

# Vocational education and training in Slovenia

## Short description





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**The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training** (Cedefop) is the European Union's reference centre for vocational education and training, skills and qualifications. We provide information, research, analyses and evidence on vocational education and training, skills and qualifications for policy-making in the EU Member States.

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# Foreword

The Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the European Union (EU) in the second half of 2021 is the third of a trio of presidencies that have developed an 18-month programme which takes forward the EU strategic agenda 2019-24. With the motto: 'Together. Resilient. Europe' Slovenia's six-month presidency's priorities and programme are oriented towards EU recovery from challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, reinforcing resilience and reflecting on a common and shared vision of the future of Europe. In education, work will focus on several areas: new ways of learning and teaching (contributing to shaping of the Council Recommendation on blended learning for high-quality and inclusive primary and secondary education); development of digitalisation and artificial intelligence and their ethical use in education processes (contributing to implementation of the Digital education action plan); renewing the European Agenda for adult learning; education for sustainable development, micro-qualifications, individual-learning accounts and access to vocational education and training and lifelong learning.

Vocational education and training (VET) play a prominent role in Slovenia. VET attractiveness is high, with the Slovenian education/VET system offering progression opportunities both horizontally and vertically; possibilities for work-based learning such as through intercompany training centres or recently reintroduced apprenticeship in upper secondary three-year VET; and comprehensive policies on scholarships. Slovenia has the highest share of VET learners in upper secondary education in the EU-27, and among the lowest rates of early school leavers. Further, the importance of raising adults' levels of skills is becoming more widely accepted. Along with facing challenges of an aging population and steadily decreasing participation in lifelong learning in the past decade, more than a quarter of workers are at high risk of seeing their job automated. A need to focus developments on strengthening digital skills and broadening opportunities for upskilling and reskilling is on the rise.

This short description, drawn up in collaboration with Cedefop's national ReferNet partner, aims to provide an insight into Slovenia's VET for a wider European audience. Our overall objective is to help readers understand VET, its main features and challenges faced in a specific country context. In this way, we can help build bridges between VET systems, encourage learner and

teacher mobility across Europe, and strengthen the understanding that VET is an attractive option for both the young and adults. While grasping VET's complexity, we want to emphasise its importance in achieving the common goals shared among Member States that incorporated VET in the very foundations of the EU. We hope that the information in this publication will be a useful source of inspiration for policy-makers, researchers, VET providers and other readers across and beyond Europe.

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# Slovenia



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Area	<b>20 300 km<sup>2</sup></b>
Capital	<b>Ljubljana</b>
System of government	<b>Democratic Republic</b>
Population (2020) <sup>(1)</sup>	<b>2 095 861</b>
Per capita gross domestic product (GDP) (current prices, 2019) <sup>(2)</sup>	<b>EUR 23 165</b>
Legislative power	<b>Parliament (National Assembly and National Council)</b>

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<sup>(1)</sup> Eurostat, tps00001 [extracted on 7.5.2021].

<sup>(2)</sup> SURS [extracted on 28.3.2021].

## CHAPTER 1.

# External factors influencing VET

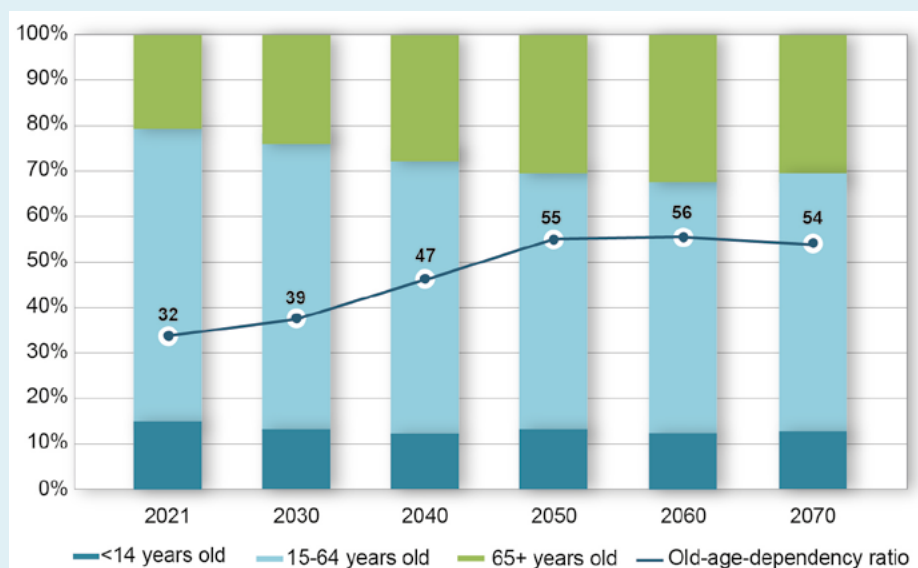


## 1.1. Demographics

On 1 January 2020, the population of the Republic of Slovenia was 2 095 861. Since 2015, it has increased by 1.6% due to positive net migration and natural change (live births minus deaths) <sup>(3)</sup>. Slovenia is in central Europe and has Italian and Hungarian minorities. The country's area is approximately 20 300 sq. km.

As the population is ageing, the old-age-dependency ratio is expected to increase from 31 in 2020 to 54 in 2070 (Figure 1) <sup>(4)</sup>. In 2021, the old-age-dependency ratio in Slovenia equals those of the EU-27 average (32%); the proportion of population aged 0-14 years is 15.1, while the share of population in the age group 65 and more is 20.7 <sup>(5)</sup>. The increasing old-age-dependency ratio appeared for the first time in the previous decade, partly because the large post-war generation started to retire, and as the smaller early-1990s cohorts entered the labour market (Knavs and Šlander, 2019).

**Figure 1. Population forecast by age group and old-age-dependency ratio**



Source: Eurostat, proj\_19ndbi [extracted on 7.5.2021].

<sup>(3)</sup> Eurostat, tps00001 and proj\_19ndbi [extracted on 7.5.2021].

<sup>(4)</sup> 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).

<sup>(5)</sup> Eurostat, proj\_19ndbi [extracted on 7.5.2021].

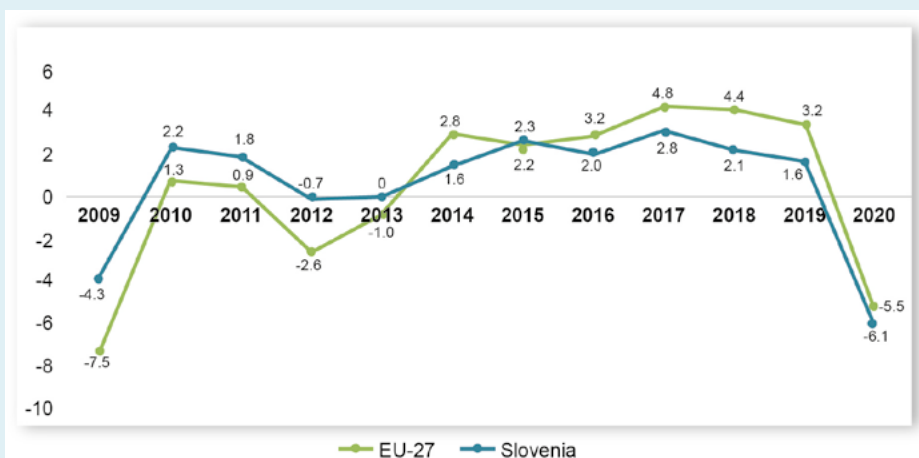
The education and training system will need to prepare to face long-term demographic challenges, which may have a negative impact on the number of learners attending vocational education and training (VET) programmes. The State has responded by adopting the Active ageing strategy (UMAR, 2018) and comprehensive support to companies for active ageing of employees (Section 1.4), aimed at increasing the vocational competences of the adult population.

Currently, the Resolution on the national programme of adult education in the Republic of Slovenia 2021-30 is under preparation. It will set several measures for adult education, including skills development in response to the challenges of an ageing population and labour market needs (European Commission, 2020a).

## 1.2. Economy and labour market indicators

In 2019, Slovenia's gross domestic product (GDP) growth was estimated at 3.2% (EU-27: 1.6%). It has remained higher than the EU-27 average for four consecutive years (Figure 2). After a downswing at the beginning of the previous decade due to the economic crisis, the Slovenian economy has been steadily growing ever since. The real GDP growth rate peaked in 2017, while for the next two years it was above 3%.

Figure 2. Real GDP growth rate (percentage change on previous year)



Source: Eurostat, tec00115 [extracted on 27.5.2021].

From 2020 and for some time after, Slovenia, along with the other EU Member States, will have to address the challenges posed by the COVID-19 crisis. In 2020, the GDP registered a reduction of 4.3% and real fall of 5.5% (EU-27: 6.1%). Domestic expenditure in 2020, compared to 2019, decreased by almost 6.5%, which was strongly influenced by the fall in household consumption expenditure; alongside that, external demand also decreased (SURS, 2021).

With increased uncertainty and the closure of all non-essential service activities due to the measures taken to contain the COVID-19 epidemic in mid-March 2020, the decline in GDP was mainly attributable to a fall in trade, transportation, and accommodation and food service activities (UMAR, 2020a). In the second quarter of 2020, the largest contribution to the decline was made by service activities, especially trade, transportation, and accommodation and food service activities (UMAR, 2020b). The indicators of economic activity have improved markedly since May 2020 and indicate a strong rebound in the third quarter, but in August and September the recovery was already slowing considerably in most sectors (UMAR, 2020c). The second wave of the epidemic had a stronger negative impact, particularly on some service activities, while export-oriented activities recorded further growth. As during the first wave in the spring, the fall was sharpest in accommodation and food-service activities (UMAR, 2021).

In April 2021, the Government adopted the national recovery plan, with measures for strengthening the resilience of the education system, by strengthening competences for the digital and green transition, to respond more quickly to the needs of the economy and aid personal transition from education to the labour market (SVRK, 2020).

### 1.2.1. Economic structure

The main economic sectors of the Slovenian economy are (Cedefop and Centre of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training, 2019):

- (a) manufacturing (automobile, metallic, electronics, pharmacy and chemicals);
- (b) service sector;
- (c) construction.

The country has an open economy with an international orientation, making exports one of the main factors of economic growth. However, growth is also domestically driven recently (Knavs and Šlander, 2019). The manufacturing sector offers the main portion of exports, including motor vehicles, electrical equipment, pharmaceutical products, machinery and basic metals.

In 2018, there were 73 504 enterprises (with at least one employee) with 611 129 employees in total. Most of enterprises (one fifth) were in wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles; most employees (one third) were in manufacturing, followed by wholesale and retail trade, and repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles. Most enterprises are small, more than three quarters having one to four employees. Even though only 11.2% have 10 or more employees, they employ three quarters of those employed <sup>(6)</sup>.

### 1.2.2. Professional regulations

A process of deregulating professions started in 2010; an initial number of 323 regulated professions was limited to 220. In 2021 (Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, MDDSZ, 2021 <sup>(7)</sup>; SPOT, 2021) <sup>(8)</sup>, deregulation was focusing on all economic sectors, though seen mostly in fields such as tourism, construction, veterinary, trade, social assistance, seller and commercial manager. The objective of this policy intervention was to ease access to the labour market by alleviating entry conditions; it sought to minimise the administrative burden that would lead to easier inclusion of young people, migrants and other vulnerable groups into the labour market, make markets more flexible (easier career change, faster activation of unemployed) and provide smoother provision of services (such as lowering the number of licences or permits required in specific professions) (Cedefop and CPI, 2019).

### 1.2.3. Employment and unemployment

Unemployment was on the rise during the economic crisis at the beginning of the previous decade, peaking in 2013 (10.1%) <sup>(9)</sup>. It has been steadily falling since then, reaching 4.5% in 2019 and 5% in 2020, which is lower than the EU-27 average (7.1%) <sup>(10)</sup>. The higher the level of education attainment, the lower the possibility of being unemployed; tertiary education graduates enjoy lower unemployment rates than graduates of upper secondary education or less.

At each education level, unemployment for those aged between 15 and 24 is higher than for the age cohort 25-64. In the age group 15-24, the unemployment rate of upper secondary education (including VET) graduates (international standard classification of education (ISCED) level 3) was lower than of tertiary education graduates until 2014. In more recent years, this trend was inverted (Figure 3).

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<sup>(6)</sup> SURS SiStat database.

<sup>(7)</sup> Last data are available for 1.2.2021.

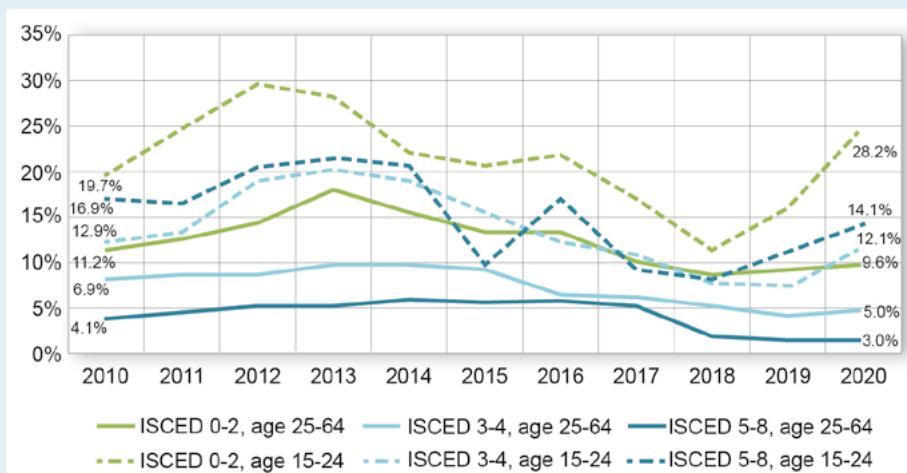
<sup>(8)</sup> Slovenian Business Point (*Slovenska Poslovna Točka*, SPOT).

