composed of representatives of State, self-government, employers and employees. They are advisory bodies to the heads of the eight self-governing regions; they prepare regional VET policy documents, discuss number of places to be offered in respective schools and programmes, etc.;
- the [Alliance of Sectoral Councils](#) is an interest association of legal entities which, according to the new wording of the law (19) ensures and coordinates the creation and updating of the [National System of Occupations](#) and the [National Qualifications System](#). It establishes sectoral (skills) councils according to relevant sectors of the economy, ensures their activity and evaluates their functionality and efficiency. The sectoral councils update the National System of Occupations, determine the requirements for knowledge, skills and competences necessary for work activities in jobs on the labour market and create prerequisites for their transfer to the lifelong learning system;
- sectoral assignees - institutions of the world of work selected from chambers and employers' associations - represent employers' interests in each VET study field as professional counterparts to education authorities and experts. Sectoral assignees should play a prominent role in adjusting VET to labour market needs and in assuring its quality. The Employer Council for Dual VET encompassing sectoral assignees involved in dual VET, coordinating their activities, was renamed [Employer Council for Vocational Education and Training](#), based on the amendment of the Act on VET adopted by the parliament in October 2021;
- expert groups and ad hoc working groups affiliated to the State Institute of Vocational Education covering respective fields of study focus on diverse curriculum issues and conditions of provision of VET (material, spatial and equipment-related requirements).

Schools are headed by directors appointed by school establishers for a 5-year term, based on a tender organised by a school board (*rada školy*). The school board can also have impact on development plans of schools and can also suggest dismissing the director. The board is usually composed of 11 members representing school staff, parents, school establisher, students, and, if requested, also sectoral assignees. The school director is not a member of the school board.

In 2022, there were 427 VET schools, out of which 81 private and 20 church-affiliated. The remaining schools are established by self-governing regions, with a few exemptions established by the State.

Since 2009, the influence of employers on VET policy has been gradually increased in relation to school-based VET. VET schools must submit their educational programmes (autonomously elaborated school curricula reflecting and adjusting national curricula to local/regional needs) to

sectoral assignees, unless they were devised in cooperation with companies participating in dual VET or discussed with companies offering practical training within the mixed scheme (20). In 2017/18, sectoral assignees, for the first time, checked assignments related to school leaving examinations. There is also strong engagement of sectoral assignees in dual VET in assessment and certification of companies offering practical training and in training of in-company trainers (instructors). The 2021 amendment to the Act on VET allows for the annual financing of the activities of respective sectoral assignees. Their involvement was expanded to cover all secondary VET, following the renaming of the Employer Council for Dual VET to Employer Council for VET. This enabled replacement of activities initially conducted by expert groups of the State Institute of Vocational Education by expert groups under the control of employers.

Regulation of secondary VET

Self-governing regions are responsible for maintaining public secondary VET schools and for regulating inflow of learners into respective programmes and schools in their territory. VET programmes and numbers of students are strictly regulated based on macroeconomic [forecasting data](#) and [graduate tracking data](#), corrected by opinions of regional stakeholders. The education ministry supports schools by issuing national curricula and regulates conditions of provision of education, for example qualification and continuing professional development of staff. Some VET schools are under the responsibility of the interior and health ministries.

[18] Act on VET 184/2009, Act on VET 61/2015 as amended, and Act on Employment Services 5/2004 as amended.

[19] § 35b of the [Act on Employment Services 5/2004 as amended by the Act 488/2022](#)

[20] VET can be also offered as a mixed scheme of school-based learning along with training provided by a company within the framework of school-company contract specifying numbers of trainees and a share of training performed by the company.

[27] § 35b (1) I of the [Act on Employment Services 5/2004](#)

CHAPTER 8.

VET financing mechanisms

In relative terms, total public expenditure on education in Slovakia is lower than in EU-27. Substantial inflow comes from the European structural and investment funds.

General government expenditure on education in Slovakia and EU-27

	2009	2011	2013	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
EU27 % of GDP	5.1	4.9	4.9	4.8	4.7	4.7	4.7	4.7	5.0	4.8
SK million EUR	2 869.2	3 064.3	3 073.5	3 331.9	3 130.6	3 284.1	3 523.7	4 007.8	4 156.4	4 270.0
SK % of GDP	4.5	4.3	4.1	4.2	3.9	3.9	3.9	4.2	4.4	4.3

Source: Eurostat, table gov_10a_exp; last update: 21.7.2023 [extracted 8.10.2023].

Expenditure on secondary education including secondary VET in 2021 (1.5% of GDP) was substantially lower than the EU-27 average (1.8% of GDP). Despite more generous support for dual VET, financing of secondary education, and particularly VET, remains critically low.

Initial VET

Initial VET, regardless of ownership, is subsidised from the State budget. In 2022, per capita contribution ranged from EUR 2 558.86 to EUR 4 668.25, depending on school category, with an increase about 17% set for 2023 (21). This type of financing often forces VET schools to attract learners regardless of their capabilities and personal aspirations. Capital expenditures are covered by bodies that establish schools, and - in emergency - the State. Schools must attract additional funding to complement the State subsidy. Private schools can collect fees. Church-affiliated VET schools can benefit from parish community donations.

Continuing VET

Continuing VET is funded by learners, employers, public finances and EU funds. Cost per person is substantially lower compared to EU-27.

Cost of CVET courses (EUR)

CVT main indicator	CVTS 3 (2005)	CVTS 4 (2010)	CVTS 5 (2015)	CVTS 6 (2020)
Cost of CVT courses - cost per person employed in all enterprises - EU27	496	595	644	618
Cost of CVT courses - cost per person employed in all enterprises - SK	144	267 (b)	256	247
Cost of CVT courses - cost per person employed in enterprises providing CVT courses - EU27	661	733	780	786
Cost of CVT courses - cost per person employed in enterprises providing CVT courses - SK	213	351	312	324

NB: (b) = break in time series.

Source: Eurostat Continuing Vocational Training Survey (CVTS) [trng_cvt_17s], last update: 13.3.2023, [trng_cvt_18s], last update: 13.3.2023 [extracted 8.10.2023].

Labour market training

Labour market training for unemployed and employed job seekers depends heavily on European social fund.

Trends in training expenditure within labour market polices (million EUR)

	2011	2013	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Total LMP (EUR mill.)	546.8	460.6	419.8	486.7	473.0	492.1	527.7	1508.4	1982.6
Training (EUR mill.)	0.2	0.3	7.6	6.9	9.6	24.4	18.6	9.2	3.8
Share in LMP (%)	0.0	0.1	1.8	1.4	2.0	5.0	3.5	0.6	0.2
Share in GDP (%)	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.03	0.02	0.01	0.00
PPS/per person*	0.8	0.8	26.5	26.5	40.0	117.8	100.6	42.9	17.3

(*) Expenditures on training per person wanting to work, in purchasing power standard (PPS).

NB: mill. = million; LMP = labour market expenditure.

Source: European Commission, LMP_EXPME\$SK, LMP_IND_EXP, last update: 27.9.2023, [extracted 12.10.2023].

[21] Detailed data on financing of schools in 15 categories [are available here](#)

CHAPTER 9.

Teachers and trainers

9.1 VET teacher types

In VET, there are:

- general subject teachers;
- vocational subject teachers;
- trainers in school (nationally referred to as ‘masters of practical training’);
- in-company trainers (nationally referred to as ‘instructors’); from 2018, head instructors can also be employed by companies).

Teachers and trainers in VET schools

	2010/11	2015/16	2017/18	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	Change 2023/2011 (%)
Teachers	13 247	10 874	10 230	9 764	9 598	9 644	-27.2
Trainers in schools	3 470	2 840	2 621	2 563	2 558	2 542	-26.7

NB: Full-time teachers only, including (deputy) directors. Data on in-company trainers are not available.

Source: Slovak Centre of Scientific and Technical Information. Data as of 15 September. Calculated and tabled by ReferNet Slovakia.

The number of in-company trainers has been gradually increasing, though it remains relatively limited as the share of dual learners is low: dual learners represent only 7.39% of VET programme full-time learners.

Companies often employ former trainers from schools where there is a lack of own employees able to serve as in-company trainers.

General and vocational subject teachers are university graduates. Graduates from non-pedagogical programmes also need to complete pedagogical studies to obtain a full VET teacher qualification.

General subject teachers are trained and fully qualified for the general education stream. They are adjusted to VET learner needs within their continuing professional development and in-service training.

Trainers in VET schools are formally required to have a *maturita* school leaving certificate and completed pedagogical studies. However, many have a bachelor degree, which provides better remuneration.

[A new Act on Pedagogical and Professional Staff \(138/2019\)](#) has made qualification requirements more flexible to attract more people from business and industry to teaching and make it easier to change subject areas/positions. Specialists in occupation-oriented areas are not required to comply with qualification requirements in pedagogy provided they

- teach, at most, 10 hours per week or a maximum of 90 days during the school year; ensuring/assessing their teaching competences is the school director’s task;
- teach during the 6 months in classes with dual learners; thus, they can serve as full-time teachers for a half year or as part-time teachers under conditions as above.

[In-company trainers](#) are not considered pedagogical staff. Since the introduction of dual VET in 2015, in-company trainers (instructors and head instructors) are required to:

- have at least a certificate of apprenticeship in the respective study field;
- have 3-year experience (5 years in the case of a head instructor) as a fully qualified worker in the respective occupation;
- have completed an 'instructor training' offered by sectoral assignees (22) within 1 year of their first appointment.

From 2021, head instructors with eight years of experience and instructors with 5 years of experience qualify for these positions without the required qualification if they have obtained a certificate of 'verifying their professional competence' under the Lifelong Learning Act (568/2009).

9.2 Continuing professional development of teachers/trainers

Responsibility for [teachers' continuing professional development \(CPD\)](#) is with school directors and is based on annual plans. Provision of in-service training is very sensitive to European social fund. Traditionally, most of the training was provided by the Methodological-Pedagogical Centre, now the National Institute of Education and Youth after merging several organisations; much of it focuses on pedagogy and general issues. There is a lack of training aimed at innovations and changes in the business world. Although it is not their responsibility, professional and employer organisations also provide CPD for teachers. Some offer places in courses for business and industry professionals for reduced fees or for free. Eligibility for public funding is linked to competence development in areas covered by the respective professional standards.

In May 2019, a new Act on Pedagogical and Professional Staff (138/2019) was approved by the parliament, replacing the the previous act (317/2009) (23). The new act addresses professional development and provides financial bonus for completing specified training or passing the State examination in foreign languages. The heavily criticized credit system, which tied participation in training to advancement regardless of its impact on professional development, has been abolished. Greater emphasis is now placed on portfolio building and assessment, which allows for alternative options for CPD beyond traditional in-service training. Renaming 'in-service teacher trainers' to 'trainers of professional development' represents a significant step towards the intended change. However, traditional in-service training is still the dominant instrument of CPD.

Pre-service training of teachers and trainers also faces changes due to the transformation of higher education already in progress (24). New accreditation procedures are based on the new quality standards and interlinked with assessment of internal quality assurance system by a newly established independent Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education.

Gradually increasing difficulties in [attracting qualified teachers and trainers to the service](#) resulted in a call for applications for financing costs of pedagogical studies to obtain a full qualification for non-qualified teachers and trainers, as well as additional in-service training for qualified staff to expand their qualification to other subject matters.

Additional measures addressing the lack of staff are contained in a substantial amendment of the Act on Pedagogical and Professional Staff adopted by the parliament in October 2021. This supports hiring of student teachers, provision of teaching and training over regular teaching load by staff already employed, and hiring of professionals without a teaching qualification. While previous regulation allowed professionals from other sectors to be employed as teachers only part-time, now such professionals can serve as full-time teachers during the 6 months in classes with dual learners. Although these compensation measures are helpful, a risk of insufficient quality of teaching/training remains.

For more information, visit Cedefop project page on [Teachers' and Trainers' professional](#)

development and the interactive toolkits for VET practitioners: [Cedefop VET toolkit for tackling early leaving](#) and [Cedefop VET toolkit for empowering NEETs](#). You may also read [Cedefop/ReferNet country reports on Teachers and Trainers in a Changing World](#) and [Cedefop comparative analysis](#).