<sup>(9)</sup> Unemployment rate (aged 15-74).

<sup>(10)</sup> Eurostat, une\_rt\_a [extracted on 28.5.2021].



**Figure 3. Unemployment rate (aged 15-24 and 25-64) by education attainment level in 2010-20**



NB: Data based on international standard classification of education (ISCED) 2011; breaks in time series; low reliability for ISCED 0-2 and 5-8, age 15-24; in Slovenia there is no ISCED 4 programmes.  
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 on 11.5.2021].

Total employment (age group 20-64) reached 75.6% in 2020 (EU-27: 72.4%). Although there is a gap between employment rates of men and women (78.6% and 72.4% respectively), it is smaller than the EU-27 average (78.1% and 66.8% respectively) <sup>(11)</sup>.

The COVID-19 epidemic impact on the economy influenced most employment reduction in manufacturing, followed by administrative and support service activities and accommodation and food services <sup>(12)</sup>.

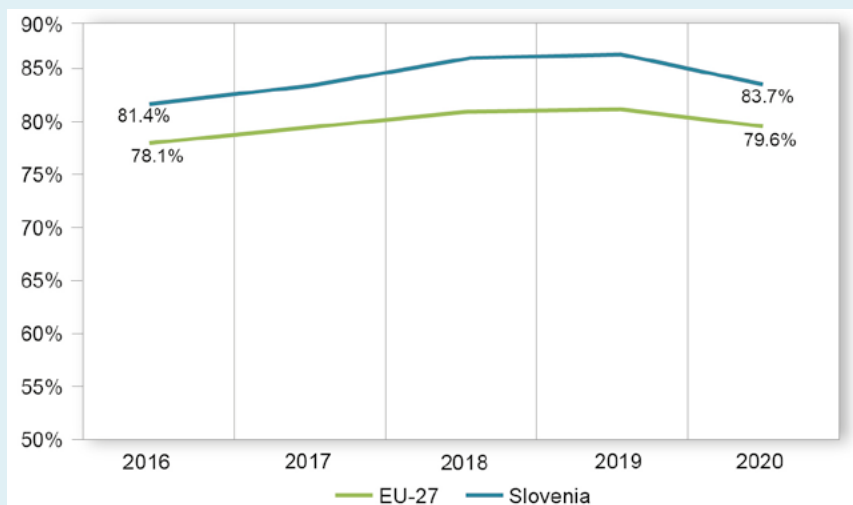
The trend of a dynamic rise in recent VET graduate employment in recent years changed in 2020 (Figure 4). Overall, it rose at slower pace (2.3 percentage points), compared to the total employment rate of all ISCED level graduates (Table 1).

<sup>(11)</sup> Eurostat, t2020\_10 [extracted on 28.5.2021].

<sup>(12)</sup> The impact of the SARS-CoV epidemic on the labour market in Slovenia:

[https://www.ess.gov.si/\\_files/13330/Analiza\\_vpliva\\_epidemije\\_SARS-CoV-2\\_na\\_trg\\_dela.pdf](https://www.ess.gov.si/_files/13330/Analiza_vpliva_epidemije_SARS-CoV-2_na_trg_dela.pdf)

Figure 4. Employment rate of VET graduates (20-34 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 on 6.5.2021].

Table 1. Total employment rate of all ISCED level graduates (age 20-34)

2016	80.0%
2020	84.6%
Change 2016-20 (percentage points)	4.6

Source: Eurostat, edat\_ifse\_24 [extracted on 7.5.2021].

According to the public employment service (*Zavod Republike Slovenije za zaposlovanje*, ZRSZ) data <sup>(13)</sup>, almost half of enterprises have encountered difficulties in recruiting new employees in 2019; among large enterprises this proportion was even higher. Labour market mismatches often relate to young people's modest interest in some education programmes and the low attractiveness of some occupations at upper secondary VET level (UMAR, 2020d). Employers face problems hiring specific occupations requiring a VET qualification at ISCED level 3, such as masons, heavy-truck and tractor drivers,

<sup>(13)</sup> Data by the employment forecast 2019/II (ZRSZ, 2019).

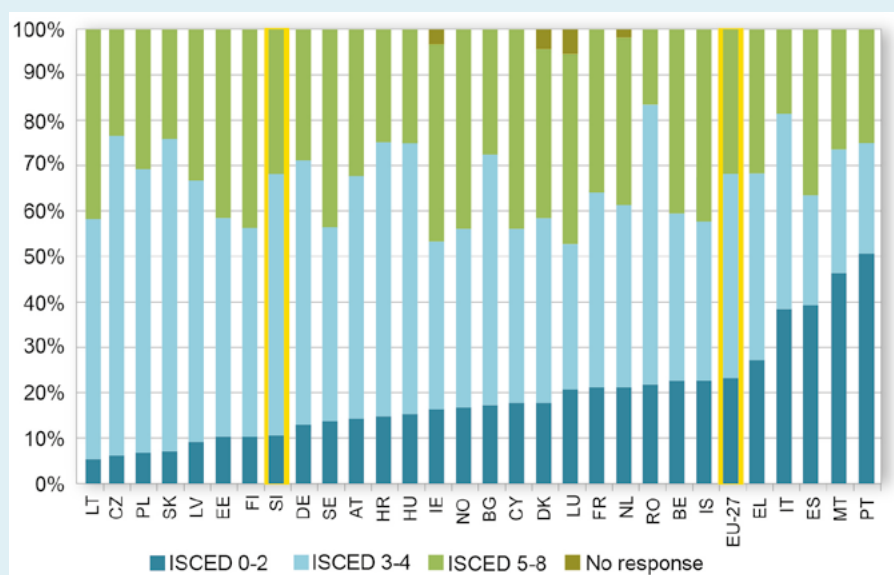


workers for simple work in manufacturing activities, sellers, welders, toolmakers, and electricians (ZRSZ, 2020a). Similarly, the occupational barometer 2020 shows there is excess demand for VET occupations, such as electrical installers, electromechanics, toolmakers, plumbers, roofers, turners and welders (ZRSZ, 2020b).

### 1.3. Education attainment

In 2020, the share of those with medium-level qualifications <sup>(14)</sup> was 55.7%, well above the EU-27 average (47%); only 11.9% of those aged 25 to 64 had low-level <sup>(15)</sup> or no qualification (EU-27 average: 22.2%) (Figure 5).

**Figure 5. Population (aged 25 to 64) by highest education level attained in 2020**



NB: Data based on ISCED 2011. Low reliability for 'no response' in Czechia and Latvia.  
ISCED 0-2 = less than primary, primary and lower secondary education.  
ISCED 3-4 = upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education <sup>(16)</sup>.  
ISCED 5-8 = tertiary education.

Source: Eurostat, Ifsa\_pgaed [extracted on 6.5.2021].

<sup>(14)</sup> In Slovenia, medium-level qualifications are at ISCED 3 level only; no ISCED 4 qualifications are offered. In the EU, medium-level qualifications encompass ISCED levels 3 and 4.

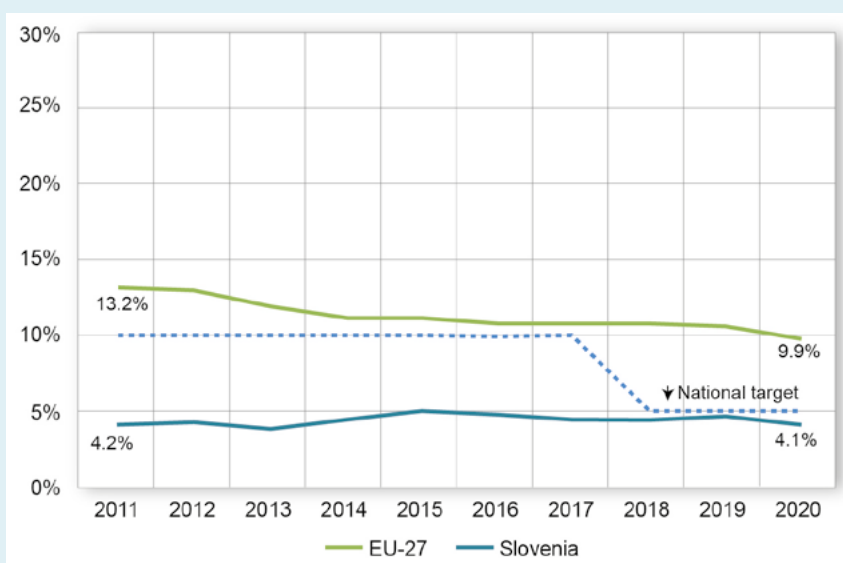
<sup>(15)</sup> In Slovenia, low-education level (ISCED 0-2) means up to compulsory basic education completed. No VET programmes are offered at this level.

<sup>(16)</sup> In the Slovenian education system there are no programmes at ISCED level 4.

According to the labour force survey, there are more men (in 2019: 61.6%) than women (in 2019: 38.4%) among employees with ISCED level-3 VET qualification, while there are more female employees (56.6%, male: 43.4% in 2019) with a qualification at ISCED levels 5-8 <sup>(17)</sup>.

In the past decade, the percentage of early leavers from education and training has been stable (below 5%, 4.1% in 2020); it is among the lowest and well below the EU-27 average (10.2% in 2020) (Figure 6) and the national target of 5%. To prevent early school leaving, Slovenia introduced measures which enable the identification of students at risk of leaving school, the provision of expert and learning assistance, and inclusion in the consulting process at school (European semester 2020) (Republic of Slovenia, 2020).

Figure 6. Early leavers from education and training in 2011-20



NB: Share of the population aged 18 to 24 with at most lower secondary education and not in further education or training.

Source: Eurostat, edat\_lfse\_14 [extracted on 6.5.2021] and European Commission: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/2018-european-semester-national-reform-programmes-and-stability-convergence-programmes\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/2018-european-semester-national-reform-programmes-and-stability-convergence-programmes_en)

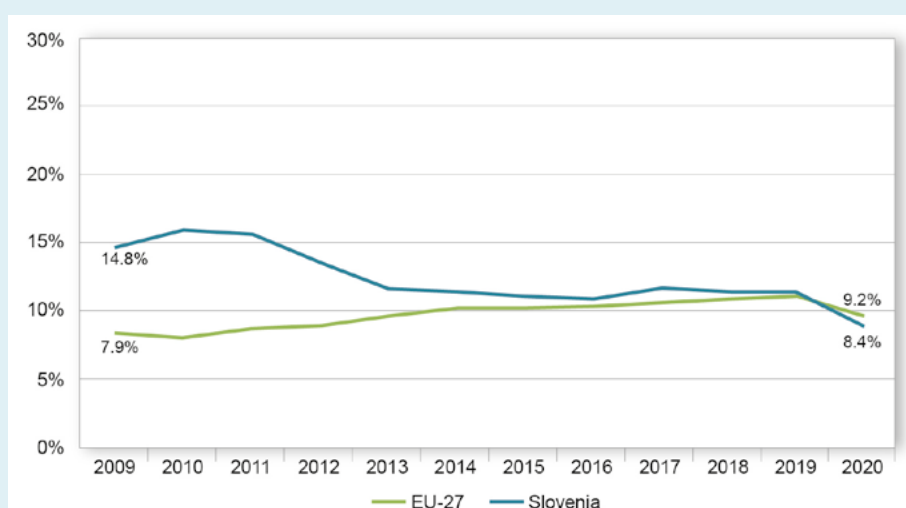
Since 2010, adult participation in education and training (age 25-64) has been reduced by eight percentage points (from 16.4% in 2010 to 8.4% in 2020). For the first time since 2010, it declined below the EU-27 average (9.2% in 2020)

<sup>(17)</sup> SURS SiStat database.

(Figure 7). Low-skilled workers, older people, men and foreigner participation is lower than average (UMAR, 2020d). Participation in lifelong learning (LLL) is higher in companies with 10 or more employees than in those with fewer employees, and it is higher in the public than the private sector. Also, given the challenges of digital transformation and automation, the low participation in education is particularly problematic for workers in jobs that are highly vulnerable to fast technological changes (UMAR, 2020e).

Slovenia's development strategy 2030 aims at 19% participation of adults in lifelong learning by the end of the decade.

**Figure 7. Participation in lifelong learning in 2009-20**



NB: Share of adult population, aged 25 to 64, participating in education and training.

Source: Eurostat, trng\_lfse\_01 [extracted on 6.5.2021].

The State supports adult learning, linking it with active labour market policy, aiming to raise the employability of the unemployed and of jobseekers <sup>(18)</sup>. The unemployed have the right and obligation to participate in several active labour market policy programmes. In 2019, around 18% unemployed <sup>(19)</sup> and around 0.4% employed persons <sup>(20)</sup> attended adult education and training programmes, with a total budget of EUR 14.1 million (MDDSZ, 2020).

<sup>(18)</sup> Employees whose employment contract ends soon.

<sup>(19)</sup> Source: MDDSZ (2020) and ZRSZ (2020), CPI calculations.

<sup>(20)</sup> Source: MDDSZ (2020) and SURS (2021a), CPI calculations.

## 1.4. Employment policies and VET

Raising employability has been a major area of focus for several recent policies. In January 2021, the Government adopted active employment policy guidelines 2021-25 <sup>(21)</sup>, prepared by MDDSZ. It emphasises the importance of training of the unemployed, jobseekers and the employed and will have great impact in the following years on active employment policy programmes.

Under the responsibility of MDDSZ, and often within the European Social Fund (ESF) supported programmes, several employment-strengthening initiatives are being implemented targeting a variety of groups, both unemployed and employed. The basis for these programmes is the Active employment policy programme.

Several measures aiming to increase the employability of the unemployed are in force, including (Knavs and Šlander, 2019):

- (a) legal provisions that offer the possibility to validate and get recognised non-formal and informal learning and acquire nationally recognised national vocational qualifications (NVQs, *nacionalne poklicne kvalifikacije*) (Section 2.4). Usually, more than two thirds of those obtaining an NVQ find a job (MDDSZ, 2018);
- (b) the project Learning for young adults (*Projektno učenje mlajših odraslih*, PUM-O) <sup>(22)</sup> targets the unemployed and jobseekers not enrolled in education (NEETs), focusing on early leavers from education and training (aged 15 to 26). The employment service of Slovenia (ZRSZ) selects programme providers and referral of jobseekers and the unemployed to the programme. The programme aims to support social inclusion of vulnerable young adults through education and/or work (MDDSZ, 2020).

Within the remit of the education ministry, intercompany training centres (*medpodjetniški izobraževalni center*, MIC) at school centres are implementing practical programmes, promoting not only practical training of VET learners but also the employability of the unemployed (Section 2.6).

There is a range of programmes aiming to support those in employment as well. One of these is the Comprehensive support for active ageing of the labour force (2016-22) <sup>(23)</sup>, operated under the Public scholarship, development,

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<sup>(21)</sup> [Active employment policy webpage](#).

<sup>(22)</sup> The project is part of the [Youth guarantee 2016-20 implementation plan](#).

<sup>(23)</sup> Approximately EUR 30 million for the overall programme is foreseen.

disability and maintenance fund of the Republic of Slovenia, and implemented by enterprises. It aims to increase employee (aged 50 or more) competences and support them in managing efficiently the challenges of the ageing labour force (Knavs and Šlander, 2019).

Since 2010, MDDSZ has jointly financed competence centres for human resource development; these aim to revitalise Slovenian industries, businesses and individuals, by offering financial support to different business branches to strengthen employee competence development (Cedefop and ReferNet, 2020a). The companies are in the same economic sector or in 10 fields, identified in the 2017 Smart specialisation strategy, connected into a competence centre <sup>(24)</sup>. Employees are trained according to the needs of the company. With the help of experts, a competence model is prepared, deficit areas are detected and a training plan for employees is prepared.

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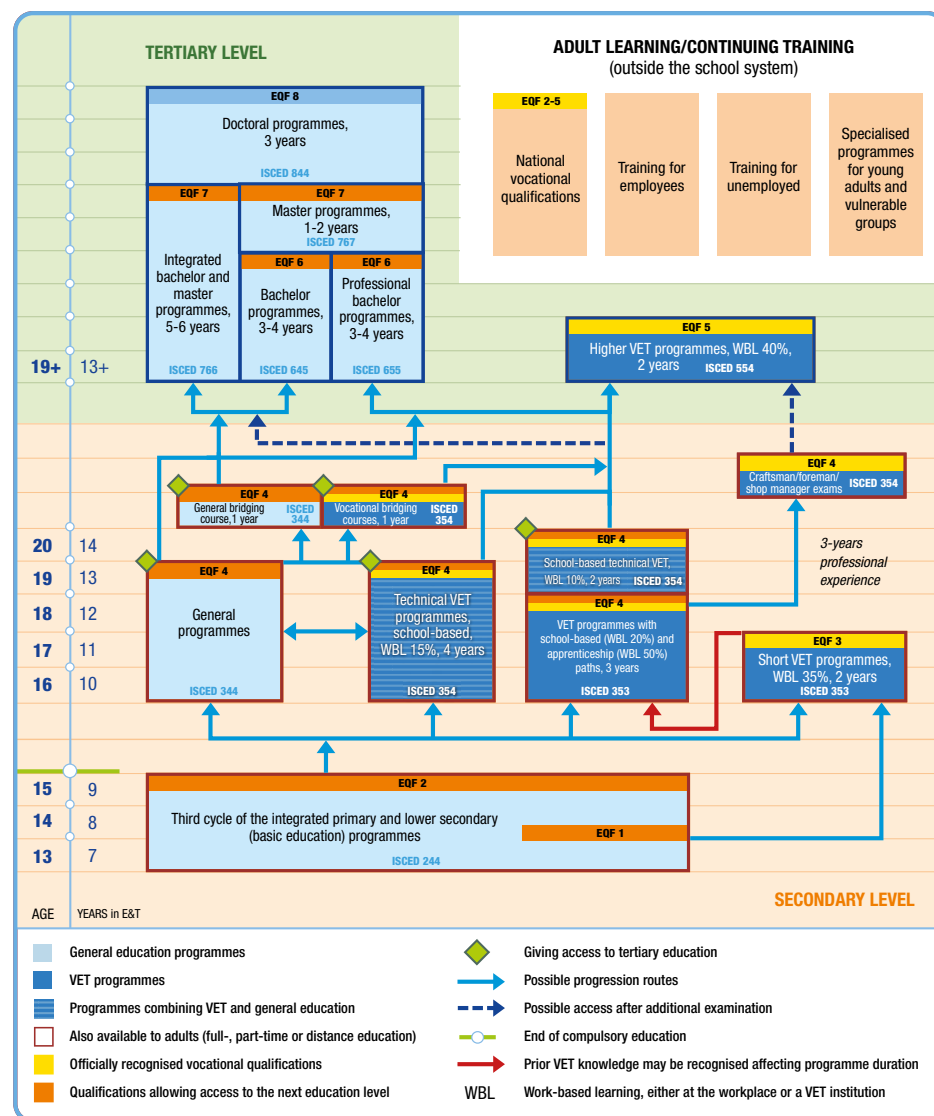
<sup>(24)</sup> In 2017-18, 11 competence centres were set up, including 250 companies with more than 35 800 employees. In 2019-22, 10 additional competence centres were set up, covering all 10 areas of the Smart specialisation strategy, having involved 327 companies. More than 22 000 employees are expected to be trained. Projects are jointly funded by the European Social Fund.

## CHAPTER 2.

# VET provision



Figure 8. VET in the Slovenian education and training system in 2020/21



NB: ISCED-P 2011.

Source: Cedefop and ReferNet Slovenia, 2021.

## 2.1. Education and training system overview

The education and training system (Figure 8) comprises <sup>(25)</sup>:

- (a) preschool education, covering children from 11 months to six years <sup>(26)</sup>;
- (b) basic education, integrating primary and lower secondary education (European qualifications framework (EQF) levels 1 and 2) <sup>(27)</sup>;
- (c) upper secondary education (EQF levels 3 and 4) <sup>(28)</sup>;
- (d) tertiary education (EQF levels 5, 6, 7 and 8) <sup>(29)</sup>.

Preschool education (*predšolska vzgoja*) is not compulsory. However, every child has a right to be enrolled into a kindergarten (*vrtec*). Approximately 81% of children attend a kindergarten; most (94%) are in public ones, founded and funded by municipalities. Parents pay fees that might be subsidised by the government, depending on the family's incomes <sup>(30)</sup>.

Learners start basic nine years compulsory education (*osnovnošolsko izobraževanje*) at the age of six. It is successfully completed when the learner achieves required learning outcomes.

Basic education integrates primary and lower secondary education into a single structure. Along with 448 public schools founded by local communities and funded by the education ministry, there are six private schools offering basic education <sup>(31)</sup>. Basic education graduates can choose between initial VET (IVET) or general upper secondary programmes (EQF 4). Those not successful in completing basic education can enrol in short vocational upper secondary programmes (EQF 3).

Most learners start upper secondary education at the age 15 or 16. Upper secondary education is offered at EQF levels 3 and 4 and ISCED level 3. Along with a range of general education programmes, a variety of VET pathways are offered, all offering possibilities for learners' progression or changing direction:

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<sup>(25)</sup> As defined in the Slovenian Qualification Framework Act (2015); and Organisation and Financing of Education Act.

<sup>(26)</sup> Regulated by Kindergarten Act (1996, amended in 2005, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2012, 2015, 2017, 2021).

<sup>(27)</sup> Regulated by Basic School Act (1996, amended in 2006, 2007, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2016).

<sup>(28)</sup> Regulated by General Upper Secondary School Act (1996, amended in 2007, 2017, 2018, 2019); VET Act (2006, amended in 2017 and 2019); Matura Examination Act (2003, amended in 2007 and 2016); and Apprenticeship Act (2017).

<sup>(29)</sup> Regulated by Higher Education Act (1993, amended in 2012, 2014, 2016, 2017, 2020 and 2021); and Higher Vocational Education Act (2004, amended in 2013).

<sup>(30)</sup> Calculated by family income: <https://www.gov.si/teme/znizano-placilo-vrtca/>

<sup>(31)</sup> Source: MIZŠ [data extracted on 28.4.2021].



- (a) upper secondary general education (*splošno srednješolsko izobraževanje*) lasts four years (EQF 4) and is mainly offered by public schools (*gimnazija*). To enrol, applicants' grades in the last three years of basic education are considered. Upon programme completion and successfully passing an external examination, the graduates are awarded a general *matura* certificate (*splošna matura*) that provides access to tertiary education. General upper secondary programmes might be focused solely on the general education (*splošna gimnazija*) or more classical subjects (*klasična gimnazija*), or they might add some professional orientation to it as well (*strokovna gimnazija*), such as in technology (*tehniška gimnazija*)<sup>(32)</sup>, economy (*ekonomska gimnazija*)<sup>(33)</sup> and art (*umetniška gimnazija*)<sup>(34)</sup>. Some schools, providing general education programmes, have so-called sport departments for young sportsmen, with extended hours of sport activities;
- (b) VET programmes are offered at upper secondary and tertiary level for young (full-time) and adult (part-time) learners. The VET offer in Slovenia is diversified into different programme types and delivery modes (school-based and apprenticeships), leading to different types of qualifications and consequently offering different progression possibilities (for detailed descriptions see Section 2.2).

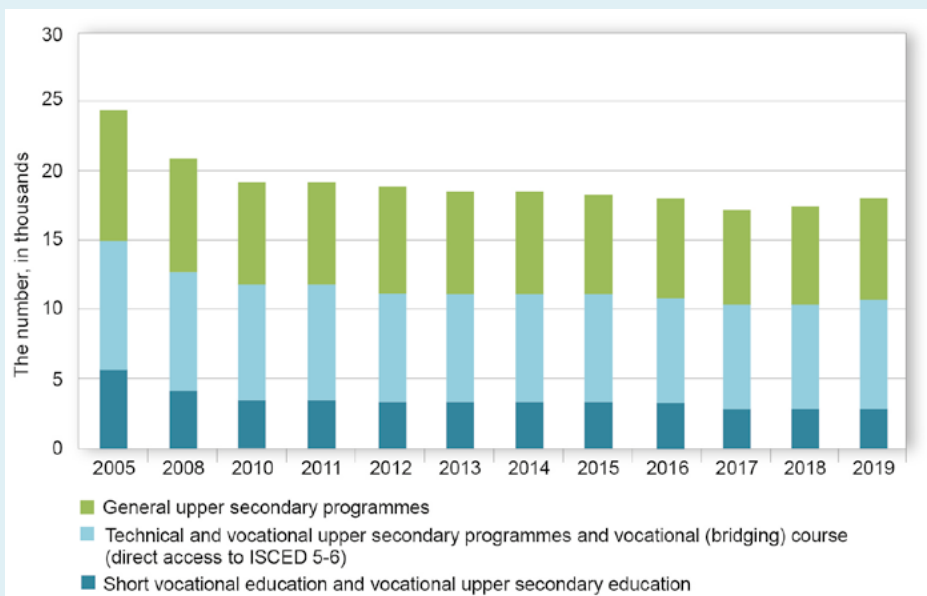
Mostly due to a smaller cohort, there was a significant downturn in the number of graduates from upper secondary education programmes (ISCED 3) in the period between 2005 and 2013; this has remained stable since (Figure 9). Since 2012/13, enrolment rates in general education programmes have been more impacted by demographic reduction than participation in VET programmes.

<sup>(32)</sup> Within the extended elective part of the programme, learners can choose among subjects, such as: electrical engineering, construction, agriculture, woodworking, microbiology, descriptive geometry, computer systems and networks, mechanical engineering.

<sup>(33)</sup> Learners have additional subjects of entrepreneurship and economy and within the extended elective part of the programme, can choose among subjects, such as business informatics, economic history, economic geography.

<sup>(34)</sup> Programmes offer additional subjects in four courses: music, dance, fine arts, drama and film.

Figure 9. Young people, graduating in ISCED 3 education, by type of education programme, 2005/06 – 2018/19



Source: SURS, SiStat database [extracted on 30.3.2021].

Tertiary education comprises two-year higher VET programmes (EQF 5), professional and academic bachelor programmes (three or four years) (EQF 6), master programmes (one or two years) (EQF 7) and doctoral programmes lasting three or four years (EQF 8).

Adult education (AE) is within the remit of the education ministry (*Ministrstvo za izobraževanje, znanost in šport*, MIZŠ). It is regulated by the AE Act (2018), which also defines different vulnerable adult groups. Measures that address unemployed adults and jobseekers are under the labour ministry (MDDSZ). Adults can enrol in the same formal initial VET programmes as young people and participate in formal and non-formal continuing VET (CVET). Adult learners have the same social rights as young learners (for example, basic health insurance), provided they are under 26 and not registered as jobseekers or employed; usually, they are in the age cohort 20 to 24 (Figure 11). In 2021, 77 VET schools, 25 folk high schools <sup>(35)</sup> and 14 private education institutions provide IVET programmes for adults. To address the needs of a working adult with family, they might adjust the ways of organising instruction, recognising prior learning and carrying out exams.

<sup>(35)</sup> Folk high schools (*ljudske univerze*) are public institutions; they provide all forms of AE and are well-spread throughout the country.

Slovenia has a multi-track approach, aiming at inclusion of learners with special education needs (SEN). A committee at the National Education Institute of Slovenia (ZRSŠ) grants learners a SEN status <sup>(36)</sup>. Most SEN learners are integrated in a mainstream preschool, basic and upper secondary schools. A learning programme is adapted for each learner; in terms of its implementation modality and granting professional support. Only a minority of SEN learners attend specialised programmes offered by regular schools or specialised institutions <sup>(37)</sup>. A recent development expanded the cross-sectoral approach and offers holistic support for young and their families <sup>(38)</sup>.