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- [22] Institutions of the world of work selected from chambers and employer associations and defined by law (Decree 251/2018) to represent employer interests as professional counterparts to education authorities and experts.
 - [23] The Act on Pedagogical and Professional Staff (317/2009) specified four career levels of teachers/trainers: beginner, independent teacher and attested teacher (first and second (advanced) level attestation); it also defined the professional standards of each level and introduced credits in continuing training.
 - [24] See Act on [Quality Assurance in Higher Education \(269/2018\)](#) that came into force on 1 November 2018

CHAPTER 10.

Shaping VET qualifications

10.1 Anticipating skill needs

The chambers and/or employer representatives, mandated as sectoral assignees (25) provide with 'documents and cooperation to the Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family in the preparation of analyses and forecasts on labour market developments' (26). According to the 2022 amendment to the Act on Employment Services (27), the Alliance of Sectoral Councils 'coordinates the process of detecting, monitoring and forecasting of development trends in the labour market, the skills required for the performance of work activities in jobs on the labour market, the creation and disappearance of jobs, emerging and disappearing occupations'.

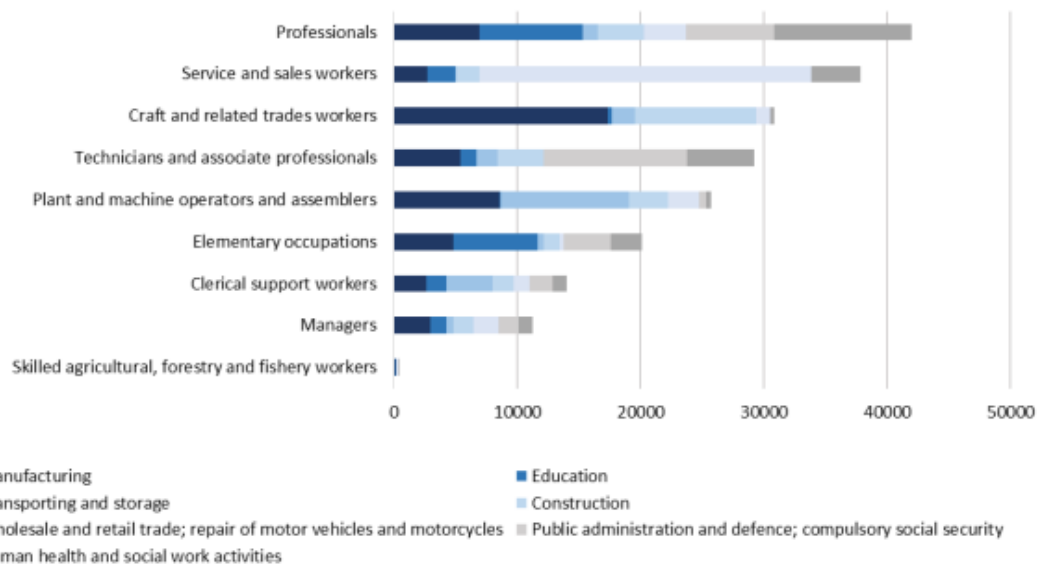
There are two models of macroeconomic forecasting available (28). The [model supervised by the labour ministry](#) forecasts additional labour market needs by ISCO (29) groups. The forecasting data are transformed into estimation of ceilings for each programme and each school, and used for further negotiation on regulation of the inflow of new entrants into secondary schools and secondary programmes. Analyses of job vacancy data from online job portals (30) and information on regional players can also influence decisions of self-governing regions' heads on VET entrants and, subsequently, graduate supply.

Detailed data on graduates from respective programmes (average wages, employment and unemployment rates, and estimation of prospects) regionally and nationally, have been available for graduates from 2018 and 2019. A specialised portal developed under the surveillance of the labour ministry (31) informs students, education counsellors and career guidance counsellors about the prospects of respective professions and fields of study. These data also contribute to corrections of ceilings for each programme and each school by regional authorities. An alternative visualisation of similar data on graduates from 2020 is offered in the education ministry portal (32). While graduate tracking initiatives are in progress, anticipation of skills needs based on employer surveys is still missing.

Lists of jobs have been developed by the labour ministry to indicate [professions lacking labour force in all eight regions in Slovakia](#). These lists of jobs entitle to accelerated administrative procedures in the employment of nationals of third countries. From 1 January 2023, there is a further simplification of the filling of vacant positions concerning the employment of highly qualified nationals of third countries who have been issued a blue card and those who have been granted temporary residence. It is also possible to fill vacancies beyond the scope of these lists if it is concerning positions in the field of education and research. These lists also indicate what kind of graduates from secondary VET and what kind of labour market training for the unemployed is needed.

[START_IMAGE]

Occupations requirement in main sectors until 2025



NB: ISCO-08 categories; Statistical Classification of Economic Activities in the European Community (NACE Rev.2) sectors in the legend.

Source: Trexima Ltd.

The most significant employment growth is forecasted in manufacturing (51 587) and wholesale and retail trade, repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles sectors (37 856).

More information on national qualifications frameworks and the qualifications types can be found in Cedefop's [NQF online tool](#). See also [Cedefop's skills intelligence](#) data and [European Skills Index](#).

10.2 Designing qualifications

Three sets of standards are under development and/or further refinement:

- educational;
- occupational;
- qualification.

Educational standards were developed backed by the 2008 Education Act (245/2008) under the lead of the State Institute of Vocational Educational and the National Institute of Education and Youth (33) and predominantly driven by educator experience. Education standards are composed of so-called content and performance standards, as stipulated by the Education Act (245/2008). Performance standards can be seen as learning outcomes that students are supposed to achieve during their studies and demonstrate when completing them. Assessment standards are considered a tool to help evaluate whether learners have achieved the performance standards. Assessment standards are to be developed by schools and set within

school educational programmes (school curricula) specifying criteria and assessment procedures for achieving performance standards corresponding to the respective school environment.

Occupational standards were developed by the sectoral (skills) councils. Their development was initiated by the labour ministry, backed by the Act on Employment Services (5/2004). Development of occupational standards has been significantly affected by employers' representatives active in sectoral (skills) councils. Occupational standards are currently contained in occupation cards (*karta zamestnanía*) of selected individual occupations from the [register of occupations](#). Occupational standards have an important information function and contributed also to improved job seeker information within the information system on the labour market managed by the labour sector (34). However, occupational standards have no normative power for recognition of qualifications.

Qualification standards started to be developed under the supervision of the education ministry backed by the Lifelong Learning Act (568/2009) and supported by the European social fund (ESF) project Creation of the national qualifications system. Within this project, an [online qualification register](#) and the [Slovak Qualifications Framework \(SKKR\)](#) have been created.

Qualification standards in the register should inform the education sector, and particularly schools, in updating their school educational programmes. Qualification standards and assessments manuals were developed (35) within the national ESF project System of verifying qualifications. They were used in piloting processes of validation of non-formal and informal learning.

Curriculum development

Since 2008, curriculum development has been decentralised. The State is responsible for developing national curricula, officially titled State educational programme (*štátny vzdelávací program*). These contain educational standards. Subsequently, schools prepare their own school curricula, officially titled School educational programme (*školský vzdelávací program*) based on the respective State educational programme. School educational programmes must be discussed with sectoral assignees and representatives of companies offering practical training. For dual VET, companies offering practical training directly participate as co-authors of respective school educational programmes.

Currently there are 27 State educational programmes for VET prepared by the State Institute of Vocational Education (36). These documents are developed in cooperation with expert commissions comprising experienced practitioners from the world of education and the world of work (37). They are also discussed with sectoral assignees. A draft document is submitted for discussion to the respective tripartite working group of the National VET Council. Thus, State educational programmes are commented by representatives of social partners specified by law (38) before submission for final approval and issue by the education ministry. These programmes cover all major VET fields under the responsibility of the education ministry and include specific framework requirements for all relevant ISCED levels and educational standards for individual programmes. The ministries of health and interior are autonomous in programming initial VET under their responsibility.

State educational programmes reflected all key competences set by the 2006 European reference framework (39). Originally, they reflected all individual competences separately; from 2013/14, only three overarching key competences were set and subsequently also reflected in school educational programmes:

- act independently in a social and working life;
- use interactively knowledge, information communications technology (ICT), communicate in Slovak, mother tongue and foreign language;
- work in heterogeneous groups.

From 2021, efforts to address all respective key competences separately are back and respective changes in State educational programmes reflect the 2018 Council recommendation on key

competences for lifelong learning (40).

To cover general education requirements in VET, the National Institute of Education and Youth responsible for national curricula for general education also develops [educational standards for all relevant general subjects for VET programmes](#) by ISCED level. Standards for foreign languages are set in compliance with the respective levels (A1 to C1) of Common European framework of reference for languages.

Since 2015, developing curricula for dual VET has been in progress based on requirements from chambers and employer representatives. From 2019, the same curriculum documents apply for school-based and dual VET.

More information on national qualifications frameworks and the qualifications types can be found in Cedefop's [NQF online tool](#)

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- [25] Institutions of the world of work selected from chambers and employers' associations and defined by law (Decree 251/2018) to represent employers' interests as professional counterparts to education authorities and experts, see more in Cedefop (2016). [Vocational education and training in Slovakia: short description](#). Luxembourg: Publications Office.
 - [26] § 32 (1) of the [Act on VET 61/2015](#)
 - [28] Developed by the Institute of Economic Research of the Slovak Academy of Sciences (2014) and Trexima Bratislava and supervised by the labour ministry.
 - [29] International standard classification of occupations.
 - [30] <https://www.profesia.sk/> and <https://www.istp.sk/>
 - [31] www.trendyprace.sk
 - [32] <https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrljoiNjk2ZDI0M2EtZDc2Yi00NzFkLWlzMmQtZjU3YTAxYTUyOTBmliwidCI6IjRlYjQ2ODE1LTcyOTQtNDQwOS1iODU1LWZhMzQzZjE2MTRjOCIsImMiOiI9>
 - [34] A former information system ISTP was renamed into [Work](#)
 - [35] Manuals relevant for verifying qualifications are gradually published at <https://www.kvalifikacie.sk/instrukcie-pre-zaujemcu-o-overenie-kvalifikacie>
 - [36] See the website of State Institute of Vocational Education covering [32 major VET fields](#) and [national curricula for all general subjects valid for VET](#). Two new State educational programmes were created for conservatories, but these do not belong to VET, https://siov.sk/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/SVP_HDK.pdf, https://siov.sk/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/SVP_TK.pdf.
 - [37] State educational programmes explicitly state names of all authors and institutions they represent.
 - [38] Act on VET 61/2015, § 28 (2).
 - [39] See European Parliament; Council of the European Union (2006). [Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning](#). *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 394, pp.10-18.
 - [40] See Council of the European Union (2018). [Council recommendation of 22 May 2018 on key competences for lifelong learning](#). *Official Journal of the European Union*, C 189, pp. 1-13.
 - [44] <https://www.kvalifikacie.sk/informacie-pre-zaujemcu-o-overenie-kvalifikacie>

CHAPTER 11.

Quality assurance

The national/regional quality assurance approaches applied so far are traditional in terms of governance and methodology. Nevertheless, some improvement is visible. The State Institute of Vocational Education is also an active member in the European Peer Review Association and the European Peer review manual for VET has been translated into Slovak. The institute initiated piloting the [peer-review methodology](#) in one VET school in Bratislava and subsequently one in the Trenčín region. Meanwhile, the nationwide expansion under the ESF project 'Introduction of the quality management in VET and adult education', approved in December 2023, is already underway. Support for implementing the European quality assurance in VET (EQAVET) principles is now more visible (41).

Regional schooling including VET schools

The State School Inspectorate is a main stakeholder that checks VET quality. It is an independent State administration body headed by the chief school inspector appointed for a five-year period by the education minister; its evaluation work is based on annual plans and results in yearly reports presented to the parliament.

According to the Act on State Administration and Self-governance (596/2003), directors are responsible for the quality of their schools' performance. They can be replaced by a self-governing region upon the chief school inspector's request based on justified severe failures.