## 2.2. Government-regulated VET provision

The purpose of VET is to provide, at an internationally comparable level, the knowledge, skills and vocational competences and abilities necessary for the pursuit of the chosen vocation and for further education (Article No 2 of Vocational Education Act, 2006).

Most VET programmes are offered at upper secondary education level; one two-year higher VET programme type is offered at tertiary level. All upper secondary and tertiary VET programmes are considered formal IVET programmes, leading to nationally recognised VET qualifications. They are free of charge for full-time learners, while those attending a part-time programme (adults) pay fees.

The progression possibilities, along with recently implemented policy measures, such as introduction of apprenticeship in a three-year VET programme (Section 2.2.1.2), a new policy on scholarships (Section 4.1.1) and campaigns aiming to raise VET attractiveness, seem to keep VET attractiveness steady. Between 2014 and 2018, the share of VET learners in upper secondary education was increased by four percentage points (from 66.8% to 70.8%) <sup>(39)</sup>. Slovenia has the highest share of VET learners in upper secondary education (Figure 10) in the EU-27. Figures differ if only young people are considered: 65.2% of them attended VET in 2019/20 (Figure 12).

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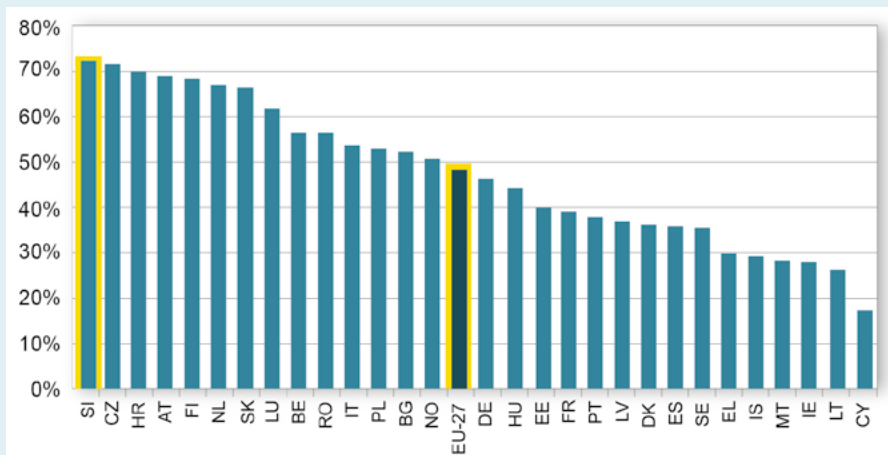
<sup>(36)</sup> The Placement of Children with Special Needs Act (2011, amended in 2012).

<sup>(37)</sup> Twenty-four institutions specialised in different learners' needs, for example hearing impairment, blindness, emotional and behavioural disorders, according to the [MIZŠ web portal](#).

<sup>(38)</sup> On 13.1.2021, the Act on the Intervention for Children and Youth with Emotional and Behavioural Disorders in Education came into effect.

<sup>(39)</sup> Eurostat (educ\_uoe\_enrs01, educ\_uoe\_enrs04 and educ\_uoe\_enrs07) [extracted on 6.5.2021].

Figure 10. Share of initial VET learners from total learners at upper secondary level (ISCED level 3), 2019

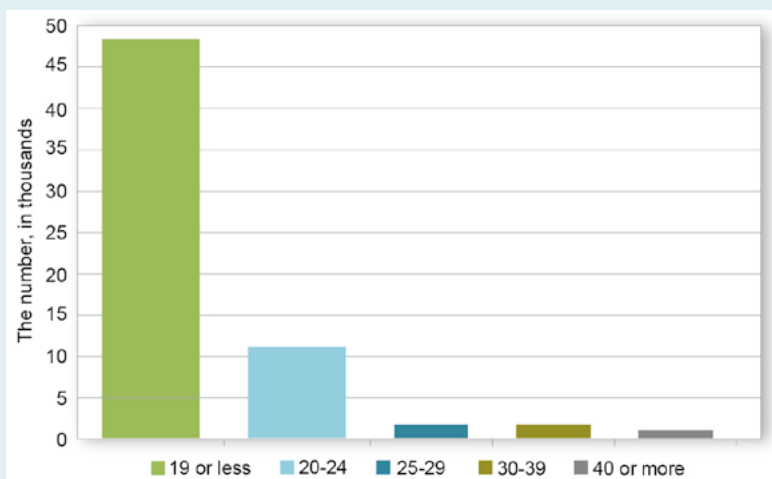


NB: Data based on ISCED 2011.

Source: Eurostat, educ\_uoe\_enrs04 [extracted on 27.5.2021].

Almost one quarter (23.5%) of VET learners are adults (over 20 years old) (Figure 11). Adults, attending ISCED level 3 programmes, usually enrol in VET programmes (95.5% in 2018/19), compared to general education programmes (4.5% in 2018/19).

Figure 11. The number of young people and adults enrolled in VET, at ISCED levels 3 and 4, 2018/19



Source: SURS, SiStat database [extracted on 30.3.2021].

Almost 60% of upper secondary VET learners are male, with preferences for programmes in fields such as science and engineering, manufacturing and construction. Females more often enrol in education, social sciences, business and law, health and welfare, humanities and arts and services (Table 2) (Cedefop and CPI, 2019).

**Table 2. Young people enrolled in upper secondary VET, by field of education, number and structure, by sex, in %, 2019/20**

	Total number	Structure of enrolment by sex, in %	
		Men	Women
VET, total	47 942	58.5	41.5
Education	2 610	9.8	90.2
Arts and humanities	2 947	36.3	63.7
Business, administration and law	6 025	40.1	59.9
Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics	306	40.5	59.5
Information and communications technologies (ICTs)	3 276	94.7	5.3
Engineering, manufacturing and construction	18 592	89.1	10.9
Agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary	2 394	44.8	55.2
Health and welfare	5 590	23.1	76.9
Services	6 202	34.8	65.2

Source: SURS, SiStat database [extracted on 2.6.2021].

### 2.2.1. Initial VET

IVET upper secondary and higher VET programmes are competence-based and modularised. The completion of a specific number of vocational modules leads to a vocational qualification. VET modules describe learning outcomes to be achieved through theory learning and practical training (work-based learning, WBL) at school laboratories or workshops, intercompany training centres and at employers. For each vocational module, a catalogue of knowledge is prepared at national level. These include general objectives, vocational competences and learning outcomes to be achieved by completion of the module.

While tertiary VET programmes focus on vocational modules, upper secondary VET programmes also include general education subjects (for

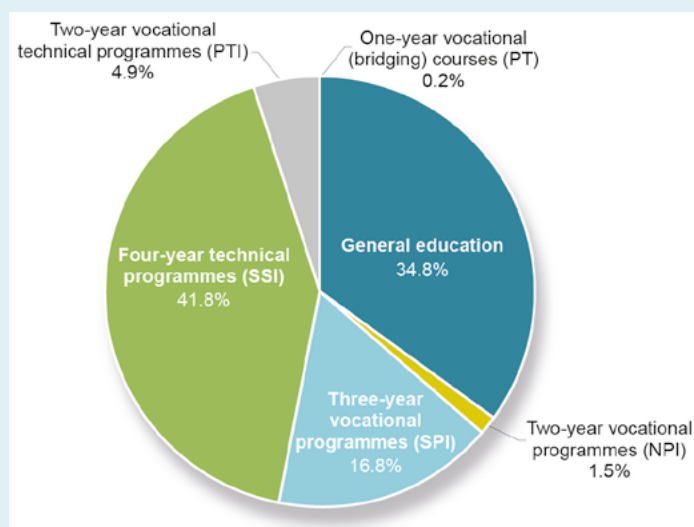
example, mother tongue and foreign language, mathematics, natural and social sciences) to differing degrees. All VET programmes also develop key competences, which are defined in national catalogues of knowledge and are integrated into all subjects and vocational modules.

Upper secondary IVET programmes are <sup>(40)</sup>:

- (a) two-year vocational programmes (*nižje poklicno izobraževanje*, NPI);
- (b) three-year vocational programmes (*srednje poklicno izobraževanje*, SPI) <sup>(41)</sup>;
- (c) four-year technical programmes (*srednje strokovno izobraževanje*, SSI);
- (d) two-year vocational technical programmes (*poklicno tehniško izobraževanje*, PTI);
- (e) one-year vocational (bridging) courses (*poklicni tečaj*, PT) <sup>(42)</sup>.

More than two thirds of young VET learners are enrolled in technical VET programmes, showing learners' preferences for VET programmes that offer completion of the upper secondary level and possibility of progressing to tertiary education (Figure 12).

Figure 12. Young people in upper secondary programmes, in %, 2019/20



Source: SURS, SiStat database [extracted on 30.4.2021].

<sup>(40)</sup> Numbers of different programmes available in 2019/20 are: six NPI, 38 SSI, 44 SPI, 19 PTI, four PT.

Source: MIZŠ web portal.

<sup>(41)</sup> SPI graduates can continue their studies at PTI programmes.

<sup>(42)</sup> Enable acquiring of SSI education to general upper secondary graduates.

### 2.2.1.1. *Technical upper secondary programmes*

Technical upper secondary programmes (*srednje strokovno izobraževanje*, SSI) are four-year formal IVET programmes, leading to EQF level 4 (ISCED 354) qualifications <sup>(43)</sup> and 240 credit points. They target both young people (usually 15-year-olds) and adults who graduated basic education. Upon successfully passing vocational matura exams (Box 1), graduates can access higher vocational programmes, professional bachelor programmes or enter the labour market.

#### Box 1. **Vocational matura**

Success in a vocational *matura* (*poklicna matura*) examination awards learners a vocational *matura* certificate (*spričevalo o poklicni maturi*) that refers to both upper secondary education level achieved and VET qualification. It allows graduates to access higher vocational programmes, professional bachelor programmes or enter the labour market. Graduates receive an individualised Europass certificate supplement in Slovenian and English. Holders of a vocational *matura* can pass an additional exam in a fifth subject from the general *matura* subjects, enabling them to enrol in academic bachelor programmes.

A vocational *matura* (*poklicna matura*) comprises four parts. Along with common parts – written and oral exams in mother tongue and a theoretical-technical subject – learners take written and oral exams in either foreign language or maths, according to their preferences, and a practical assignment. School examination boards carry out oral exams and assess practical assignments. The National Examinations Centre (RIC) provides written tests, an exception being theoretical-technical subjects of programmes with a smaller number of learners, which are prepared by the school examination board. The practical assignment can be a project or a presentation. Learners choose the topic with help of their teacher. Employer representatives can participate in the examination board of the practical assignment assessment as external members: they must possess at least a relevant technical upper secondary qualification, five years of relevant professional experience, and have met possible additional requirements set by RIC.

The vocational *matura* is defined in Vocational Education Act (2006, amended in 2017 and 2019) and Matura Examination Act (2007, amended in 2016).

Source: CPI.

<sup>(43)</sup> Examples of qualifications: economic technician, electro-technician, pharmaceutical technician, geo-mining technician, nature protection technician, environmental technician, nautical technician, electronic communications technician, technician of mechatronic.

SSI programmes are mainly school-based, with about 15% of WBL. Along with vocational modules, they offer at least 2 137 hours of general education subjects of Slovenian language, maths, foreign language, arts, social science, natural science and physical education. In-company training lasts at least eight weeks, or minimum 304 hours per programme. Practical training of around 480 hours is implemented in school workshops or in MICs (Section 2.6).

#### 2.2.1.2. Vocational upper secondary programmes

Vocational upper secondary programmes (*srednje poklicno izobraževanje*, SPI) are three-year formal IVET programmes (180 credit points), leading to an EQF level 4 (ISCED 353) final examination certificate (*spričevalo o zaključnem izpitu*). They target both young people (usually 15-year-olds) and adults who graduated basic education or short vocational upper secondary programmes. Upon passing the final exam (Box 2), graduates can access two-year vocational technical education programmes or enter the labour market.

SPI programmes comprise vocational modules along with general education of at least 1 048 hours: courses in Slovenian language, maths, foreign language, arts, social science, natural science and physical education. SPI programmes are offered either as school-based or apprenticeship:

- (a) the SPI school-based path <sup>(44)</sup> offers a high share of WBL; about 40% of the programme is implemented in school workshops, laboratories or MICs, and as in-company training typically lasting 24 weeks (912 hours, 20% of the programme) <sup>(45)</sup>. A contract for the in-company training is required, defining obligations of all parties, training duration and competences to be developed; it is signed by the school, employer and learners or their legal guardians. In-company training can be prolonged to up to 53 weeks, while shortening the practical training at school. In this case, in the second year, the learner must pass a mid-term test of practical skills, provided by the chamber that the employer is attached to: the Chamber of Commerce and Industry (*Gospodarska zbornica Slovenije*, GZS) or the Chamber of Craft and Small Business (*Obrtno-podjetniška zbornica Slovenije*, OZS);

<sup>(44)</sup> Examples of qualifications: administrator, florist, chimney sweep, gastronomy and hotel services, baker.

<sup>(45)</sup> The duration of in-company training may differ in some programmes; for instance, in the Gastronomy and hotel services programme it lasts 29 weeks.



- (b) in 2017/18, following the 2017 Apprenticeship Act adoption, the apprenticeship path was reintroduced <sup>(46)</sup> in selected programmes <sup>(47)</sup>. In 2020/21, 14 SPI apprenticeship programmes <sup>(48)</sup> are offered in 20 schools. Most of the programme is carried out at employer (50% to 60%) and the rest, being mostly general education, at school. The relevant chamber accredits practical training placements at the employer. The apprenticeship contract is signed by the employer and apprentice and must be verified by the relevant chamber. The school and employer prepare an apprenticeship implementation plan (*načrt izvajanja vajeništva*) for each apprentice, under the relevant chamber's supervision. The apprenticeship implementation plan defines the objectives (including learning outcomes) and time schedule of the practical training, the distribution of roles and means of communication and cooperation between the school and the company, also regarding the final exam. It is signed by the learner and the representatives of the school, company and chamber. The employer covers basic safety and health insurance, subsidies/costs for food and travel and pays a remuneration to apprentices of at least EUR 250 per month.