The National Institute of Education and Youth, from 2022, absorbing the former National Institute for Certified Educational Measurements, is responsible for developing national testing instruments and implementing national and international testing. It details results and suggests improvements. It is responsible for monitoring and assessing education quality, as stipulated by the Education Act (245/2008). The institute develops, on an annual basis, tests in mathematics and languages that are used in *maturita* school leaving exams in grammar schools and ISCED 354 programmes of VET schools. Introduction of an online *maturita* school-leaving examination is envisaged from 2025, supported by the Recovery and Resilience Plan for Slovakia in response to the COVID-19 pandemic-related restrictions.

Both institutions predominantly focus on general education subjects. Despite envisaged expansion of national testing and quality checking, both would require extra staff to cover respective VET fields. Employer representatives are expected to help more to check the quality of VET. They are, however, not assigned the ultimate responsibility for quality assurance in practical training and achieving qualification standards by individual learners due to lack of personal and financial capacities. Currently, sectoral assignees (42) focus primarily on input and process, such as on certifying company premises established for provision of practical training within dual VET, certifying instructors and head instructors responsible for practical training within dual VET, and awarding/withdrawing a title VET centre to outstanding VET schools according to their criteria (43). Sectoral assignees only assist the State School Inspectorate, in quality checking of practice-oriented training provided by companies within dual VET, and schools in quality checking within final examinations.

According to the law, schools are still responsible for the quality of their graduates in both theory and practice, but with an increasing share of training in companies they have no sufficient control to guarantee it.

Continuing VET and adult learning

Detailed accreditation of further education programmes and authorised institutions for

examinations are stipulated by the Lifelong Learning Act (568/2009). Despite addressing quality in its recent amendments, this legislation focuses predominantly on 'input' assessment. Evaluation processes are still under development. Assessing course provision by graduate rating was suggested by the education ministry, but has not been put in place so far. The new legislation is already under preparation, *inter alia* to address quality assurance in more detail and in the full range, as the current Lifelong Learning Act applies to programmes provided by the education sector only. Quality assurance in other sectors depends on sectoral authorities and is regulated in various ways.

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- [33] State Institute of Vocational Education and National Institute for Education, now the National Institute of Education and Youth after merging several organisations in 2022, directly managed by the education ministry.
 - [41] <https://okvalite.sk/>
 - [42] Institutions of the world of work selected from chambers and employer associations to represent employer interests as professional counterparts to education authorities and experts.
 - [43] VET school complying with quality requirements in terms of learning environment, equipment, staff and school-businesses cooperation is identified based on approval by the establisher, Regional VET Council and final decision of sectoral assignee.

CHAPTER 12.

Validation of prior learning

There is no genuine and appropriately developed national model for validation of non-formal and informal learning. The Lifelong Learning Act (568/2009) created some preconditions for gradual progress but it refers only to certification of the ability to run a business originally restricted to certificate of apprenticeship holders.

The following are data indicating the trend in issuing qualification certificates ‘verifying professional competences’, entitling people without a certificate of apprenticeship (required by the Trade Licensing Act) to start a business.

Number of certificates verifying professional competence in 2016-2022

Year	Certificates issued
2016	786
2017	1 044
2018	1 167
2019	1 335
2020	1 447
2021	1 280
2022	1 808

Source: Ministry of Education, Science Research and Sport

Qualification certificates ‘verifying professional competence’ are not equivalent to those from formal education. They substitute a ‘certificate of apprenticeship’ for the purpose of starting a business only. These certificate holders are entitled to start a craft regulated by the Trade Licensing Act (455/1991), but they are not allowed to progress within formal education based on these certificates, as they do not certify the respective education level.

The 2019-23 national ESF project [System of verifying qualifications](#) should create a fully-fledged model of validation of non-formal and informal learning. 150 authorised institutions entitled to validation and 376 authorised (validation) specialists were selected. 111 national guarantors responsible for quality assurance were selected. 2 702 individuals were certified within piloted validation based on assessment manuals. 314 manuals were developed, out of which manuals related to 43 qualifications were applied depending on validation demands (44).

CHAPTER 13.

Incentives for learners

The following [incentives for learners](#) are in place:

- performance-based state-funded motivation scholarships for learners in programmes related to occupations that are in high demand on the labour market. These equal 25%, 45% and 65% of the national subsistence minimum, depending on their school performance;
- company scholarships amounting up to four times the national subsistence minimum;
- remuneration for productive work during training, which has no ceiling to allow companies to better value quality performance of learners;
- State scholarships for socially disadvantaged learners who perform well to support completion of secondary VET;
- pregnancy scholarship: this came in force from 1 April 2021 for learners aged 18 and more from the 13th week of pregnancy to cover additional costs of living and to prevent dropping out from education. Currently, it is EUR 200 monthly and is subject to change.

The Government agreed to pilot [individual learning accounts](#) of EUR 200 / adult annually, and fiscal incentives in support of employee training. In total, EUR 15 640 000 had to be allocated between 2020 and 2027 in support of adult learning and CVET. However, implementation was stopped and the new impetus is expected from the [2030 Strategy of lifelong learning and counselling](#) and the strategy paper prepared by the State Institute of Vocational Education (45).

Incentives for unemployed learners (covering travel costs, meals, childcare during participation) can also be offered by public employment services. Currently, the most attractive and successful retraining schemes for the unemployed (RE-PAS and KOMPAS) and a [recent upskilling initiative](#) can be considered as [learning vouchers](#). Requalification passport (RE-PAS) entitles an unemployed person to attend a retraining course of his/her choice for free. The choice of training can be drawn from a list of accredited or some specific non-accredited courses (e.g. ICT-related) offered by public or private providers. The cost of the selected course must be approved by the labour office. The administrative burden lies with training providers who actively attract the unemployed and not individual learners. The KOMPAS (acronym for competence passport) scheme focuses on provision of courses aimed at strengthening key competences important for transition to the labour market. Both schemes are supported by the ESF under the responsibility of public employment services and currently operated as REPAS+ and KOMPAS+ schemes indicating further improvement of the original schemes. The table below offers the numbers of trainees and placement rates concerning both schemes (46).

REPAS+ and KOMPAS+ schemes evolution in 2019-22

Year	Number of registered unemployed trained within the scheme		Funding in EUR		Successful labour market placement until six month (%)	
	REPAS+	KOMPAS+	REPAS+	KOMPAS+	REPAS+	KOMPAS+
2019	647	2 095	3 800 244	1 169 361	39.60	35.04
2020	841	1 072	4 158 319	1 063 077	43.81	47.29
2021	357	864	2 457 013	606 478	52.15	49.32
2022	385	1 150	3 643 318	695 929	50.41	50.88

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- [45] Gállová, Ľ. et al. (2023). *Nové prvky kvalifikačných systémov na rozvoj zručností* [New elements of qualification systems for skills development]. Bratislava: ŠIOV.
- [46] https://www.upsvr.gov.sk/buxus/docs/SSZ/OAOTP/Statistiky/Vyhodnotenie_AOTP_za_rok_1.pdf

CHAPTER 14.

Incentives for enterprises to boost their participation in VET provision

Since 2015, the new Act on VET (61/2015) and its 2018 amendment has introduced [corporate tax reliefs and additional stimuli](#) for enterprises involved in dual VET:

- a tax exemption for certified companies that train VET learners;
- companies also receive a 'tax bonus' of EUR 1 600 or 3 200 for each learner depending on the hours (200 or 400) of training provided per year;
- the remuneration for learners for productive work is equal to at least 50% of a minimum wage and exempted from levies up to 100% of a minimum wage;
- companies that offer 200 to 400 hours of training per year will receive a direct per capita payment of EUR 300, and those offering more than 400 hours will receive EUR 700. SMEs qualify for EUR 1 000.

In 2023, 1 097 companies, of which 939 were SMEs, received a total EUR 8.2 million to cover part of costs of dual VET for 9 826 learners. 2 995 learners attended the first year, 2 804 the second year, 2 358 the third year, 1 659 the fourth year and 10 the fifth year. In total, 5 059 learners were contracted by SMEs and 4 767 by large companies.

[Non-financial incentives](#) were also introduced, simplifying administrative procedures or expanding the period for entering dual VET.

CHAPTER 15.

Guidance and counselling

According to the Education Act (245/2008) [guidance and counselling in the education sector](#) is provided by:

- centres of counselling and prevention;
- specialised centres of counselling and prevention;
- individuals directly employed in schools.

The services are provided by pedagogical or professional staff in respective working categories or working positions specified by law (138/2019) (47), such as school psychologists, school special pedagogues, therapeutic pedagogues, social pedagogues, educational counsellors, career counsellors or coordinators of school support teams. They address learners at primary and secondary schools. Educational counsellors are as a rule regular teachers with specialisation gained through continuing training. They can offer information and some guidance, but not genuine counselling as they are not professional psychologists.

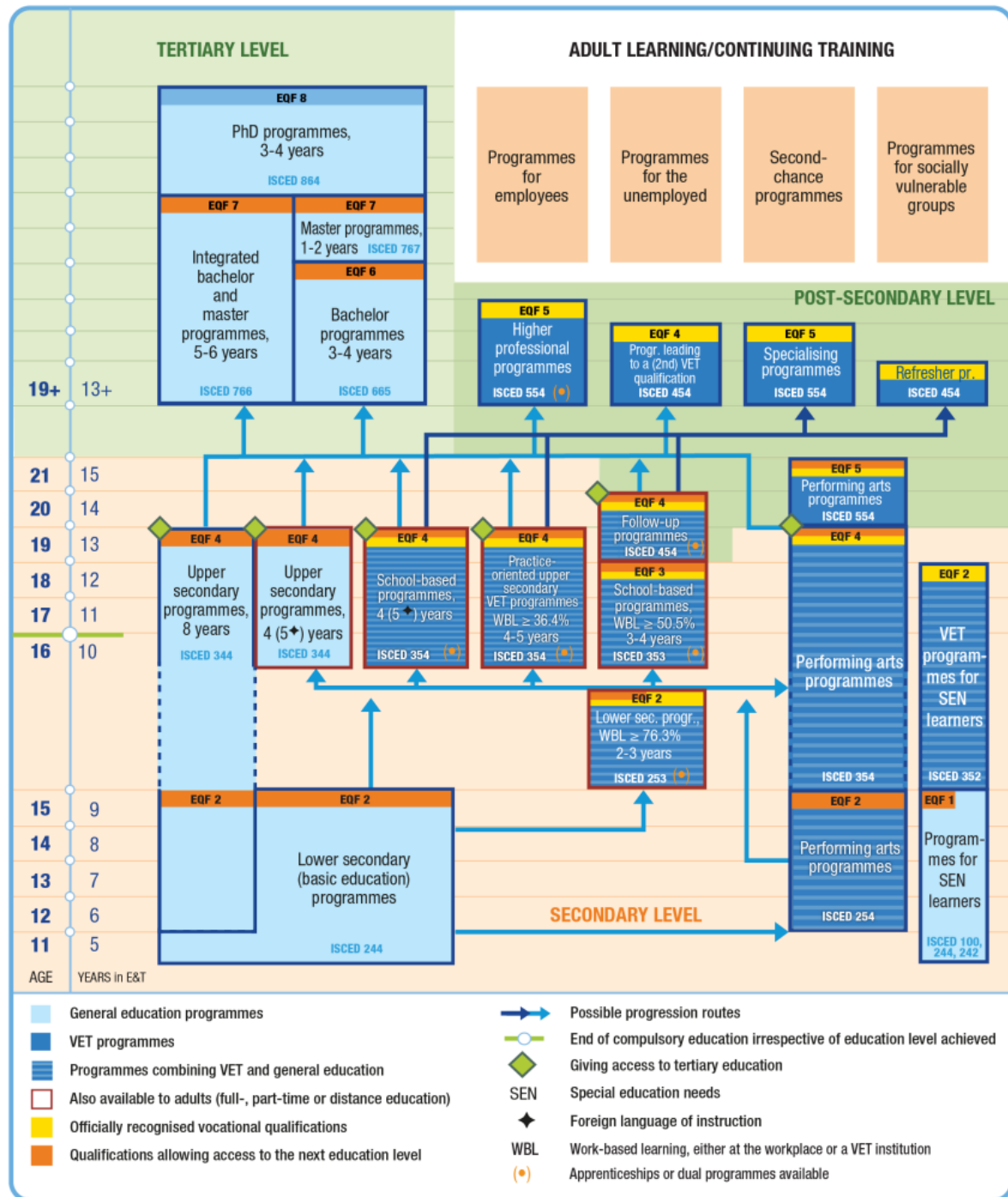
In October 2021, the parliament adopted an amendment of the Education Act 245/2008 transforming the current system of guidance and counselling services. Instead of horizontal specialisation, a vertically structured system is envisaged composed of five levels of supportive services. The first level is offered in schools by individual specialists, the second level by newly introduced school support teams that can be created by the director of school encompassing specialists in support of inclusive education. The third and fourth levels are offered by centres of counselling and prevention, serving all children in need, and the fifth level by specialised centres of counselling and prevention offering highly specialised services. Support for activities of school support teams are offered by the Research Institute of Child Psychology and Psychopathology. Three sets of [standards](#) (performance standards of professional activities, content standards of professional activities, and content standards for diagnostics) are valid from 1 September 2023.