## Box 2. Final exam

To graduate from SPI programmes (school-based and apprenticeship path), learners take a final exam (*zaključni izpit*) composed of written and oral exam in mother tongue and a final practical assignment. A national examination catalogue is developed by the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for VET (*Center RS za poklicno izobraževanje*, CPI) and approved by the Expert Council of the Republic of Slovenia for VET (*Strokovni svet Republike Slovenije za poklicno in strokovno izobraževanje*) for each programme. Graduates are awarded a final examination certificate (*sprichevalo o zaključnem izpitu*) and individualised Europass certificate supplement in Slovenian and English. They can continue training at vocational technical programmes or enter the labour market (Cedefop and CPI, 2019).

Source: CPI.

<sup>(46)</sup> After being abolished in 2006, due to low interest.

<sup>(47)</sup> This is supported by the ESF project Reform of upper secondary vocational education 2016-21, implemented by the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for VET (CPI). The project supports schools and companies involved in providing joint implementation of the programme, creating and monitoring a register of practical training placements, in cooperation with social partners, and evaluation of the implementation of the apprenticeship path.

<sup>(48)</sup> SPI apprenticeship programmes: electrician, gastronomy and hotel services, mason, roofer, industrial mechanic, joiner, metal shaper – toolmaker, paper maker, painter – sign painter, glassmaker, machine engineering mechanic, bricklayer, car mechatronic, car mechanic, and vehicle body repairer.

### 2.2.1.3. Vocational technical upper secondary programmes

Vocational technical upper secondary programmes (*poklicno-tehniško izobraževanje*, PTI) are two-year formal IVET programmes that allow graduates of a three-year VET programme (3+2) to obtain an upper secondary technical level of education and associated qualification at EQF level 4 (ISCED 354). To graduate and have opened progression possibilities, learners must pass vocational *matura* (Box 1).

PTI programmes are school-based and include at least 1 178 hours of general education subjects. WBL (about 10% of the programme) is delivered both in-company and in school workshops or MICs.

### 2.2.1.4. Short vocational upper secondary programmes

Short vocational upper secondary programmes (*nižje poklicno izobraževanje*, NPI) are two-year formal IVET programmes, leading to EQF level 3 (ISCED 353) qualification and 120 credit points. They target young people (usually 15-year-olds) and adults who have nine years compulsory attendance and successfully finished at least seven grades of nine-year compulsory education, or basic education for SEN learners.

NPI programmes are school-based, with at least 675 hours of general education. WBL ranges from 35% to 40% of the programme, with four weeks in-company training (152 hours) and the rest in school workshops or MICs. The areas of training include wood worker, assistant construction worker, biotechnology and care assistant, assistant in technology processes, auxiliary administrator and textile worker.

To graduate, learners must pass a final exam (*zaključni izpit*) (Box 2).

### 2.2.1.5. Vocational bridging programmes

Vocational bridging programmes (*poklicni tečaj*, PT) are formal one-year IVET programmes, leading to EQF level 4 (ISCED 354) qualifications <sup>(49)</sup> and 60 credit points <sup>(50)</sup>. These programmes mostly target graduates of general upper secondary programmes (*gymnasia*) who want a VET qualification, or those who finished SSI (without vocational *matura*) to prepare for vocational *matura*. All prior learning, in particular general subjects, is recognised; the programme focuses on VET modules and in-company learning. To graduate, learners must

<sup>(49)</sup> Vocational bridging programmes are available for four qualifications: economic technician, gastronomy and tourism, preschool education and computer technician.

<sup>(50)</sup> With the exception of the qualification of computer technician, where graduates earn 77 credit points.

take a vocational *matura* (*poklicna matura*) (Box 1). Upper secondary general education graduates must pass only the vocational part of the *matura*.

PTs are provided by VET schools or adult education providers. Programmes include vocational modules only and WBL at the PT provider and in-company. WBL share varies depending on programme <sup>(51)</sup>.

#### 2.2.1.6. Higher vocational programmes

Higher vocational programmes (*višje strokovno izobraževanje*, VSI) are two-year formal IVET tertiary education programmes, leading to a short-cycle higher vocational diploma (*Diploma o višji strokovni izobrazbi*) at EQF level 5 (ISCED 554) and 120 credit points. They are offered by public or private higher vocational schools and target young people (usually 19-year-olds) and adults who either hold a general or vocational *matura* or have passed master-craftsman/foreman/shop-manager examination, general subject vocational *matura* exams and have three years of working experience. In 2019/20, 13.9% <sup>(52)</sup> of tertiary education young learners enrolled in one of the 37 VSI programmes offered <sup>(53)</sup>.

VSI programmes are school-based with 40% of WBL, including 20 weeks of in-company training for which a learning contract must be signed by learner, school and employer. Upon passing a diploma exam – consisting of submitting and defending a practically oriented diploma thesis – graduates are awarded a diploma of higher vocational education (*diploma o višji strokovni izobrazbi*), an integral part of which is a diploma supplement in Slovenian and one official EU language. Graduates can access professional and academic bachelor programmes and have previous education and modules recognised (Cedefop and CPI, 2019).

### 2.2.2. Continuing VET

#### 2.2.2.1. Master craftsman, foreman and shop manager certification

The master craftsman, foreman and shop manager exams (*mojstrski, delovodski in poslovodni izpiti*) are part of formal education and training, leading to a qualification at EQF level 4 <sup>(54)</sup>. They are conducted by the Chamber of Craft and Small Business, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Slovenian Chamber of Commerce (TZS) respectively. Candidates must pay participation

<sup>(51)</sup> It is considered that learners have already acquired the necessary general education knowledge.

<sup>(52)</sup> SURS, *Študentje glede na program v študijskem letu 2019/20*.

<sup>(53)</sup> MIZŠ web portal.

<sup>(54)</sup> Master-craftsman examination certificate (*Spričevalo o opravljenem mojstrskem izpitu*); foreman examination certificate (*Spričevalo o opravljenem delovodskem izpitu*); managerial examination certificate (*Spričevalo o opravljenem poslovodskem izpitu*).

fees <sup>(55)</sup>, though they prepare on their own. Preparation courses are non-formal programmes, provided by chambers and MICs. Successful candidates receive 60 credit points.

These exams target those who aim to improve their level of education and/or become an in-company mentor (Section 2.7.1). To sit the exams, someone must have at least one of the following:

- (a) a vocational upper secondary education and three years of relevant work experience;
- (b) a technical upper secondary education and two years of relevant work experience;
- (c) a higher vocational education and one year of relevant work experience.

After passing the exams, candidates obtain a master-craftsman/foreman/shop-manager certificate (*spričevalo o opravljenem mojstrskem, delovodskem, poslovodskem izpitu*) and a technical upper secondary education level is achieved/ recognised (EQF 4; ISCED 354). Successful candidates can become a master confectioner, master joiner, master butcher, master beekeeper, master watchmaker, foreman in electro energetics, construction foreman, food foreman and shop manager. They can also sit the general subject exams of the vocational *matura* to enrol in a higher vocational programme or a professional bachelor tertiary programme (Cedefop and CPI, 2019).

#### 2.2.2.1. Continuing education and training for employees

Formal CVET programmes (*programov nadaljnjega poklicnega usposabljanja in izpopolnjevanja*), envisaged by the VET Act (2006, amended in 2017 and 2019) and Higher VET Act (2004), have been available on a limited scale. The CPI project The development of programmes for upskilling in CVET 2017-22 (the PINPIU project) is one of the projects aiming to fill the gap, by developing new formal CVET programmes (up to 30 credit points) to upskill, update and develop specific vocational competences of employed VET graduates (Cedefop and ReferNet, 2020b). Two types of CVET programme at EQF levels 4 and 5 are envisioned:

- (a) upskilling programmes (*programi izpopolnjevanja*): to improve, expand and update VET competences. A completed IVET programme in a relevant field and level of study is required;
- (b) training programmes (*programi usposabljanja*): to equip individuals with knowledge and skills for professions (or part of a profession) that are not

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<sup>(55)</sup> Fees depend on profession, for example EUR 717.74 for the shop manager examination, EUR 1 364.86 for the foreman and from EUR 1 284 to EUR 1 683 for the master craftsman.

offered within IVET. The basis for these programmes will be newly adopted occupational standards.

Six programmes for upskilling in continuing vocational education and training in higher VET <sup>(56)</sup> were adopted by the Expert Council for VET by the end of May 2021 <sup>(57)</sup>. The programmes are not yet being implemented.

## 2.3. Other forms of training

### 2.3.1. Accredited training programmes qualifying for performing specific activities or jobs

There are two types of State-accredited (or verified) training programmes:

- (a) those that lead to certificates necessary to perform regulated activities, such as a driving or diving licence, and a qualification to become a volunteer firefighter or mountain rescuer;
- (b) those that lead to qualifying to perform specific jobs, such as firemen, swimming pool lifeguards, professional drivers, real estate agents, drivers of a forklift truck.

These programmes are included in a register of accredited programmes developed by the responsible ministry and regulated by specific legislation. To practise these activities and professions, individuals must attend the programmes and obtain a certificate or licence. Providers are accredited by the competent ministry; they must employ adequately qualified personnel, have the appropriate equipment and fulfil the requirements.

Both types of programme have specific expected learning outcomes and type of final examination. They differ in their length and entry conditions. Most have tuition fees, but some are part-funded by the State. In some public services, vocational training is provided by the institutions employing these professions, for instance the army and the police (Knavaš and Šlander, 2019).

### 2.3.2. Public employment service education and training programmes

As part of the active labour market policy, the public employment service designs education and training activities in cooperation with employers. ZRSZ identifies employers' needs and develops training programme proposals in cooperation

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<sup>(56)</sup> Such as the Expert for smart buildings installations programme and the Aromatherapist in wellness centre programme.

<sup>(57)</sup> According to the CPI's ReferNet input to the report.

with training providers registered by ZRSZ. Before being adopted, certain programmes might be reviewed by employer representatives <sup>(58)</sup>. Only ZRSZ-registered providers can offer these programmes.

In 2021, 151 non-formal VET education and training programmes are offered to the unemployed <sup>(59)</sup>. The duration of the programme ranges from eight hours ('Basics of agile (scrum) methods') to 1 040 hours (training in the field of engineering and metallurgy) <sup>(60)</sup>.

Programmes are intended to reach the following groups:

- (a) individuals over 50;
- (b) those over 30 with completed primary education and/or the long-term unemployed and/or those receiving social assistance and/or registered as unemployed during the pandemic.

Programme completion leads to a certificate, describing programme duration and competences acquired. Although not part of formal education or the national qualifications framework (NQF), these certificates are valued by employers and raise learners' employability (Knavs and Šlander, 2019).

ZRSZ also offers financial incentives for the unemployed to complete basic and upper secondary education and training. In 2020, 349 unemployed were involved (ZRSZ, 2020c).

ZRSZ also offers the unemployed two to three months of paid on-the-job training programmes (*Usposabljanje na delovnem mestu*); this was taken by 720 people in 2019 (Cedefop and ReferNet, 2020a).

### 2.3.3. Programmes for migrants

Education and training of migrants is under the scope of the Ministry of the Interior (*Ministrstvo za notranje zadeve*, MNZ).

Initial integration of migrants (*Začetna integracija priseljencev*, ZIP) has been available since 2011. It is a 180-hour education programme for migrants, consisting of initial (60-hour) and continuing (120-hour) module. ZIP programmes cover basic communication in the Slovene language and basic information on the country's history, culture and constitutional order (ACS, 2011). Third-country nationals are eligible for a free-of-charge participation upon obtaining a certificate on compliance issued by the administrative unit. Programme costs are covered

<sup>(58)</sup> Mostly engineering programmes, since ZRSZ needs expertise or opinion of the relevant chamber.

<sup>(59)</sup> [ZRSZ web portal](#).

<sup>(60)</sup> Most programmes are related to technology, manufacturing technology and construction (42), followed by transport, security, catering and tourism, personal services (27), business and management (26), information and communication technologies (21).

by the MNZ and the European Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF). Currently, there are 30 providers offering ZIP.

Migrant IVET learners are entitled to additional hours of Slovenian language and adjustment of grading.

Since 2016, ZRZS has also offered short (90-hours) programmes, helping migrants gain job-searching skills and understand the Slovenian labour market and employment regulations (Cedefop and ReferNet, 2020a).

## 2.4. Validation of non-formal and informal learning

The Slovenian education and training system recognises the fact that people learn in numerous ways; different validation arrangements are available and regulated by legislation. Two regulated routes or two fundamental purposes of recognising knowledge acquired through non-formal learning have been established: to recognise professional competences (national vocational qualification system) in the labour market; and to enable individuals to engage further in formal education (to continue suspended education or pursue it at higher levels, etc.) (CPI, 2020).

### 2.4.1. National vocational qualifications certification

Embedded in the National Professional Qualifications Act from 2000 <sup>(61)</sup>, and within the remit of the labour ministry (MDDSZ), the system of national vocational qualifications is the most long-standing validation system (Pavkov, 2019). It enables recognition of the competences, gained in various learning environments, and obtaining a formal vocational qualification, a publicly recognised document (NVQ certificate) <sup>(62)</sup>, which is transferable to various working environments (CPI, 2020).

The NVQ system is integrated into the Slovenian qualifications framework (SQF), ranging from EQF levels 2 to 5 (Pavkov, 2019). The backbone of this system is the national register of national vocational qualifications; in 2020, it comprised 316 NVQs <sup>(63)</sup>.