In the labour sector, offices of labour, social affairs and family offer career guidance and counselling for job seekers. In addition to internal counsellors are external counsellors and those involved in developing personal portfolios for the unemployed. The [2030 Strategy of lifelong learning and counselling](#) suggests the creation of an overarching system of lifelong guidance and counselling to overcome current institutional fragmentation of services and discontinuity in the provision of services.

Two institutions capitalise on international networking and guidance experience. [Euroguidance Slovakia](#) focuses on guidance practitioners and policy-makers from both the education and employment sectors. The [Association for Career Guidance and Career Development](#) has developed into an important professional body commenting and influencing policies.

[47] [Act on Pedagogical and Professional Staff 138/2019.](#)

Vocational education and training system chart



NB: ISCED-P 2011.

Source: Cedefop, & ŠIOV/SNO - State Institute of Vocational Education/Slovak National Observatory of VET. (2023). Vocational education and training in Europe – Slovakia: system description. In Cedefop, & ReferNet. (2024). Vocational education and training in Europe: VET in Europe database – detailed VET system descriptions [Database]. www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/tools/vet-in-europe/systems/slovakia-u3

VET Programme Types

EQF 2
Lower secondary programmes, WBL => 76.3% 2-3 years ISCED 253

Lower secondary VET programmes (ISCED P 253) leading to qualifications at EQF level 2, (učebný odbor na získanie nižšieho stredného odborného vzdelania)

EQF level	2	ISCED-P 2011 level	253
Usual entry grade	10	Usual completion grade	11-12
Usual entry age	15+	Usual completion age	17+ or 18+
Length of a programme (years)	2-3		
Is it part of compulsory education and training?	 but it depends on an individual learner track. Compulsory education starts at the age of six and usually includes 9 years of basic education and at least 1 year of upper secondary education. Thus, a learner can be in his/her 10th year or a higher year (inter alia due to repetition of classes at basic school). In the first case it is a part of compulsory education, in the latter case it is not.	Is it part of formal education and training system?	
Is it initial VET?		Is it continuing VET?	
Is it offered free of charge?		Is it available for adults?	

ECVET or other credits	No credits applied
Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)	According to law, these programmes can be offered as: • school-based; with practical training in own workshops or facilities; • school-based; with contracted segments of practical training in companies; • dual VET. In practice, it is school-based due to a specific target group, often not attractive for companies. Part-time (evening) and distance forms are envisaged and described within State educational programmes (national curricula).
Main providers	Secondary VET schools (<i>stredná odborná škola</i>)
Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies	>=76.3%
Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)	Currently, practical training is offered predominantly in schools. It can also be offered within a mixed scheme, with school-based learning complemented by training provided by a company based on a school-company contract specifying numbers of trainees and a share of training hours performed in the company.
Main target groups	These programmes target low achievers, who have not completed lower secondary education. Programmes are available for young people and also for adults. Some programmes are also offered for special education needs learners within a special schools stream (e.g. technical services in car repair shops, textile manufacturing).
Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age)	Incomplete lower secondary (basic) education due to repeating grades or insufficient performance in the final year of basic school. There are no age limits.
Assessment of learning outcomes	To complete a VET programme by a certificate of apprenticeship, learners need to pass a final examination composed of a practical part and an oral part. Those who fail the examination can repeat it within a time period stated by law. Alternatively, some learners complete the programme via a final assessment.

Diplomas/certificates provided	These programmes offer qualifications that allow performing simple tasks. In individual cases a certificate of apprenticeship (<i>výučný list</i>) is awarded. These certificates are officially recognised.
Examples of qualifications	Certificates do not usually indicate a specific profession. Thus, qualifications relate to performing simple tasks in respective sectors of economy of study fields. For girls the most popular qualification is garment worker, while for boys the most popular qualification is construction worker.
Progression opportunities for learners after graduation	According to the 2023 revision of curricula, all ISCED 253 programmes must contain a general education component (132 hours) preparing for achieving lower secondary (general) education. Graduates of 13 of these programmes can continue in the relevant ISCED 353 VET programmes as newly set by the decree (287/2022). Learners of the other three programmes (construction production, agriculture production and forestry production) that are not explicitly linked to relevant ISCED 353 VET programmes according to the decree, can achieve lower secondary (general) education after passing a commission examination or external testing organised by selected schools. Graduates of these programmes can also enter the labour market with only lower secondary vocational education but without a lower secondary (general) education certificate.
Destination of graduates	Information is only available for individual programmes/qualifications.
Awards through validation of prior learning	
General education subjects	 General subjects represent 8.33% of study time in 2-year programmes and 6.67% in 3-year programmes. In addition, there are 8.33% and 6.67% of study time, respectively, left for school decision. An ongoing reform supported general education in order to prepare for entering ISCED 353 programmes without the need to start from the first class for learners interested in receiving higher qualification. For newly introduced additional obligatory 132 hours, non-specified hours from the programme or afternoon lessons can be used.
Key competences	 State educational programmes (national curricula) reflect all key competences set by the European reference framework adjusted to this education level.

Application of learning outcomes approach	National authorities consider both State educational programmes (national curricula) and school educational programmes (school curricula) as learning-outcome based. Educational standards (in particular the component 'performance standards') in both national and school curricula are seen as prescribing learning outcomes. National curricula address key competences, vocational competences and personal competences for the field of study (group of similar programmes) at this level. Educational standards (composed of performance and content standards), universal for the field of study at this level and specific for each programme, are set in the national curricula and addressed in school curricula. The State School Inspectorate is responsible for assessing compliance of school curricula with national curricula.
Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners	ISCED 253 learners account for 3.34% out of all secondary and post-secondary VET learners (48).

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- [48] 2022/23. ISCED 2 to 5 full-time and part-time VET learners including special education needs learners, learners from conservatories and specific art education programmes, and except learners from practical schools and schools of interior ministry.

EQF 3

School-based
programmes,
WBL => 50.5%
3-4 years
ISCED 353

3- and 4-year upper secondary VET programmes (ISCED P 353) leading to qualifications at EQF 3, (učebný odbor na získanie stredného odborného vzdelania)

EQF level	3	ISCED-P 2011 level	353
Usual entry grade	10	Usual completion grade	12 or 13
Usual entry age	15 to 16	Usual completion age	18 or 19
Length of a programme (years)	3 or 4		
Is it part of compulsory education and training?	 Compulsory education starts at the age of six and includes 9 years of basic education and at least 1 year of upper secondary education. Thus, the first year of this programme (16 years of age) usually belongs to compulsory education to facilitate transition from lower secondary to upper secondary education.		
Is it part of formal education and training system?			

Is it initial VET? 	Is it continuing VET?  In individual cases it could be considered CVET provided these learners progress in training that is content-related, linked to previous training and following the period of working in a relevant working position. Legislation does not make a strong difference between initial and continuing VET.
Is it offered free of charge?  In public schools it is for free, but private and church-affiliated schools can collect fees. Church-affiliated schools do not make use of this option.	Is it available for adults?  Adults usually apply for part-time (evening and distance) forms.

ECVET or other credits



ECVET credits are only used within geographic mobility.

Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)

These programmes can be offered as:

- school-based, with practical training in own workshops or facilities;
- school-based, with contracted segments of practical training in companies;
- dual VET.

Since dual VET was introduced in 2015/16, it has allowed companies to sign individual training contracts with learners for in-company practical training, complemented by an institutional contract between schools and companies. Learners in dual VET are students and not employees. Final responsibility for assessment and certification lies with schools concerning both theory and practice.

Part-time (evening and distance) forms are envisaged and described within State educational programmes (national curricula). Part-time forms are only offered as school-based.

The so-called 'shortened studies' were introduced from 2015/16. Based on the mainstream 3-year programmes, they focus on occupation-related areas and last either 1 or 2 years. The 2-year study leads to a certificate of apprenticeship; participants of the 1-year study are attendance and exam certified.

Main providers	Secondary VET schools (<i>stredná odborná škola</i>)
Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies	>= 50.5%, depending on individual schools, in a dual form it is usually over 60%

Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)	• practical training at school • in-company training Training in school-based programmes can be offered in school workshops/labs, but also combined with in-company training based on a school-company contract. Training in dual VET is offered by company instructors in specific company training premises, but can also be complemented by training in school workshops or other companies' facilities.
Main target groups	Programmes are available for learners who have completed lower secondary education and also for adults who want to acquire an attractive qualification in the labour market. Some programmes are also offered for special education needs learners within a special schools stream (e.g. machinery mechanic). Some might be slightly adjusted to take into account their challenges.
Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age)	Completion of lower secondary (general) education (as a rule, grade 9 of basic school) and in some cases, specific requirements for skills or a state of health may apply. Drop-outs from lower secondary (general) education qualify after completion of general education equal to ISCED 244 within specific VET programmes introduced in 2023.

Assessment of learning outcomes	To complete this programme, learners need to pass a final examination composed of: • a theoretical part, within which knowledge of a topic drawn from at least 25 topics is assessed; • a practical part, where the student's skills and abilities are assessed in a topic drawn from up to 15 topics. Topics for the theoretical part of the final exam are elaborated by teachers of vocational subjects in cooperation with trainers. Topics for the practical part of the final exam are elaborated by trainers in cooperation with the teachers of vocational subjects and employers. The final exam in the fields of education published on the website of the education ministry is carried out according to uniform assignments drawn up and approved by the relevant sectoral assignees. The theoretical part lasts for no more than 15 minutes. The practical part lasts for a maximum of 24 hours and, if required by the nature of the exam, it can take up to 4 weeks. The final examination is open to the public, If the practical part of the final examination takes place at the employer's workplace or at the practical training workplace, the examination can be closed to the public at the request of the employer. A representative of the sectoral assignee (if officially nominated) and a representative of the training company in the case of dual VET are active members of the examination commission. An external specialist can be invited to participate in the examination as a non-member of the examination commission with the right to put questions to learners but without the right to assess them. Those who fail in the examination can repeat it within a time period stated by law.
Diplomas/certificates provided	These programmes lead to a VET qualification (nationally referred to as certificate of apprenticeship) and to a school-leaving certificate. The certificate of apprenticeship (<i>výučný list</i>) attests that graduates are qualified to work in the respective occupation, while the school-leaving certificate (<i>vysvedčenie o záverečnej skúške</i>) is considered as attesting the level of education entitling graduates to progress to subsequent formal education programmes. These certificates are officially recognised.
Examples of qualifications	Carpenter, cook, gardener, hairdresser, metal-worker, motor vehicle repairer - automotive electrician, plumber, shop sales assistant
Progression opportunities for learners after graduation	Those who complete these programmes can enter the labour market or continue their studies at post-secondary follow up programmes (EQF 4, ISCED 454).
Destination of graduates	Information is only available for individual programmes/qualifications (49).