Although the awareness of the NVQ certification system has risen among the general public (Cedefop, 2016), participation was stable over time with a drop

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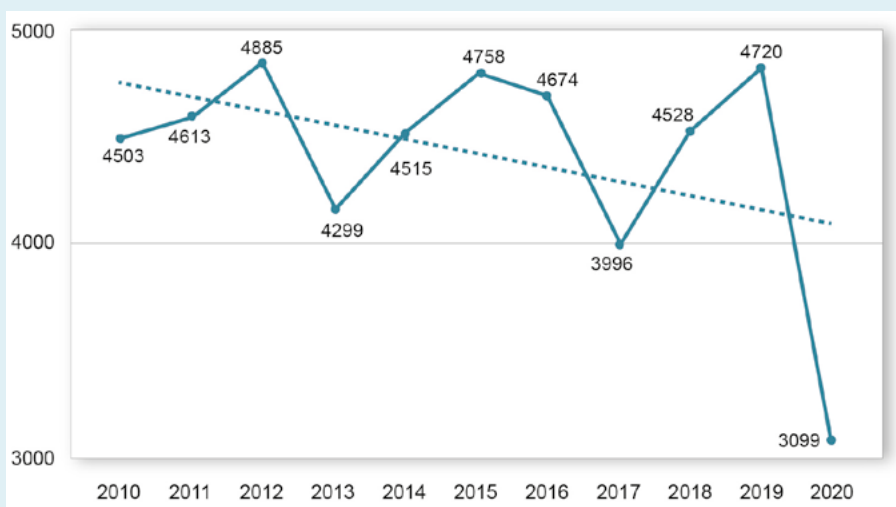
<sup>(61)</sup> Amended in 2007 and 2009.

<sup>(62)</sup> It does not allow achieving a level of education or school-leaving certificate, degree or title which can be acquired by completing formal education programme.

<sup>(63)</sup> National reference point (NRP), extracted on 15.3.2021.

in 2020 <sup>(64)</sup> (Figure 13). In the period 2010-20, close to 50 000 NVQ certificates were awarded.

Figure 13. Number of NVQ certificates issued, by year



Source: National reference point (NRP).

### NVQ validation procedure

The NVQ certification system mobilises a network of institutions and committees <sup>(65)</sup> and follows the rules <sup>(66)</sup> and specific quality assurance (QA) principles ensuring impartiality, transparency and comparability of the knowledge and skills of the individual.

The NVQ catalogue serves as the basis for the verification and validation process. Along with the requirements for candidates, it sets the requirements for validation providers and validation committee members (Drofenik, 2017):

- (a) NVQ validation providers ensure adequate infrastructure and are included in the register and supervised by RIC;
- (b) validation committee members are experts with adequate education qualifications and work experience. After being trained for this role, RIC grants them a four-year licence, renewable upon proof of continuing professional

<sup>(64)</sup> Due to COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the procedure was suspended during the periods of lockdown.

<sup>(65)</sup> Labour ministry; sectoral committees for occupational standards; Expert Council of the Republic of Slovenia for VET; social partners; Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for VET; national examination centre – according to Drofenik (2017).

<sup>(66)</sup> Rules on the method and procedure for the validation of national vocational qualifications (*Državni zbor Republike Slovenije*, 2015, amended in 2020).



training or other conditions requested by specific NVQ catalogue (Knavs and Šlander, 2019).

Guidance is an integral part of the NVQ recognition and validation procedure. A counsellor informs candidates about the procedure, gives advice on suitable qualifications and helps them to create a personal portfolio. The portfolio should be systematically structured in line with the occupational standard and NVQ catalogue, including the applicant's learning and work achievements, competences, qualifications and other experience (Pavkov, 2019).

The validation committee evaluates the applicant's portfolio and can conclude that:

- (a) all requirements are met, so the applicant is awarded the NVQ;
- (b) additional practical assessment is required.

The assessment method and tasks are defined in the NVQ catalogue. Written, practical or oral assessment is possible, most often their combination. Sometimes, NVQ validation providers offer a non-formal preparation course for companies for their employees. The cost of NVQ certification can be covered by the applicant or employer. The fees differ and depend on the assessment methodology.

The NVQ portal, managed by the CPI and the labour ministry, is available in Slovenian and English and includes information on new qualifications and validation and assessment procedures (Pavkov, 2019).

#### **2.4.2. Validation of non-formal learning in formal education**

Apart from the system of national vocational qualification, which allows the acquisition of a complete NVQ based on validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL), validation of non-formal and informal learning has been possible in all education subsystems since 2006, regulated by sector-specific acts and regulations (Pavkov, 2019).

In the education and training system, validation aims at recognising individual elements of publicly valid education or study programmes, with quicker progression within the framework of the education system and reduction of learning obligations. Recognition can work in two ways:

- (a) by recognising the results of non-formal learning before proceeding to a certain education or training/study programme;
- (b) during the implementation of the education process.

In most cases, it is to enable individuals to engage in further formal education.

In upper secondary VET and technical education, validation is regulated by the VET Act (2017 amendments), which stipulates that schools that perform part-time education can adapt education programmes to the needs of each learner, considering previously formally acquired knowledge or non-formal knowledge, which is proven by examination or some other way. The minister in charge of education prescribes the method and procedure for examining and assessing knowledge, for obtaining credit points, validating non-formal knowledge, as well as the form and content of public documents certifying completion of education (Pavkov, 2019).

In higher VET, VNFIL is regulated by the Higher VET Act (2004) and rules on the recognition of the previous education in higher vocational education (2010).

The new Adult Education Act (2018) defines that counselling in AE also includes support in identifying and documenting knowledge and skills acquired through formal, non-formal and informal learning, for purposes of personal development, continuing education and entry into the labour market (CPI, 2020).

## 2.5. Financing VET

Public financing of VET programmes in upper secondary and tertiary education is regulated by the Organisation and Financing of Education Act <sup>(67)</sup>. This includes the terms and conditions for financing and the monitoring mechanism. VET provision is funded by both the national and local community budgets. Adult learners are the only ones that should pay tuition fees. The education ministry determines the cost of a VET programme per learner each year, mostly taking into consideration the cost of school staff salaries, equipment and consumables, and programme duration. Total funding is defined annually by a financing agreement between the MIZŠ and each school. Additional public funding is available through national and international projects, covering extra costs. Other funding sources include:

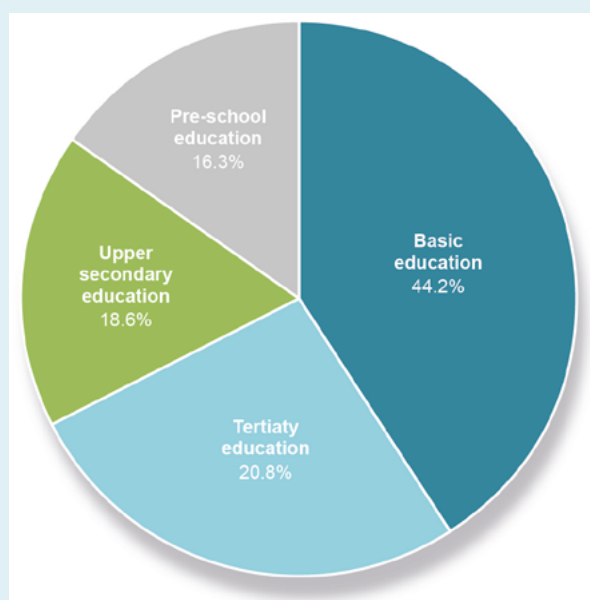
- (a) contributions from industry associations and chambers;
- (b) direct contributions from employers for the provision of in-company practice;
- (c) payments and fees from adult learners;
- (d) revenue from school services and products;
- (e) donations, sponsorships and other sources.

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<sup>(67)</sup> Adopted in 2007, with multiple amendments, the latest in 2017.

In 2019, public expenditure (Figure 14), allocated to formal education (including VET), was EUR 2 779 million (5.74% of GDP). The biggest share of total public expenditure for formal education was allocated to basic education (44.2%), followed by tertiary education (20.8%) upper secondary education (18.6%) and pre-school education (16.3%) (SURS, 2020).

Figure 14. Public expenditure on formal education, 2019



Source: SURS.

## 2.6. VET governance

VET is centralised; decisions about founding VET schools or distributing VET programmes among schools are taken at national level. MIZŠ is responsible for the regulation, financing and governance of vocational education of young people and adults. While the education ministry deals with VET at systemic level, the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for VET has a prominent role in developing and supporting VET at the practical level (Cedefop, 2021). MDDSZ holds the responsibility for adoption of occupational standards, NVQ system (Section 2.4.1) and training of the unemployed and jobseekers.

Social partners are involved in four national expert councils playing a consulting role to the education ministry:

- (a) Expert Council for VET;
- (b) Expert Council for General Education;
- (c) Expert Council for AE;
- (d) Expert Council for higher education.

Eight government public institutions are responsible for the implementation of the ministry's regulations and supporting VET implementation and/or development:

- (a) the **CPI** monitors and guides the development of VET, recognition of non-formal competences and provides in-service teacher training and VET curricula. The CPI also acts as a link between ministries, schools and social partners (Cedefop, 2021);
- (b) **ZRSŠ** is responsible for the quality and development of the general education subjects in the upper secondary VET programmes;
- (c) **ACS** is a central national institute for adult education, responsible for development and quality of adult education, including VET, provider quality development, and training of trainers in AE;
- (d) **RIC** is responsible for the implementation of the part of vocational *matura* that relates to general-education subjects. RIC also plays a part in the validation of non-formal and informal knowledge, such as development of methodologies and procedures for assessment and certification of NVQ;
- (e) the Educational Research Institute (**Pedagoški Inštitut**, PI) is a national research institution for education, implementing national projects and participating in international research and development projects;
- (f) the Centre of the Republic of Slovenia for Mobility and European Education and Training Programmes (**CMEPIUS**) is responsible for EU mobility and other programmes;
- (g) the National School of Leadership in Education (**ŠR**) is responsible for initial and in-service training of head teachers, including head teachers in VET schools;
- (h) the Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (**NAKVIS**) holds responsibility for the external evaluation processes of higher VET colleges to assess whether they meet accreditation or reaccreditation standards.

The government appoints the members of the institute's governing bodies. These institutions are also subject to public funding, and to common rules, guidelines and salary system with the rest of the public sector.

A school inspectorate operates within the education ministry, monitoring providers of accredited education programmes in their compliance with regulations.

## **VET providers**

Public education institutions providing accredited VET programmes at upper secondary level are autonomous and funded by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports and municipalities. Higher vocational schools might be State-owned or private, depending on which they can have a different type of organisation (independent college, unit of another institution or company) and different governing council and management bodies (head teachers) constitution (Cedefop and CPI, 2019).

Upper secondary VET schools are run by the school council appointed by the education ministry, in which the main stakeholders are represented (founders, teachers, parents). The school headmaster is responsible for managing the institution and the pedagogical guidance.

All upper secondary and tertiary VET programmes leading to the completion of an education level are accredited and part of formal education; those in upper secondary education are centrally adopted. Specific local needs are addressed in the so-called open curriculum; this refers to 20% of VET programme that is designed locally by schools in cooperation with institutions, business representatives or other social partner organisations.

There is a limited number of private education institutions; for VET, only higher vocational programmes are offered by private institutions (52%) (Knave and Šlander, 2019).

Although upper secondary VET education is free of charge, learners cover expenses such as meals and extracurricular activities.

The language of instruction is Slovenian. However, members of the Italian and Hungarian national communities can attend some VET upper secondary programmes in their native language <sup>(68)</sup>; some specific rights are also offered to the Roma community.

According to the Vocational Education Act (2006, amended in 2017 and 2019) and Higher Vocational Education Act (2004, amended in 2013), schools provide IVET programmes in partnership with companies. Public upper secondary

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<sup>(68)</sup> In VET, 22 EQF 4 programmes are carried out with Italian and/or Hungarian as the language of instruction.

and higher vocational schools can be merged into a school centre <sup>(69)</sup>. In 2020, there were 101 upper secondary VET schools in total; 51 of them and 29 higher vocational schools were included in 30 school centres <sup>(70)</sup>. There are 29 private higher vocational schools, but all upper secondary VET schools and school centres are public institutions.

School or school centres can establish a MIC to raise the quality of work-based learning in IVET and support cooperation between the school and local economy. MICs can offer tailor-made courses in the market. There are 20 MICs that provide the following services (Knavs and Šlander, 2019):

- (a) practical training for VET learners, including those that local employers cannot cover;
- (b) professional development of VET teachers;
- (c) training of the unemployed;
- (d) tailor-made practical training for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) employees;
- (e) lifelong learning activities and VET programmes for adults;
- (f) career orientation activities for basic-education learners.

## 2.7. Teachers and trainers

### 2.7.1. Vocational teachers and trainers

In upper secondary VET, teachers might be <sup>(71)</sup>:

- (a) teachers of general subjects;
- (b) teachers of vocational modules;
- (c) teachers of practical training in school workshops and laboratories;
- (d) in-company trainers (nationally referred to as mentors). In-company mentors are employees of a company offering in-company WBL as part of VET programmes.

Requirements that need to be fulfilled for practising as teachers and trainers in upper secondary VET education are presented in Table 3.

<sup>(69)</sup> It can also provide general upper secondary programmes, higher VET programmes (EQF 5) and adult education programmes.

<sup>(70)</sup> MIZŠ, [data extracted on 28.4.2021].

<sup>(71)</sup> VET Act (2006, amended in 2017 and 2019); Rules on the education of teachers and other expert workers in vocational and professional education (*Državni zbor Republike Slovenije*, 2011).