Awards through validation of prior learning	✗	Validation of non-formal and informal learning does not allow for receiving a certificate of apprenticeship. However, it allows for receiving a qualification certificate 'verifying professional competence' (<i>osvedčenie o kvalifikácii</i>) (50). This certificate is not equivalent to a certificate of apprenticeship, but it is an equivalent substitute for a specific reason: entitling to run a business requiring a certificate of apprenticeship.
General education subjects	✓	General subjects represent 22.22% of study time in 3-year programmes and 18.56% in 4-year programmes: 11.62% and 9.47% of study time, respectively, are left for school decision. Thus, general education can be expanded, if considered relevant.
Key competences	✓	State educational programmes (national curricula) reflect all key competences set by the European reference framework adjusted to this education level.
Application of learning outcomes approach	✓	National authorities consider both State educational programmes (national curricula) and school educational programmes (school curricula) as learning-outcome based. Educational standards (in particular the component 'performance standards') in both national and school curricula are seen as prescribing learning outcomes. National curricula address key competences, vocational competences and personal competences for the field of study (group of similar programmes) at this level. Educational standards (composed of performance and content standards), universal for the field of study at this level and specific for each programme, are set in the national curricula and addressed in school curricula. The State School Inspectorate is responsible for assessing compliance of school curricula with national curricula.
Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners		ISCED 353 learners account for 15.12% of all secondary and post-secondary VET learners (51).

[49] <https://www.uplatnenie.sk/>

[50] [Act on Lifelong Learning 568/2009](#).

[51] 2022/23. ISCED 2 to 5 full-time and part-time VET learners including special education needs learners, learners from conservatories and specific art education programmes, and except learners from practical schools and schools of interior ministry. Including special education needs learners in an ISCED 353 programme completed without a certificate of apprenticeship.

EQF 4

Practice-oriented upper secondary VET

programmes,

WBL $\geq$ 36.4%

4-5 years

ISCED 354

Practice-oriented 4- and 5-year upper secondary VET programmes (ISCED P 354) leading to qualifications at EQF 4 (študijný odbor s praktickým vyučovaním formou odborného výcviku)

EQF level	4	ISCED-P 2011 level	354
Usual entry grade	10	Usual completion grade	13 or 14
Usual entry age	15 to 16	Usual completion age	19 or 20
Length of a programme (years)	4 or 5		
Is it part of compulsory education and training?	 Compulsory education starts at the age of six and includes 9 years of basic education and at least 1 year of upper secondary education. Thus, the first year of this programme (16 years of age) usually belongs to compulsory education to facilitate transition from lower secondary to upper secondary education.		
Is it part of formal education and training system?			

Is it initial VET?		Is it continuing VET?		In individual cases it could be considered that CVET provided these learners progress in training that is content-related, linked to previous training and following the period of working in a relevant working position. Legislation does not differentiate strongly between initial and continuing VET.
Is it offered free of charge?		Is it available for adults?		Adults usually apply for part-time (evening and distance) forms.
ECVET or other credits				
ECVET credits are only used within geographic mobility.				
Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)	These programmes can be offered as: • school-based, with practical training in own workshops or facilities; • school-based, with contracted segments of practical training in companies; • dual VET. Since dual VET was introduced in 2015/16, it has allowed companies to sign individual training contracts with learners for in-company practical training, complemented by an institutional contract between school and companies. Learners in dual are VET students and not employees. Final responsibility for assessment and certification lies with schools concerning both theory and practice. Part-time (evening) and distance forms are envisaged and described within State educational programmes (national curricula). Part-time forms are only offered as school-based.			
Main providers	Secondary VET schools (<i>stredná odborná škola</i>)			
Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies	>=36.4%, depending on individual schools, in a dual form it is usually over 50%			

Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)	• Practical training at school • in-company training Training in school-based programmes can be offered in school workshops/labs, but also combined with in-company training based on school-company contract. Training in dual VET is offered by company instructors in specific company training premises, but can also be complemented by training in school workshops or other companies' facilities.
Main target groups	Programmes are available for young people and also for adults who have completed lower secondary education. Some programmes are also offered for special education needs learners within a special schools stream (e.g. computer network mechanic, digital media graphic designer, beautician). Some might be slightly adjusted to take into account their challenges.
Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age)	Completion of lower secondary (general) education (as a rule, grade 9 of basic school) and, in some cases, specific requirements for skills or a state of health may apply. Drop-outs from lower secondary (general) education qualify after completion of general education equal to ISCED 244 within specific VET programmes introduced in 2023.
Assessment of learning outcomes	To complete a VET programme, learners need to pass a <i>maturita</i> school leaving examination. It is composed of external testing organised by the National Institute of Education and Youth (in foreign languages; language of instruction and literature; and the Slovak language and Slovak literature (where the language of instruction differs) and internal examination comprising general component (two subjects) (52) and vocational component (theoretical and practical part). Up to 15 topics for the practical part and 25 topics for the theoretical part and a minimum of 30 assignments for general component subjects are prepared, approved by the school director. They must comply with performance standards set by the national curricula. The topics for the theoretical and practical parts of the vocational component of the examination are discussed with sectoral assignees. A representative of the sectoral assignee (if officially nominated) and a representative of the training company in the case of dual VET are active members of the examination commission. An external specialist can be invited to participate in the vocational component of the examination as a non-member of the examination commission with the right to put questions to learners but without the right to assess them. The practical part of vocational component lasts for a maximum of 24 hours, and, if required by the nature of the exam, it can take up to 4 weeks. The theoretical part of vocational component is open to public. Those who fail in the examination can repeat it within a time period stated by law.

Diplomas/certificates provided	These programmes lead to a VET qualification, certified by a <i>maturita</i> school leaving certificate (<i>vysvedčenie o maturitnej skúške</i>), and to a certificate of apprenticeship (<i>výučný list</i>), provided that they include extended practice-oriented training (<i>odborný výcvik</i>). The <i>maturita</i> school leaving certificate is considered as certifying both level of education and qualification. In this case 'qualification' refers to the ability to perform professional activities covered by the curriculum; it is often called 'wider' qualification. The certificate of apprenticeship offers a more specific qualification related to an occupation in addition to the wider qualification. These certificates are officially recognised.
Examples of qualifications	Beautician, computer network mechanic, operation and economics of transport operator, plant and equipment mechanic, pharmaceutical production operator.
Progression opportunities for learners after graduation	Those who complete these programmes can enter the labour market or continue their studies at post-secondary programmes leading to a (second) VET qualification, specialising programmes or higher professional programmes; they can also progress to higher education programmes.
Destination of graduates	Information is only available for individual programmes/qualifications .
Awards through validation of prior learning	Validation of non-formal and informal learning does not allow for receiving a certificate of apprenticeship. However, it allows for receiving a qualification certificate 'verifying professional competence' (<i>osvedčenie o kvalifikácii</i>) (53). This certificate is not equivalent to a certificate of apprenticeship, but it is an equivalent substitute for a specific reason: qualifying to run a business requiring a certificate of apprenticeship.
General education subjects	 General subjects represent 34.85% of study time in 4-year programmes and 35.15% in 5-year programmes: 18.18% and 20% of study time, respectively, are left to school decision. Thus, general education can be expanded, if considered relevant.
Key competences	 State educational programmes (national curricula) reflect all key competences set by the European reference framework adjusted to this education level.

**Application of learning
outcomes approach**



National authorities consider both State educational programmes (national curricula) and school educational programmes (school curricula) as learning outcome based. Educational standards (in particular the component 'performance standards') in both national and school curricula are seen as prescribing learning outcomes.

National curricula address key competences, vocational competences and personal competences for the field of study (group of similar programmes) at this level. Educational standards (composed of performance and content standards) universal for the field of study at this level and specific for each programme are set in the national curricula and addressed in school curricula. The State School Inspectorate is responsible for assessing compliance of school curricula with national curricula.

**Share of learners in
this programme type
compared with the
total number of VET
learners**

Learners of ISCED 354 programmes with extended practical training account for 22.70% of all secondary and post-secondary VET learners (54).

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- [52] In schools with other language of instruction in three subjects.
- [53] [Act on Lifelong Learning 568/2009](#).
- [54] 2022/23. ISCED 2 to 5 full-time and part-time VET learners including special education needs learners, learners from conservatories and specific art education programmes, and except learners from practical schools and schools of interior ministry.

EQF 4

School-based

programmes,

4 (5*) years

ISCED 354

Theory-focused school-based 4- and 5-year VET programmes (ISCED P 354) leading to qualifications at EQF 4. (študijný odbor s praktickým vyučovaním formou odbornej praxe); changes apply for arts programmes and sport education.

EQF level	4	ISCED-P 2011 level	354
Usual entry grade	10	Usual completion grade	13 or 14
Usual entry age	15 to 16	Usual completion age	19 or 20
Length of a programme (years)	4 or 5 (for bilingual programmes); up to 5 years also for special schools serving special education needs learners.		
Is it part of compulsory education and training?	 Compulsory education starts at the age of six and includes 9 years of basic education and at least 1 year of upper secondary education. Thus, the first year of this programme (16 years of age) usually belongs to compulsory education to facilitate transition from lower secondary to upper secondary education.		
Is it part of formal education and training system?			

Is it initial VET? 	Is it continuing VET? 
	In individual cases it could be considered that CVET provided these learners progress in training that is content-related linked to previous training and following the period of working in a relevant working position. Legislation does not make a difference strongly between initial and continuing VET.
Is it offered free of charge? 	Is it available for adults? 
In public schools it is for free, but private and church-affiliated schools can collect fees. Church-affiliated schools do not make use of this option.	Adults usually apply for part-time (evening and distance) forms.

ECVET or other credits



ECVET credits are only used within geographic mobility

Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)

These programmes are school-based; they focus on VET theory and have a lower share of work-based learning, for example, in school labs, workshops and short-term internships.

Expanding dual into this segment of VET is possible from the 2019/20 school year (55).

Part-time (evening and distance) forms are envisaged and described within State educational programmes (national curricula). It is up to individual schools and learner demand whether these forms are offered. Data about part-time studies are collected, but data on a distance learning form are not distinguished.

Main providers

Secondary VET schools (*stredná odborná škola*) (56).

Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies

These (non-bilingual) programmes have a prescribed minimum coverage of 4 224 hours, of which a share of general education is 36.36%, VET theory 22.73%, VET practice 19.70% and 21.21% left to school decision. These 'free' hours can be used for general education, VET theory or VET practice.

VET practice is composed of hours of working in labs in schools or companies and internships. Lengths of internship differ across fields of study and the total VET practice depends on individual schools (and the decision of schools about 'free' hours).

Thus, the share of work-based learning also differs depending on school educational programme (school curricula).

Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)	Usually, work-based learning takes the form of short-term individual internships in companies. Practical training in groups in companies can be agreed, but practical training in school (in school labs, specialised classrooms and workshops) is more typical and cannot be considered a genuine work-based learning.
Main target groups	Programmes are available for young people and also for adult graduates of lower secondary education. Some programmes are also offered for special education needs learners within a special schools stream (e.g. promotional graphics, social-educational worker, commercial academy), or exclusively for these learners (masseur for the visually impaired). Some might be slightly adjusted to take into account their challenges.
Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age)	Completion of lower secondary (general) education (grade 9 of basic education equal to ISCED 244) and in some cases specific requirements for skills or a state of health may apply.
Assessment of learning outcomes	To complete a VET programme, learners need to pass a <i>maturita</i> school leaving examination. It is composed of external testing organised by the National Institute of Education and Youth (in foreign languages; language of instruction and literature; and the Slovak language and Slovak literature if the language of instruction differs) and internal examination comprising general component (two subjects (57)) and vocational component (theoretical and practical part). Up to 15 topics are prepared for the practical part and 25 topics for the theoretical part and a minimum of 30 assignments for general component subjects, approved by the school director. They must comply with performance standards set by the national curricula. The topics for the theoretical and practical parts of the vocational component of the examination are discussed with sectoral assignees. A representative of the sectoral assignee (if officially nominated) and a representative of the training company in the case of dual VET are active members of the examination commission. An external specialist can be invited to participate in the vocational component of examination as a non-member of the examination commission with the right to put questions to learners but without the right to assess them. The practical part of vocational component lasts for a maximum of 24 hours (exceptionally 33 hours), and, if required by the nature of the exam, it can take up to 4 weeks. The theoretical part of the vocational component is open to the public. Those who fail in the examination can repeat it within a time period stated by law.
Diplomas/certificates provided	These programmes lead to a <i>maturita</i> school leaving certificate (<i>vysvedčenie o maturitnej skúške</i>) confirming level of education and VET qualifications attained. These certificates are officially recognised.

Examples of qualifications	In these programmes, qualifications only rarely address one specific profession. They usually certify the ability to perform professional activities related to the respective studies in fields, such as agriculture, forestry and rural development, food-processing; mechanical engineering, electrical engineering, economics and organisation, retail and services, and healthcare. There are qualifications naming respective professions, such as orthopaedic technician according to SK ISCO-08_2020, and there are qualifications indicating areas of performance, such as mechatronics, tourism services, agribusiness - farming.
Progression opportunities for learners after graduation	Those who complete these programmes can enter the labour market or continue their studies at post-secondary programmes leading to a (second) VET qualification, specialising programmes or higher professional programmes; they can also progress to higher education programmes.
Destination of graduates	Information is only available for individual programmes/qualifications .
Awards through validation of prior learning	✗
General education subjects	✓ General subjects represent 36.36% of study time in 4-year programmes and 54.55% (of which two thirds are Slovak and foreign languages) in 5-year bilingual programmes; 21.21% and 16.36% of study time, respectively, are left to school decision.
Key competences	✓ State educational programmes (national curricula) reflect all key competences set by the European reference framework adjusted to this education level.
Application of learning outcomes approach	✓ National authorities consider both State educational programmes (national curricula) and school educational programmes (school curricula) as learning-outcome based. Educational standards (in particular the component 'performance standards') in both national and school curricula are seen as prescribing learning outcomes. National curricula address key competences, vocational competences and personal competences for the field of study (group of similar programmes) at this level. Educational standards (composed of performance and content standards) universal for the field of study at this level and specific for each programme are set in the national curricula and addressed in school curricula. The State School Inspectorate is responsible for assessing compliance of school curricula with national curricula.

**Share of learners in
this programme type
compared with the
total number of VET
learners**

Learners of school-based ISCED 354 programmes account for 45.35% of all secondary and post-secondary VET learners (58).

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- [55] This is about efforts to strengthen work-based learning rather than about genuine dual, as a share of VET practice in these programmes is comparably low.
- [56] Similarly to conservatories, art education schools (*škola umeleckého priemyslu*) and sport schools are not subsumed under the term secondary VET schools to indicate their specificity newly backed by legislation.
- [57] In schools with other language of instruction in three subjects.
- [58] 2022/23. ISCED 2 to 5 full-time and part-time VET learners including special education needs learners, learners from conservatories and specific art education programmes, and except learners from practical schools and schools of interior ministry.

EQF 4
Follow-up programmes ISCED 454

Follow-up programmes (ISCED P 454) leading to qualifications at EQF 4 (nadstavbové štúdium)

EQF level	4	ISCED-P 2011 level	454
Usual entry grade	13	Usual completion grade	14
Usual entry age	18 to 19	Usual completion age	20
Length of a programme (years)	2		
Is it part of compulsory education and training?		Is it part of formal education and training system?	
Is it initial VET?	It varies depending on the individual learner. If they continue in this programme after completing an ISCED 353 programme, it is often considered initial VET. However, legislation does not address this issue.	Is it continuing VET?	It varies depending on the individual learner. If there is a break after completing an ISCED 353 programme, it is considered continuing VET. However, legislation does not address this issue.
Is it offered free of charge?	 In public schools it is for free, but private and church-affiliated schools can collect fees. Church-affiliated schools do not make use of this option.	Is it available for adults?	

ECVET or other credits 

ECVET credits are only used within geographic mobility.

Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)	These programmes are school-based; they focus on VET theory, as learners already possess the certificate of apprenticeship (<i>výučný list</i>). Part-time (evening and distance) forms are envisaged and described within State educational programmes (national curricula). It is up to individual schools and learner demand whether these forms are offered. Data about part-time studies are collected, but data on a distance learning form are not distinguished.
Main providers	Secondary VET schools (<i>stredná odborná škola</i>)
Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies	These are usually school-based programmes. All these programmes have a prescribed minimum coverage of 2 112 hours, of which the share of general education is 34.85%, VET theory 22.73%, VET practice 12.12% and 30.30% left to a school decision. These 'free' hours can be used for general education, VET theory or VET practice. Thus, the share of VET practice differs depending on school educational programme (school curricula). Internships or provision of some practice in companies can be agreed based on the school decision.
Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)	Practical training is usually offered in school. It is possible to agree some in-company practice depending on the school decision.
Main target groups	These programmes are designed for graduates of ISCED 353 upper secondary VET programmes (<i>učebný odbor</i>) who originally received a certificate of apprenticeship and wanted to deepen their theoretical studies in order to increase their employability and/or to open the option to apply for higher education. Some programmes are also offered for special education needs learners within a special schools stream: they include mechanical engineering - manufacturing, installing and repair of devices, machinery and equipment; wood and furniture manufacturing, entrepreneurship in crafts and services. Some might be slightly adjusted to take into account their challenges.
Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age)	Learners should have graduated from ISCED 353 upper secondary VET programmes (<i>učebný odbor</i>) with a similar professional orientation.

Assessment of learning outcomes	To complete a VET programme, learners need to pass a <i>maturita</i> school leaving examination. It is composed of external testing organised by the National Institute of Education and Youth (in foreign languages; language of instruction and literature; and the Slovak language and Slovak literature where the language of instruction differs) and internal examination comprising general component (two subjects (59)) and vocational component (theoretical and practical part). Up to 15 topics are prepared for the practical part and 25 topics for the theoretical part and minimum of 30 assignments for general component subjects, approved by the school director. They must comply with performance standards set by the national curricula. The topics for the theoretical and practical parts of the vocational component of the examination are discussed with sectoral assignees. A representative of the sectoral assignee (if officially nominated) and a representative of the training company in the case of dual VET are active members of the examination commission. An external specialist can be invited to participate in the vocational component of examination as a non-member of the examination commission with the right to put questions to learners but without the right to assess them. The practical part of vocational component lasts for a maximum of 24 hours, and, if required by the nature of the exam, it can take up to 4 weeks. The theoretical part of the vocational component is open to public. Those who fail in the examination can repeat it within a time period stated by law.
Diplomas/certificates provided	These programmes lead to a <i>maturita</i> school leaving certificate (<i>vysvedčenie o maturitnej skúške</i>). These certificates are officially recognised.
Examples of qualifications	Within this segment of VET, qualifications only rarely address one specific profession. They usually certify the ability to perform professional activities related to the respective field of study. Qualifications indicate areas of performance rather than specific professions: catering, entrepreneurship in crafts and services, electrical engineering - manufacturing and operation of machinery and equipment.
Progression opportunities for learners after graduation	Those who complete these programmes can enter the labour market or continue their studies at post-secondary programmes leading to a (second) VET qualification, specialising programmes or higher professional programmes; they can also progress to higher education programmes.
Destination of graduates	Information is only available for individual programmes/qualifications.
Awards through validation of prior learning	

General education subjects	 General subjects represent 34.85% of study time; 30.30% of study time is left to a school decision. Thus, general education can be expanded, if considered relevant.
Key competences	 State educational programmes (national curricula) reflect all key competences set by the European reference framework adjusted to this education.
Application of learning outcomes approach	 National authorities consider both State educational programmes (national curricula) and school educational programmes (school curricula) as learning-outcome based. Educational standards (in particular the component ‘performance standards’) in both national and school curricula are seen as prescribing learning outcomes. National curricula address key competences, vocational competences and personal competences for the field of study (group of similar programmes) at this level. Educational standards (composed of performance and content standards) universal for the field of study at this level and specific for each programme are set in the national curricula and addressed in school curricula. The State School Inspectorate is responsible for assessing compliance of school curricula with national curricula.
Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners	Learners of ISCED 454 follow-up programmes account for 4.28% of all secondary and post-secondary VET learners (60).

[59] In schools with other language of instruction in three subjects.

[60] 2022/23. ISCED 2 to 5 full-time and part-time VET learners including special education needs learners, learners from conservatories and specific art education programmes, and except learners from practical schools and schools of interior ministry.

EQF 4

Programmes leading
to a (2nd)
VET qualification
ISCED 454

Programmes (ISCED P 454) leading to a (second) VET qualification (also called 'qualifying programmes') at EQF 4 (pomaturitné kvalifikačné štúdium)

EQF level	4	ISCED-P 2011 level	454
Usual entry grade	14+	Usual completion grade	15+
Usual entry age	19+	Usual completion age	21+
Length of a programme (years)	2		
Is it part of compulsory education and training?		Is it part of formal education and training system?	
Is it initial VET?	Legislation does not address this issue.	Is it continuing VET?	Legislation does not address this issue. In practice it is often considered CVET.
Is it offered free of charge?	 In public schools it is for free, but private and church-affiliated schools can collect fees. Church-affiliated schools do not make use of this option.	Is it available for adults?	

ECVET or other credits 

ECVET credits are only used within geographic mobility.

Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)	These programmes are usually school-based and of two types: one focusing on theory and one including an element of practical training that can be offered also in a company. Part-time (evening and distance) forms are envisaged and described within State educational programmes (national curricula). It is up to individual schools and learner demand whether these forms are offered. Data about part-time studies are collected, but data on a distance form are not distinguished.
Main providers	Secondary VET schools (<i>stredná odborná škola</i>)
Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies	Predominantly theory-focused 2-year VET programmes have a prescribed minimum coverage of 2 112 hours, of which a share of VET theory 33.33%, VET practice 21.21%, and 45.45% is left to a school decision. These 'free' hours can be used for theory or practice. 2-year VET programmes with extended practical training, offering also a certificate of apprenticeship, have a prescribed minimum coverage of 2 176 hours, of which a share of VET theory 32.35%, VET practice 64.71%, and 2.94% is left to a school decision. The share of VET practice differs depending on the school educational programme (school curricula). Usually, no work-based learning is offered, unless internships or provision of some practice in companies is agreed based on the school decision.
Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)	A share of work-based learning depends on the individual school's decision. It is usually higher in programmes offering both a <i>maturita</i> school leaving certificate and a certificate of apprenticeship. It can be offered in school workshops/labs, but also combined with in-company training.
Main target groups	Programmes are available for graduates of at least upper secondary (general or VET) programmes with the <i>maturita</i> school leaving certificate who want to obtain a VET qualification or other VET qualification than previously studied. Some programmes are also offered for special education needs learners within a special schools stream (e.g. social legal activities, public administration).
Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age)	<i>Maturita</i> school leaving certificate is the only requirement, unless specific health requirements apply. Learners should have graduated from an upper secondary general or vocational education programme, a performing arts programme or a follow-up programme.

Assessment of learning outcomes	To complete a VET programme, learners need to pass a final examination that is composed of a vocational component (theoretical and practical part) of the <i>maturita</i> school leaving examination. Up to 15 topics are prepared for the practical part and 25 topics for the theoretical part, approved by the school director. They must comply with performance standards set by the national curricula. The topics for the theoretical and practical parts of the vocational component of the examination are discussed with sectoral assignees. A representative of the sectoral assignee (if officially nominated) and a representative of the training company in the case of dual VET are active members of the examination commission. An external specialist can be invited to participate in the vocational component of examination as a non-member of the examination commission with the right to put questions to learners but without the right to assess them. The practical part of the vocational component lasts for a maximum of 24 hours (with a maximum of 33 hours in the case of dental technician programme) and, if required by the nature of the exam, it can take up to 4 weeks. The theoretical part of the vocational component is open to the public. Those who fail in examination can repeat the examination within a time period stated by law.
Diplomas/certificates provided	These programmes lead to a school leaving certificate indicating a specific <i>maturita</i> vocational component (<i>vysvedčenie o maturitnej skúške</i>). Some of these programmes also offer a 'certificate of apprenticeship' (<i>výučný list</i>), provided they include extended practice-oriented training. These certificates are officially recognised.
Examples of qualifications	Some qualifications offered indicate a particular profession, such as dental technician; some indicate the ability to perform professional activities related to the respective field of study, such as economic informatics or social-legal activities.
Progression opportunities for learners after graduation	Those who complete these programmes can enter the labour market or continue their studies at specialising programmes or higher professional programmes; they can also progress to higher education programmes.
Destination of graduates	Information is only available for individual programmes/qualifications .
Awards through validation of prior learning	✗
General education subjects	✗

Key competences	✓	State educational programmes (national curricula) reflect all key competences set by the European reference framework adjusted to this education level.
Application of learning outcomes approach	✓	National authorities consider both State educational programmes (national curricula) and school educational programmes (school curricula) as learning-outcome based. Educational standards (in particular the component 'performance standards') in both national and school curricula are seen as prescribing learning outcomes. National curricula address key competences, vocational competences and personal competences for the field of study (group of similar programmes) at this level. Educational standards (composed of performance and content standards) universal for the field of study at this level and specific for each programme are set in the national curricula and addressed in school curricula. The State School Inspectorate is responsible for assessing compliance of school curricula with national curricula.
Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners		Learners of ISCED 454 programmes leading to a (second) VET qualification account for 3.66% of all secondary and post-secondary VET learners (61).