Table 3. Requirements for upper secondary teachers and trainers in VET

Teachers of practical training	Teachers of general subjects and teachers of professional theory	In-company mentors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• have at least an upper secondary VET qualification (EQF 4, ISCED 354)</li> <li>• have attended one year pedagogical/andragogical training</li> <li>• have passed the State professional exam</li> <li>• have at least three years of relevant work experience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• hold a master degree (EQF 7, ISCED 7)</li> <li>• have completed one year pedagogical/andragogical training</li> <li>• have passed the State professional exam</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• master craftsman, foreman or shop keeper exam or</li> <li>• at least technical upper secondary education, three years of work experience from a relevant field and pedagogical/andragogical training specially designed for them</li> <li>• if there are not enough mentors in the company fulfilling the above-mentioned conditions, then at least vocational upper secondary education, pedagogical andragogical training and at least five years of work experience from the same profession the learner is training for, will suffice</li> </ul>

Source: CPI.

In higher vocational programmes, there are lecturers and in-company trainers. Lecturers must comply with the following criteria:

- a relevant master degree (ISCED 7);
- three years of work experience;
- relevant professional achievements, such as experience as a member of an exam committee, a (co-)authored education programme or textbook <sup>(72)</sup>.

Teachers are employed by schools and their salaries are covered by the education ministry. Based on the number of learners enrolled in the programmes

<sup>(72)</sup> Rules on the education of lecturers in vocational colleges and other expert workers in the vocational college education (MIZŠ, 2011a).

they teach, they can be employed on a full-time or part-time contract. Teachers and school headmasters might progress professionally within a three-level career advancement scheme (Cedefop and CPI, 2019). They can be promoted into professional titles mentor (*mentor*) <sup>(73)</sup>, advisor (*svetovalec*) and counsellor (*svetnik*) <sup>(74)</sup>. The school headmaster proposes teacher promotion and the school council for the headmaster. The education ministry evaluates proposals and awards promotions/professional titles. Acquired titles are permanent.

### 2.7.2. Continuing professional development of teachers and trainers

Teachers have the right to attend 15 days of continuing professional development (CPD) every three years <sup>(75)</sup>. However, teacher CPD is not compulsory and options are limited. The cost of CPD is partially covered by the education ministry and employer/school. Schools can cooperate with public or private providers of CPD. The Ministry of Education funds two types of teacher CPD programme <sup>(76)</sup>:

- (a) continuing teacher education (*programi za izpopolnjevanje izobrazbe*) enables teachers to gain education for specific roles and tasks, for example headmaster, SEN teacher, pedagogical/andragogical education for non-education professionals;
- (b) career development courses (8 to 24 hours) (*programi kariernega razvoja*) support professional development of teachers, for example didactic courses, modernisation of a learning subject, key competences.

CPD programmes are presented in a national catalogue. Providers are public institutions, commissioned directly by the education ministry. One type of career development programme, so-called programmes of professional training (*programi profesionalnega usposabljanja*) are chosen via public tender for which public or private institution can apply (MIZŠ, 2017).

Many national and international projects focus on teacher CPD. For instance, the project [Strengthening the competences of professionals in managing an innovative educational institute 2018-22](#) supports teachers and lecturers to upgrade their professional skills and attend training on innovative methods of teaching, entrepreneurship, and working with SEN learners. Another recent project, POKIT, aims to strengthen teachers' digital competences.

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<sup>(73)</sup> Not equal or equivalent to in-company mentors.

<sup>(74)</sup> Rules on the promotion of employees in education into professional titles (2002, amended in 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2020).

<sup>(75)</sup> Collective agreement for the education sector in the Republic of Slovenia; Ministry of Education (1994, last amendments in 2020).

<sup>(76)</sup> Rules on the selection and joint funding of further education and training programmes for education professionals (2017).



In-company mentor training is also promoted primarily through ESF projects. The project [Training of mentors](#) (2016-21) offers, free of charge, 50 hours of training for mentors involved in upper secondary programme WBL and 60 hours for mentors in higher vocational programme WBL. This training focuses on areas, such as pedagogy/andragogy, youth psychology, communication skills, health and safety at work, and monitoring and assessing learners (Cedefop and CPI, 2019).

## 2.8. Recent policy changes

Recently, different initiatives have been introduced: apprenticeship in upper secondary EQF level 4 (ISCED 353), three-year VET programmes (SPI) and the Strategy for higher vocational education development 2020-30 should be emphasised.

The apprenticeship path of vocational education was introduced by the Apprenticeship Act (2017), which was prepared in a social dialogue between various ministries and chambers. Many SMEs have been happy to take part in this new path of youth training. The evaluations have shown satisfaction with apprenticeships; they also pointed out at the need for continued work on the shared VET vision among stakeholders and more targeted financial and non-financial support for SMEs involved in apprenticeships (Cedefop and ReferNet, 2020c; 2020d).

With the strategy for the development of higher education, adopted in 2019, the education ministry has given a new impetus to the development of vocational education at a higher level. Short-cycle higher vocational programmes are well-integrated into the economic environment and respond to its needs. The strategy emphasises the importance of combining digital and green competences, the development of specialised and further training programmes, an adapted way of financing higher vocational schools, and a better quality of practical training and career guidance.

MIZŠ initiated, and CPI has developed, in cooperation with companies and schools, new CVET programmes for employed graduates at different education levels, to meet employers' needs for skills and competences. This initiative strengthens opportunities to integrate vocational and technical education into lifelong learning (Cedefop and ReferNet, 2020b).

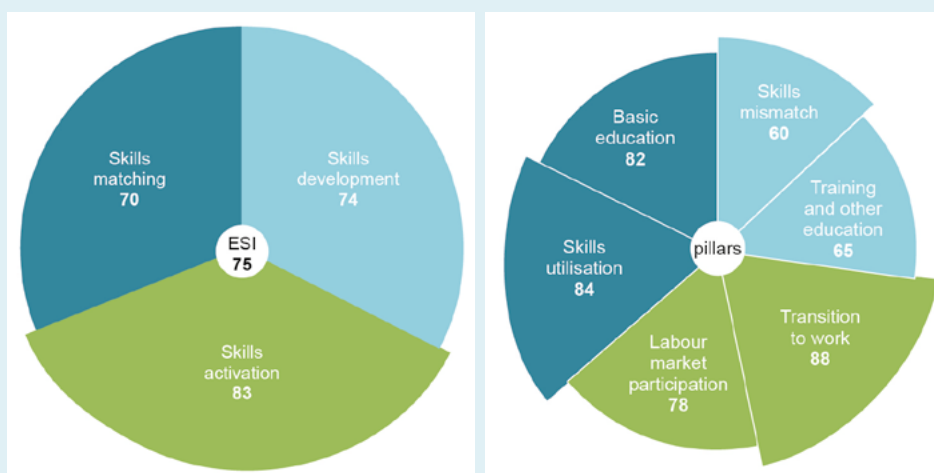
## CHAPTER 3.

# Shaping VET qualifications



Cedefop's European skills index (ESI) measures countries' performance in skills development, activation and matching. A score of 100 corresponds to the ideal performance, which is the highest achieved by any country over a period of seven years. In 2020, Slovenia was in the leader group (third), gaining two positions since 2018. Slovenia ranked sixth in skills activation <sup>(77)</sup>, obtaining the best score for the activity rate of the 25-54 cohort, while the youngest cohort (20 to 24) faces more difficulties (the country ranks 17th). In skills matching <sup>(78)</sup>, Slovenia is in ninth place, mostly due to a very good performance in qualification mismatch (ranks fifth). Slovenia is also doing very well in skills development <sup>(79)</sup> (fifth rank), showing excellent results in indicators relating to compulsory education (Figure 15).

Figure 15. European skills index: Slovenia



NB: 2020 data.

Source: Cedefop, European skills index.

<sup>(77)</sup> Skills activation includes indicators of the transition from education to work, together with labour market activity rates for different groups of the population, to identify those which have a greater or lesser representation in the labour market.

<sup>(78)</sup> Skills matching represents the degree of successful utilisation of skills, the extent to which skills are effectively matched in the labour market.

<sup>(79)</sup> Skills development represents the training and education activities of the country and the immediate outputs of that system in terms of the skills developed and attained.

### 3.1. Anticipating skills needs

Some skills anticipation activities take place in Slovenia, although there is no comprehensive and coordinated system in place. The main forms of skills anticipation used in the country concern (Cedefop, 2017):

- (a) gathering administrative data on vacancies and unemployment, and analysing relevant data, such as those from the labour force survey (LFS);
- (b) employer surveys (carried out by ZRSZ and employers' organisations), as well as surveys by labour market intermediaries and recently by SURS;
- (c) skills forecasts within international networks, primarily Cedefop (Cedefop, 2020a);
- (d) dialogues with representatives of key stakeholders.

The labour ministry and education ministries have central roles in the key skills anticipation activities. The ZRSZ, labour market intermediaries and employers' organisations are also active and there are numerous (ongoing) projects related to skills anticipation. The Slovenian government has allocated resources and efforts in the development of skills anticipation activities and improvement of the relevant tools. Many of the recent methodological improvements have been jointly financed by the ESF (Cedefop, 2017).

Skills intelligence, deriving from skills anticipation activities, is available primarily to policy-makers and key stakeholders, but is not widely visible to the public. The use of skills anticipation information in the framework of developing occupational standards and VET courses is well-developed (Cedefop, 2017).

The importance of monitoring and anticipating skills needs and supply is recognised. The labour ministry prepared a competence-forecasting platform project (Skills forecasting platform, *Platforma za napovedovanje kompetenc*) (Cedefop, 2021), adopted in May 2021. It aims to develop a comprehensive and coordinated competences-forecasting system to identify short-, medium-, and long-term gaps in occupations and competences in the labour market. The results of this system will help institutions and other stakeholders in the labour market and education to develop programmes that will help strengthen competences of all learners (young and adult) in accordance with labour market needs. By developing new tools and connecting key stakeholders in the labour market, the project will ensure a better match between supply and labour market demands and ensure greater responsiveness to increasingly demanding and changing economic conditions.

## 3.2. Designing VET qualifications

In Slovenia, occupational standards influence VET programme development <sup>(80)</sup>, making it more attuned to labour market needs. When national VET qualification is gained through validation of non-formal and informal learning, the occupation standard gives input for NVQ catalogue development (Section 2.4.1). Both for VET qualifications gained through formal education and those gained through VNFIL, the learning-outcomes approach applies <sup>(81)</sup>.

An occupational standard (OS) is a standardised description of different jobs or tasks in work processes. It defines the expected knowledge, skills and competences that a qualification holder must possess at a certain level of proficiency.

Occupational standards are developed through social dialogue, with employers and experts from the field making input into what knowledge and skills competent professional must possess to respond adequately to technical and other demands of the profession. They are also future-oriented, aiming to enable qualification holders and employers to adjust better to future labour market challenges.

**Figure 16. Process of occupational standard, VET programmes and NVQ catalogue development**



NB: OC stands for occupational standard;  
EP stands for education programme.

Source: CPI website.

The National Professional Qualifications Act (2007) describes the processes of occupational standards development (Figure 16), while CPI defines the methodology for this process.

<sup>(80)</sup> Both upper secondary and tertiary VET.

<sup>(81)</sup> National Professional Qualifications Act (amendments in 2007 and 2009).

The proposal for a new OS is submitted to the CPI by a natural or legal person. It must contain information on labour market needs, the comparability study of relevant standards in EU Member States, and, if necessary, compliance with regulations and norms at the EU level.

If CPI assessment is positive, the proposal will be submitted to one of the 10 sectoral committees (SCs) that are set by the labour ministry with experts from chambers, ministries, and trade unions. The SC approves and classifies VET qualifications and appoints the experts who will develop, using CPI methodological support, the draft occupational standard. After being approved by the Expert Council for VET, the occupational standard is to be adopted by the minister in charge of labour.

Based on the occupation standard, the CPI develops the VET programme <sup>(82)</sup> and/or drafts the NVQ catalogue entry. After the expert council confirms the VET programme, it submits it for the education minister's approval. However, the NVQ catalogue must be processed by the relevant sector council and confirmed by the Expert Council for VET and approved by the minister in charge of labour.

Revision of occupational standards and NVQ catalogues takes place every five years, using the same procedure.

VET programmes are based on:

- (a) one or more occupational standards that lead to educational qualification at EQF levels 4 and 5;
- (b) the national curriculum standards for each type of the VET programme <sup>(83)</sup> which define, for instance, the minimum hours for general subjects and vocational modules, and the proportion of open curricula;
- (c) national framework curricula developed and adopted at national level.

Providers are encouraged to develop school curriculum. This takes the form of a syllabus with specific annual preparation of the education process and teaching methods: allocation of periods, open curriculum, implementation models, and teaching methods.

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<sup>(82)</sup> According to VET Act (2019 amendments).

<sup>(83)</sup> Based on the [national guidelines and standards for the preparation of national VET programmes at upper secondary level](#) (last update in 2019) and [guidelines and standards for higher VET programmes](#) (updated in 2016).

### 3.3. The Slovenian qualifications framework

The 10-level comprehensive Slovenian qualifications framework was adopted by the Slovenian Qualifications Framework Act and came into force in July 2016, serving as the legal basis for SQF implementation and full operationalisation. Its comprehensive nature covers three categories of qualifications included in the framework and the register of qualifications (Cedefop, forthcoming):

- (a) educational qualifications;
- (b) vocational qualifications;
- (c) supplementary qualifications, awarded outside the regulated qualifications system.

Educational qualifications are awarded after completion of formal education programmes at all levels of formal education (general, vocational/technical and higher).

Vocational qualifications are awarded an NVQ certificate, issued in accordance with the national regulations governing NVQs <sup>(84)</sup>, or another document certifying completion of training or continuing education, issued in accordance with the regulations governing technical and higher education.

Supplementary qualifications are acquired in further and supplementary training on the labour market (linked to supplementing abilities and competences) and not nationally regulated; they have strong labour market focus and are awarded by an employer, a group of employers or by the employment service of Slovenia.

SQF level descriptors are used in accreditation procedures for new education programmes and NVQ qualifications and assessment catalogues, or in their reaccreditation. SQF and EQF levels are indicated on certificates, diplomas and Europass supplements at all education and training levels, and in the SQF register. By 2020, more than 1 600 qualifications were included in the SQF (Cedefop, 2020b), all described in learning outcomes.