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- [61] 2022/23. ISCED 2 to 5 full-time and part-time VET learners including special education needs learners, learners from conservatories and specific art education programmes, and except learners from practical schools and schools of interior ministry.

EQF 5

Higher professional
programmes

ISCED 554

Higher professional programmes (ISCED P 554) leading to qualifications at EQF level 5, (vyššie odborné štúdium)

EQF level	5	ISCED-P 2011 level	554
Usual entry grade	14+	Usual completion grade	16+
Usual entry age	19+	Usual completion age	22+
Length of a programme (years)	3		
Is it part of compulsory education and training?	✗	Is it part of formal education and training system?	✓
Is it initial VET?	Legislation does not address this issue.	Is it continuing VET?	Legislation does not address this issue. In practice it is often considered CVET.
Is it offered free of charge?	✓ In public schools it is for free, but private and church-affiliated schools can collect fees. Church-affiliated schools do not make use of this option.	Is it available for adults?	✓
ECVET or other credits	✗	ECVET credits are only used within geographic mobility.	

Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)

These programmes can be offered in dual form or as school-based with internships or parts of in-company training.

Part-time (evening and distance) forms are envisaged and described within State educational programmes (national curricula). It is up to individual schools and learner demand whether these forms are offered. Data about part-time studies are collected, but data on a distance form are not distinguished.

Main providers	Secondary VET schools (<i>stredná odborná škola</i>) (62)
Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies	These programmes have a prescribed minimum coverage of 3 168 hours, of which a share of VET theory 26.26%, VET practice 26.26%, and 40.40% is left to school decision. These ‘free’ hours can be used for theory or practice. The share of VET practice differs depending on school educational programme (school curricula).
Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)	The share of work-based learning differs across fields of study and individual schools. For dual VET, training is offered by company instructors in a specific contracted company but can be complemented by training in school workshops or other companies’ premises.
Main target groups	These programmes target secondary graduates with the <i>maturita</i> school leaving certificate who prefer further studies outside higher education offering attractive training required by the labour market.
Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age)	The <i>maturita</i> school leaving certificate is the only requirement, unless specific health requirements apply.
Assessment of learning outcomes	To complete a VET programme, learners need to pass an exam (<i>absolventská skúška</i>), consisting of defending a written paper, and a comprehensive examination corresponding to a respective field; for healthcare programmes, corresponding to the respective profession. A representative of the sectoral assignee (if officially nominated) and a representative of the training company in the case of dual VET are active members of the examination commission. An external specialist can be invited to participate in the vocational component of examination as a non-member of the examination commission with the right to put questions to learners but without the right to assess them. Examination is open to public. Those who fail in examination can repeat the examination within a time period stated by law.
Diplomas/certificates provided	These programmes lead to certificate on passing examination (<i>vysvedčenie o absolventskej skúške</i>), documenting attaining a higher professional education level, and to a non-university diploma (<i>absolventský diplom</i>) certifying the achieved qualification, with the right to use the title Diploma specialist, DiS (<i>diplomovaný špecialista</i>) (63). These certificates are officially recognised.
Examples of qualifications	Some qualifications offered indicate a particular profession, such as diploma optometrist (title ‘dipl. o.’), some indicate the ability to perform professional activities related to the respective field of study, such as computing systems, hotel and travel agency management, and international business.

Progression opportunities for learners after graduation	Those who complete these programmes can enter the labour market or progress to higher education programmes based on the <i>maturita</i> school-leaving certificate they received after completion of their previous studies.
Destination of graduates	Information is only available for individual programmes/qualifications .
Awards through validation of prior learning	✗
General education subjects	✗
Key competences	✓ State educational programmes (national curricula) reflect all key competences set by the European reference framework adjusted to this education level.
Application of learning outcomes approach	✓ National authorities consider both state educational programmes (national curricula) and school educational programmes (school curricula) as learning-outcome based. Educational standards (in particular the component 'performance standards') in both national and school curricula are seen as prescribing learning outcomes. National curricula address key competences, vocational competences and personal competences for the field of study (group of similar programmes) at this level. Educational standards (composed of performance and content standards), universal for the field of study at this level and specific for each programme, are set in the national curricula and addressed in school curricula. The State School Inspectorate is responsible for assessing compliance of school curricula with national curricula.
Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners	Learners of ISCED 554 higher professional programmes account for 0.78% of all secondary and post-secondary VET learners (64).

- [62] Similarly to conservatories, art education schools (*škola umeleckého priemyslu*) and sport schools are not subsumed under the term secondary VET schools to indicate their specificity newly backed by legislation.
- [63] In the case of healthcare, the [government regulation \(513/2011\)](#) specifies titles, such as 'dipl. f.' for graduates of the programme diploma physiotherapist or 'dipl. o.' for diploma optometrist.
- [64] 2022/23. ISCED 2 to 5 full-time and part-time VET learners including special education needs learners, learners from conservatories and specific art education programmes, and except learners from practical schools and schools of interior ministry.

EQF 5

Specialising
programmes
ISCED 554

Specialising programmes (ISCED P 554) leading to qualifications at EQF level 5 (pomaturitné špecializačné štúdium)

EQF level	5	ISCED-P 2011 level	554
Usual entry grade	14+	Usual completion grade	15+
Usual entry age	19+	Usual completion age	21+
Length of a programme (years)	2		
Is it part of compulsory education and training?	✗	Is it part of formal education and training system?	✓
Is it initial VET?	Legislation does not address this issue.		
		Is it continuing VET?	Legislation does not address this issue. In practice it is often considered CVET.
Is it offered free of charge?	✓ In public schools it is for free, but private and church-affiliated schools can collect fees. Church-affiliated schools do not make use of this option.	Is it available for adults?	✓
ECVET or other credits	✗ ECVET credits are only used within geographic mobility.		

Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)	These programmes are currently offered as school-based, with internships or parts of in-company training as set by school educational programmes (school curricula) of individual schools. Part-time (evening and distance) forms are envisaged and described within state educational programmes (national curricula). It is up to individual schools and learner demand whether these forms are offered. Data about part-time studies are collected, but data on a distance form are not distinguished.
Main providers	Secondary VET schools (stredná odborná škola) (65)
Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies	These programmes have a prescribed minimum coverage of 2 112 hours, of which a share of VET theory 34.85%, VET practice 22.73%, and 42.42% is left to school decision. These 'free' hours can be used for theory or practice. The share of VET practice differs depending on school educational programme (school curricula).
Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)	The share of work-based learning differs across fields of study and individual schools.
Main target groups	These programmes target secondary graduates with a <i>maturita</i> school leaving certificate in need of further specialisation in the field, for which tertiary education is not needed.
Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age)	The <i>maturita</i> school leaving certificate in the relevant field is the only requirement. Learners can only enter a programme in a field related to their previous studies.
Assessment of learning outcomes	To complete this programme, learners need to pass an exam (<i>absolventská skúška</i>), consisting of defending a written paper and a comprehensive examination corresponding to the respective field. A representative of the sectoral assignee (if officially nominated) and a representative of the training company in the case of dual VET are active members of the examination commission. An external specialist can be invited to participate in the vocational component of examination as a non-member of the examination commission with the right to put questions to learners but without the right to assess them. The examination is open to public. Those who fail in the examination can repeat it within a time period stated by law.

Diplomas/certificates provided	These programmes lead to a certificate of passing examination (<i>vysvedčenie o absolventskej skúške</i>), documenting attaining a higher professional education level, and to a non-university diploma (<i>absolventský diplom</i>) certifying the achieved qualification, with the right to use the title Diploma specialist, DiS (<i>diplomovaný špecialista</i>). These certificates are officially recognised.
Examples of qualifications	These qualifications indicate the ability to perform professional activities related to the respective field of study, such as quality management in chemical laboratory, special pedagogy, tax services.
Progression opportunities for learners after graduation	Those who complete these programmes can enter the labour market or progress to higher education programmes based on the <i>maturita</i> school-leaving certificate they received after completion of their previous studies.
Destination of graduates	Information is only available for individual programmes/qualifications
Awards through validation of prior learning	✗
General education subjects	✗
Key competences	✓ State educational programmes (national curricula) reflect all key competences set by the European reference framework adjusted to this education level.
Application of learning outcomes approach	✓ National authorities consider both state educational programmes (national curricula) and school educational programmes (school curricula) as learning-outcome based. Educational standards (in particular its component 'performance standards') in both national and school curricula are seen as prescribing learning outcomes. National curricula address key competences, vocational competences and personal competences for the field of study (group of similar programmes) at this level. Educational standards (composed of performance and content standards) universal for the field of study at this level and specific for each programme are set in the national curricula and addressed in school curricula. The State School Inspectorate is responsible for assessing compliance of school curricula with national curricula.
Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners	Learners of ISCED 554 specialising programmes account for 0.27% of all secondary and post-secondary VET learners (66).

[65] Similarly to conservatories, art education schools (*škola umeleckého priemyslu*) and sport schools are not subsumed under the term secondary VET schools to indicate their

specificity newly backed by legislation.

- [66] 2022/23. ISCED 2 to 5 full-time and part-time VET learners including special education needs learners, learners from conservatories and specific art education programmes, and except learners from practical schools and schools of interior ministry.

EQF 4

Refresher
programmes
ISCED 454

Refresher programmes (ISCED P 454) (pomaturitné inovačné štúdium, pomaturitné zdokonaľovacie štúdium)

EQF level	4	ISCED-P 2011 level	454
Usual entry grade	14+	Usual completion grade	14+
Usual entry age	19+	Usual completion age	19+
Length of a programme (years)	Depends on the school decision		
Is it part of compulsory education and training?	✗	Is it part of formal education and training system?	✓
Is it initial VET?	✗	Is it continuing VET?	✓
Is it offered free of charge?	In public schools it is for free, but private and church-affiliated schools can collect fees. Church-affiliated schools do not make use of this option.		
ECVET or other credits	✗ ECVET credits are only used within geographic mobility.		
Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)	It fully depends on the school decision; they can be part-time (evening or distance).		
Main providers	Secondary VET schools (<i>stredná odborná škola</i>)		
Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies	It fully depends on the school decision.		
Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)	It fully depends on the school decision.		

Main target groups	Learners interested in innovation within their field of study or in better mastering a profession or respective professional skills. Legislation refers to <i>post-maturita</i> innovative study (<i>pomaturitné inovačné štúdium</i>) and <i>post-maturita</i> improvement study (<i>pomaturitné zdokonaľovacie štúdium</i>),
Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age)	Learners should have a <i>maturita</i> school leaving certificate in the respective field of study, as this study builds on previous education.
Assessment of learning outcomes	To complete these programmes learners have to pass a final examination specified as final <i>post-maturita</i> examination by law.
Diplomas/certificates provided	A certificate on final <i>post-maturita</i> examination (<i>vysvedčenie o pomaturitnej záverečnej skúške</i>) These certificates are officially recognised.
Examples of qualifications	Certification does not specify a profession. This certification is for attendance and meeting examination requirements rather than explicit qualification requirements. It indicates which study programme it relates to. The content of the study can be visible from the certificate supplement indicating details of the study.
Progression opportunities for learners after graduation	These programmes aim to update learners' knowledge and skills.
Destination of graduates	Data on these programmes are not collected and there are therefore no data on potential graduates.
Awards through validation of prior learning	✗
General education subjects	✗
Key competences	✗
Application of learning outcomes approach	It depends on schools. There are no requirements stipulated by law concerning the design of these programmes.
Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners	<1% Data on these programmes are not collected. This is just an option based on tradition, however, in severe decline, as schools are not motivated to offer this kind of programme and learners prefer alternatives.

EQF 5

Performing arts

programmes

ISCED 254, 354, 554

Performing arts programmes covering: 8-year ISCED P 554 programme leading to EQF 5 qualification in dance conservatory (tanečné konzervatórium); 6-year ISCED P 554 programmes leading to EQF 5 qualification in music and drama conservatory (hudobné a dramatické konzervatórium).

EQF level	5	ISCED-P 2011 level	554 Spanning 254+354+554 in dance conservatory and 354+554 in music and drama conservatory.
Usual entry grade	6 (dance conservatory) 10 (music and drama conservatory)	Usual completion grade	13 (dance conservatory) 15 (music and drama conservatory)
Usual entry age	11 to 12 (dance conservatory) 15 to 16 (music and drama conservatory)	Usual completion age	19 (dance conservatory) 21 (music and drama conservatory)
Length of a programme (years)	8 (dance conservatory) 6 (music and drama conservatory)		
Is it part of compulsory education and training?	 Compulsory education starts at the age of six and includes 9 years of basic education and at least 1 year of upper secondary education. Thus, the fifth year in dance conservatory and the first year in music and drama conservatory (both 16 years of age) usually belong to compulsory education.	Is it part of formal education and training system?	

Is it initial VET?		Is it continuing VET?	
Is it offered free of charge?	 In public schools it is for free with no age limit, but private and church-affiliated schools can collect fees. Church-affiliated schools do not make use of this option.	Is it available for adults?	 Adults with no age limit can enter full-time programmes
ECVET or other credits	 ECVET credits are only used within geographic mobility.		
Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)	No part-time (evening and distance) studies are possible, according to law. An extraordinary form for extremely talented children combining a mainstream education programme with selected parts of a programme in a conservatory (in drama or music) is possible (67).		
Main providers	Dance conservatory Music and drama conservatory		
Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies	Not applicable		
Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)	Not applicable. Performing arts related training is regulated by individual schools, composed of training in school premises complemented by training through organised performance in school or agreed between schools and other players.		
Main target groups	Children and young people talented and interested in performing arts.		
Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age)	Passing entrance examination including talent assessment		

Assessment of learning outcomes

To complete these programmes, learners need to pass an exam (*absolventská skúška*), consisting (68) of:

- artistic performance corresponding to specialisation at music and drama conservatory or dance conservatory;
- defending a written paper related to specialisation at music and drama conservatory;
- comprehensive examination in pedagogy corresponding to specialisation at music and drama conservatory or dance conservatory (69).

The examination is open to public.

Those who fail the examination can repeat it within a time period stated by law.

In diverse music and drama conservatory programmes, students pass a *maturita* school leaving examination after first 4 years of a 6-year programme.

It is composed of external testing organised by the National Institute of Education and Youth (in foreign languages; language of instruction and literature; and the Slovak language and Slovak literature if the language of instruction differs) and internal examination comprising general (two subjects (70)) and vocational components (theoretical and practical part).

For the theoretical part of the vocational component and for general component subjects, 25 topics are prepared approved by the school director. The practical part of the vocational component contains prescribed artistic performance.

Those who fail the examination can repeat it within a time period stated by law.

Similarly, learners in dance conservatory pass a *maturita* school leaving examination in the final year of an 8-year programme. To allow participants of this programme to enter other upper secondary schools, e.g. due to health problems, a lower secondary education certificate (71) is offered after completion of the fourth year to all learners.

Diplomas/certificates provided	These programmes lead to a certificate on passing examination (<i>vysvedčenie o absolventskej skúške</i>), documenting attaining a higher professional education level, and to a non-university diploma (<i>absolventský diplom</i>) certifying the achieved qualification, with the right to use the title Diploma specialist in arts, DiS.art (<i>diplomovaný špecialista umenia</i>). They also certify qualifications for teaching in specific performing arts programmes. In music and drama conservatory, learners receive a <i>maturita</i> school leaving certificate (<i>vysvedčenie o maturitnej skúške</i>) after the first 4 years. In dance conservatory, learners receive a <i>maturita</i> school leaving certificate (<i>vysvedčenie o maturitnej skúške</i>), also in the final year, and a lower secondary education certificate (<i>vysvedčenie</i>) after the fourth year. These certificates are officially recognised.
Examples of qualifications	A dance conservatory programme offers three specialisations (classical, modern and folk dance) after 4 years of the first phase (ISCED 254). Performing arts studies at music and drama conservatory offer 28 programmes in total in four fields: music and drama, dance, singing, music (including composition, conducting, playing the piano).
Progression opportunities for learners after graduation	Graduates can enter higher education, teach in specific performing arts programmes and/or be active in performing arts.
Destination of graduates	Information is only available for individual programmes/qualifications.
Awards through validation of prior learning	✗
General education subjects	✓ as specified in respective State educational programmes (national curricula for the music and drama conservatory and for the dance conservatory)
Key competences	✓ State educational programmes (national curricula) reflect all key competences set by the European reference framework adjusted to this education level.
Application of learning outcomes approach	✓ Learning outcomes are formulated in State educational programmes (national curricula).

**Share of learners in
this programme type
compared with the
total number of VET
learners**

Learners of 8-year dance programmes account for 0.17% and learners of 6-year performing arts programmes (singing, music, dance, music and drama) account for 1.93% of all secondary and post-secondary learners (72).

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- [67] Education Act 245/2008, § 103 (9) and education ministry Decree 65/2015, § 8.
- [68] See information of State Institute of Vocational Education on music and drama conservatories at <http://siov.sk/vzdelavanie/konzervatorium/hudobne-a-dramaticke-konzervatorium/> and dance conservatories at <http://siov.sk/vzdelavanie/konzervatorium/tanecne-konzervatorium/>.
- [69] To fulfil qualification requirements for teaching in specific performing arts programmes.
- [70] In schools with other language of instruction in three subjects.
- [71] Although the first phase of this programme is labelled ISCED 254, learners receive the certificate equivalent to ISCED 244, according to Act 245/2008.
- [72] 2022/23. ISCED 2 to 5 full-time and part-time VET learners including special education needs learners, learners from conservatories and specific art education programmes, and except learners from practical schools and schools of interior ministry.

EQF 2

VET programmes

for SEN learners

ISCED 352

Lower secondary VET programmes (ISCED P 352) for SEN learners leading to EQF level 2 ([93]) (učebný odbor odborného učiliště).

EQF level	2	ISCED-P 2011 level	352
Usual entry grade	10+	Usual completion grade	12+
Usual entry age	16+	Usual completion age	18+
Length of a programme (years)	3		
Is it part of compulsory education and training?	These learners are served regardless of their age and years of schooling, also after the end of compulsory education (10 years), to achieve maximum potential. This programme can be seen as not belonging to compulsory education, but this has no implications on attendance provided learners and families are interested in participation. Legislation explicitly indicates that learners should be accepted even after completion of compulsory education.		Is it part of formal education and training system? 
Is it initial VET? 		Is it continuing VET?	
Is it offered free of charge? 	In public schools it is for free, but private and church-affiliated schools can collect fees. Church-affiliated schools do not make use of this option.		Is it available for adults? 
ECVET or other credits	No credits applied		
Learning forms (e.g. dual, part-time, distance)	School-based with practical training at school or sheltered workshops		
Main providers	Vocational school (<i>odborné učiliště</i>) for special education needs learners, a component of special schools stream		
Share of work-based learning provided by schools and companies	Depends on individual learners and individual schools		

Work-based learning type (workshops at schools, in-company training / apprenticeships)	• Practical training at school • Practical training in sheltered workshop • Practical training in-company (in individual cases)
Main target groups	Mentally challenged children that are expected to at least partly meet standards set for achieving lower secondary vocational education, entitling them to perform simple tasks or work under supervision. Children with other challenges enter regular VET programmes slightly adjusted to their needs. Children and adults with severe mental challenges enter practical school programmes (<i>praktická škola</i>) (73) or two marginal VET ISCED 252 programmes in agriculture that can be offered in vocational school (74) .
Entry requirements for learners (qualification/education level, age)	Completion of the last of year of basic school in any age.
Assessment of learning outcomes	To complete a VET programme, learners need to pass a final examination. Performance in practical component results in receiving different certificates and qualifications. Three levels of achievement are officially recognised by law (<i>zaškolenie, zaučenie, vyučenie</i>) and specified in school educational programmes (school curricula). All levels indicate qualifications, but only the highest level leads to a certificate of apprenticeship.
Diplomas/certificates provided	There are four certificates and three qualifications an individual can obtain depending on fulfilment of requirements: • certificate on completing some part of the programme (that is further specified) (<i>osvedčenie o absolvovaní časti vzdelávacieho programu</i>); • certificate on acquiring some skills (that are further specified) (<i>osvedčenie o zaškolení</i>); • certificate on achieving some vocational level (that is further specified) (<i>osvedčenie o zaučení</i>); • certificate of apprenticeship (<i>výučný list</i>). These certificates are officially recognised.
Examples of qualifications	Auxiliary works in several areas: preparing meals, gardening, bricklaying, painting, pastry.
Progression opportunities for learners after graduation	Those who complete this programme with a certificate of apprenticeship can enter the labour market and be employed in companies informed about their challenges. Others can enter the labour market and be employed in the companies informed about their limits. Sheltered workshops are usually the best for their long-term employment.
Destination of graduates	There are no individualised data about graduates. These graduates do not progress in education to achieve a higher level of education, but they can participate in diverse training.

Awards through validation of prior learning	
General education subjects	
Key competences	State educational programmes (national curricula) (75) also reflect all key competences set by the European reference framework within three groups of key competences: • act independently in a social and working life; • use interactively knowledge, information communications technology (ICT), communicate in Slovak, mother tongue and foreign language; • work in heterogeneous groups. These are adjusted to the special needs of mentally challenged learners and reflected within individual school educational programmes (school curricula). Adjustment to the new European reference framework is in the pipeline.
Application of learning outcomes approach	Learning outcomes are embedded into assessment criteria or learner profiles in school educational programmes (school curricula) used for description of three performance levels of learners (<i>zaškolenie, zaučenie, vyučenie</i>).
Share of learners in this programme type compared with the total number of VET learners	ISCED 352 special education needs learners account for 2.40% of all secondary and post-secondary VET learners (76) . Children who are mentally challenged to the extent that they do not qualify for entering this programme can enter practical schools (<i>praktická škola</i>). There are also learners with special needs in regular VET programmes that are only slightly adjusted to their needs and are therefore subsumed in the shares of respective regular programmes.

[73] There were 1 147 learners in this programme in 2022/23.

[74] There were 14 learners in one year-programme and 38 learners in two-year programme in 2022/23.

[75] [National curricula for special education needs learners](#) are prepared by the National Institute for Education, now the National Institute of Education and Youth after merging several organisations in 2022.

[76] 2022/23. ISCED 2 to 5 full-time and part-time VET learners including special education needs learners, learners from conservatories and specific art education programmes, and except learners from practical schools and schools of interior ministry.

References

- [2] Education ministry (2023). [Dlhodobý zámer vo vzdelávacej, výskumnej, vývojovej, umeleckej a ďalšej tvorivej činnosti pre oblasť vysokých škôl na roky 2023-2028](#) [Long-term intention in education, research, artistic and other creative activities in higher education for the years 2023-2028]. Bratislava: Education ministry.
- [4] Based on Cedefop (2021). [Spotlight on VET - 2020 compilation: vocational education and training systems in Europe](#). Luxembourg: Publications Office; statistical data updated.
- [13] European Commission. [2018 European Semester: National Reform Programmes and Stability/Convergence Programmes](#)