According to the SQF Act, MDDSZ, in cooperation with MIZŠ, has the overall competence and responsibility for development and implementation of the SQF. The leading institution at the operational level is CPI. In its role as the EQF national coordination point, CPI collaborates with NAKVIS – the institution responsible for quality in higher education qualifications – on all issues relating to higher education (Cedefop, forthcoming).

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<sup>(84)</sup> The National Professional Qualifications Act (2000, amended in 2009).



### 3.4. Quality assurance

According to the VET Act (2006, amended in 2017 and 2019), quality assurance and mandatory self-evaluation of VET providers are integrated into the VET system and considered crucial to quality development. The national council of experts for VET at the education ministry approved seven national quality indicators in 2007; they expanded it to 11 in 2017, all indicators being in line with European quality assurance in VET (EQAVET) (Cedefop, 2020c).

In 2017, MIZŠ developed guidelines for the development of a common national framework for QA in pre-school, basic and upper secondary education<sup>(85)</sup>. Four institutions<sup>(86)</sup> have been tasked with its further development. In 2019, a common framework for QA in education was published<sup>(87)</sup>.

VET providers are responsible for following up and improving the quality of their work, and monitoring and reporting on all 11 QA indicators. They set up a quality committee, comprising at least a chairperson and five members, including representatives of education staff, learners, parents and employers. The committee prepares an annual quality report; its content and structure are autonomously designed by the committee. VET providers are not obliged to make the results of their monitoring publicly available. However, they must send them to CPI ([EQAVET national reference point](#)), if requested.

CPI monitors some quality indicators at the national level and regularly develops and publishes a [national quality report on VET](#). CPI also provides training for VET providers on QA improvements, produces its own publications and participates in national and international QA projects.

According to the Higher Vocational Education Act (2004, latest amendments in 2013), higher vocational colleges also set up a quality committee, comprising five lecturers and two learners. NAKVIS is responsible for the system of QA in higher VET and regularly evaluates higher vocational colleagues. The duties and responsibilities of quality committees are to:

- (a) improve the quality of higher education VET programmes;
- (b) set up QA mechanisms at provider level;
- (c) plan, organise and coordinate monitoring and QA;
- (d) cooperate with NAKVIS and make comparisons between schools at national and international level;

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<sup>(85)</sup> National framework for quality assurance in education (2017).

<sup>(86)</sup> National school for leadership in education (*Šola za ravnateljce*), RIC, CPI, National Education Institute (*Zavod za šolstvo*) Slovenia.

<sup>(87)</sup> Brejc and Širok, 2019.



- (e) track and report on their employability;
- (f) suggest, in cooperation with employers, ways to improve programmes;
- (g) develop evaluation reports, which are discussed with experts from NAKVIS.

Like IVET, all adult education VET providers must carry out self-evaluation, preparing a yearly report. The role of the quality counsellor in adult education has been developed to support quality development at provider level. ACS oversees coordinating the national network of quality counsellors (Cedefop, 2020c)

## CHAPTER 4.

# Promoting VET participation



## 4.1. Incentives for learners and enterprises

### 4.1.1. Scholarships

The scholarship system is State-regulated by the Scholarship Act (2013, latest amendments 2018) and includes all education programmes, young people and adults <sup>(88)</sup>. Scholarship policy is adopted by the Government every five years to set up the implementation framework for awarding the scholarships.

A State social scholarship (*državna štipendija*) is available to upper secondary- and tertiary-education learners from low-income families. Depending on family economic status, the scholarship ranges from EUR 35.84 to EUR 97.28 per month for learners under 18 and from EUR 71.68 to EUR 194.56 EUR per month for those over 18. Additional allowances can be obtained for above-average grades and special needs.

The Zois scholarship (*Zoisova štipendija*) provides an incentive to learners who achieve exceptional results and performance. The monthly scholarship amount is EUR 122.88 for upper secondary learners studying in Slovenia and EUR 245.76 for those studying abroad. The scholarship is higher for tertiary education: EUR 143.36 for studying in Slovenia and EUR 286.72 for studying abroad.

The purpose of the Scholarship for shortage professions (*deficitarna štipendija*) is to attract more learners to VET, provide adequate human resources according to the needs of the labour market, and encourage enrolment in those education fields that enable faster employability of graduates. A total of 1 000 scholarships are offered annually (EUR 102.40 per month). The lists of vocations in demand/shortage, annually updated by the ZRSZ, and the list of VET programmes, annually updated by the education ministry, are included in the scholarship policy. This scholarship programme is jointly financed by the ESF.

Corporate scholarships (*kadrovska štipendija*) are granted directly to students by employers. The scholarship is awarded to young person(s) selected by employer(s) that – after the completion of education – employ the scholarship recipient for at least a year. The corporate scholarship is jointly financed by the employer and the Republic of Slovenia and ESF. The purpose of the corporate scholarship programme is to create an additional bridge between labour market and education. This programme encourages companies to improve their human resource management and anticipate the professions/profiles that they will need

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<sup>(88)</sup> Example of the report: [Report on the quality of VET, 2017](#).

in the intermediate future. The regulation does not specify the maximum amount awarded.

The scholarships for Slovenians living abroad, give young people of Slovenian descent living abroad the possibility to come to the country to obtain tertiary education. This helps to set new ties between Slovenian expatriates and their native country. The scholarship amounts to EUR 204.80 per month.

The *Ad futura* scholarships support international mobility of upper secondary and tertiary-education learners and researchers. They are awarded for studying abroad, study visits abroad, and participation in knowledge and research competitions abroad. An *Ad futura* scholarship for study abroad is granted for undergraduate or graduate study at education institutions abroad for academic fields defined in the call for applications. A scholarship is usually granted for living costs (up to EUR 1 250 per month) and tuition (up to EUR 15 000 in total). The amount of scholarship, conditions and criteria are determined in the call for applications.

#### 4.1.2. Textbooks, commute and school meals

The low total number of VET learners in some VET programmes makes it unprofitable for publishing houses to get involved in publishing textbooks for professional modules. Their cost is covered by the government, while the CPI coordinates textbook development. VET schools have a so-called school-textbook fund, financed by the State, and hand textbooks to learners for a maximum one third of its cost. Learners from disadvantaged economic backgrounds can get a lower borrowing fee, subsidised by the State <sup>(89)</sup>.

Upper secondary schools should offer one meal per day to learners. The State subsidises the cost for economically weaker families <sup>(90)</sup>.

All full-time learners receive subsidised tickets covering their daily commute cost with public transportation <sup>(91)</sup>.

Learners can also apply for job, which is a form of employment tailored to their needs; this may be for a short period, during school vacation or part-time <sup>(92)</sup> (Cedefop and CPI, 2019).

#### 4.1.3. Shared work-based learning costs for enterprises

To connect VET with the labour market and promote WBL by supporting companies participating in it, the cost of WBL of learners in upper secondary VET

<sup>(89)</sup> Rules on approval of the text books (2015, 2017); rules on management of the text books (2020); Organisation and Financing of Education Act (2007, latest amendments 2017).

<sup>(90)</sup> [Government guidelines on subsidising meals for learners.](#)

<sup>(91)</sup> [Government guidelines on subsidising commuting of learners.](#)

<sup>(92)</sup> [Government guidelines on jobs for learners.](#)

and higher vocational programmes is jointly financed by the State. VET providers coordinate the applications for shared financing, while hosting companies are the beneficiaries. This programme lasts until 2022 (Cedefop and CPI, 2019).

## 4.2. Guidance and counselling

The education ministry is responsible for organising guidance and counselling in basic, upper secondary and higher education. The VET Act (2006, amended in 2017 and 2019) states the objective of VET is to promote lifelong learning and career management skills (Cedefop, 2020d).

Schools have the main responsibility for vocational and educational guidance, which is provided by school counsellors. Every school, including VET schools, employs at least one school counsellor <sup>(93)</sup>.

In elementary schools, grade-nine learners are provided with (Cedefop, 2020d):

- (a) access to information needed for an appropriate decision on upper secondary education options;
- (b) minimum of two hours of career education per class;
- (c) testing of educational and vocational intentions;
- (d) one counselling session per learner.

ZRSŠ developed the guidelines for school counsellors on providing guidance to learners in upper secondary education <sup>(94)</sup> (Cedefop and CPI, 2019). Guidance provision for upper secondary VET learners has been restricted to the provision of access to the information needed during transitions, in order to make an adequate decision on further education (Cedefop, 2020d).

Learners, parents and school staff can find exhaustive information on the CPI web portal [Mojaizbira.si](http://Mojaizbira.si), which can be helpful in deciding on further education and training paths.

For recently introduced (2017/18) apprenticeship programme learners, chambers GZS and OZS provide information and offer guidance in search of an apprenticeship placement. A central register of training places on offer has been set up and maintained by the CPI <sup>(95)</sup>.

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<sup>(93)</sup> The guidelines for school counsellors (agreed by the national board of experts for general education in 1999) assigned the responsibility for career guidance to school counsellors.

<sup>(94)</sup> [Programme guidelines for secondary school counsellor services](#) (2008).

<sup>(95)</sup> [Central register of training places](#).

Information and counselling at tertiary education level is provided through career centres established at all universities and higher schools. The quality of service varies, as there is no central regulation (Cedefop, 2020d).

In adult education, free-of-charge guidance is offered by adult education guidance centres (ISIOs) and other public education organisations. ISIOs function under the umbrella of 14 regional folk high schools and supported by ACS. ISIOs particularly target marginalised groups of adults, who are usually less educated and have lower participation rates in LLL. Each year, around 25 000 adults reach out to ISIOs for support. The guidelines for counselling were adopted in 2020 <sup>(96)</sup> based on the Adult Education Act revision (2018) that promotes counselling for adult learners

The labour ministry has responsibility for guidance services for the unemployed and finances the guidance in the public employment service. Guidance is provided by 59 local offices and career centres <sup>(97)</sup>. Career counsellors in ZRSZ local offices and career centres offer advice and counselling, e-counselling, group information sessions, job-search seminars and guidance on employment programmes, mostly to the unemployed (80%) but also to learners (15%) (Cedefop, 2020d). ZRSZ maintains their where-and-how (*kam in kako*) online tool for research, development and upskilling career options intended for learners and adults.

ZRSZ also provides 160 hours of informal training for career counsellors from all areas.

Counselling is also offered throughout the process of validation of non-formal and informal learning, particularly in preparing the learning portfolio. In Slovenia, the tasks and the role of counsellor in NVQ validation procedures do not constitute an independent profession; most counsellors are employees of institutions that operate both as providers of NVQ verification and validation procedures and as providers of preparatory courses for NVQ assessments. They must complete two-day training in counselling (Drofenik, 2017).

National coordination and collaboration in career guidance are managed through a national expert group for lifelong career guidance, which operates on an informal basis. The group was nominated by the MIZŠ and has 17 members, representatives of the ministries, public institutions and other relevant parties <sup>(98)</sup>.

<sup>(96)</sup> The [guidelines for the implementation of counselling activities in adult education](#) (2020), prepared by the Expert Council for Adult Education.

<sup>(97)</sup> Coordinated by the Department for Employment and the national resource centre for vocational guidance (*Nacionalni center za informiranje in poklicno svetovanje*)/ Euroguidance Slovenia central office.

<sup>(98)</sup> [Member list](#).

### 4.3. Challenges and development opportunities

The social partners are involved in Slovenian VET in numerous ways and there is a still room to make VET more agile and flexible in responding to changes in society and economy, as well as to be better customised to individual needs. The CPI's evaluation has shown the space to refine further the shared vision of VET among stakeholders (Cedefop and ReferNet, 2020c).

The quality of work-based learning and competence-based assessment remain a challenge. Significant efforts were made through investing in new training facilities (intercompany training centres) and reinforcing in-company WBL. With the adoption of the new Apprenticeship Act in 2017, implementation of the apprenticeship path in three-year vocational programmes (ISCED 353) has started. There are discussions among social partners about the possibilities to extend apprenticeships to other education levels, to be offered to adults and in services sectors as well.

Individualisation models of pedagogical processes in upper secondary VET schools are under development and efforts in this direction will continue (Cedefop and ReferNet, 2020e).

Technological changes will require a more highly skilled workforce, asking for more focus in adult education and upskilling of the workforce. The importance of raising adults' skills levels is growing. Slovenia's population is ageing, and about 26% of workers face a high risk of seeing their jobs automated, compared to 14% across PIAAC (Programme for the international assessment of adult competences) countries on average (OECD, 2018). With a significant fall in the adult participation in lifelong learning in the past decade (8.4% in 2020), Slovenia needs to make further efforts and optimal use of EU funds to achieve the national target of 19% adult participation in learning by 2030 <sup>(99)</sup>; constant upskilling and reskilling opportunities for the elderly are required and foreseen <sup>(100)</sup>. Although its implementation is still being designed, the introduction of the new National master plan for adult education 2021-30 aims to provide every adult in Slovenia with equal opportunities for quality education throughout their life, by focusing mainly on increasing their participation in lifelong learning. It will also offer

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<sup>(99)</sup> According to the OECD study, increasing adult participation is a rather challenging endeavour for Slovenia. The country 'has large and persistent participation gaps in adult learning, whereby those most in need of adult learning are the least likely to learn. Slovenia has one of the largest participation gaps between low- and highly educated adults in the EU (14% versus 71%). Finally, the level, intensity and relevance of continuous vocational training is relatively low in certain economic sectors and smaller enterprises' (OECD, 2018, p. 24).

<sup>(100)</sup> Slovenia's national reform programme 2020 (Republic of Slovenia, 2020, p. 32).



financing for the provision of information and advice, and establishing and evaluating informally obtained knowledge prior to, during and after education or training. Advisory services will be provided to employees who require additional training, qualifications or retraining due to the needs of the labour market and the workplace <sup>(101)</sup>.

Basic digital skills levels of the 15-to-64 age group are 55%, slightly below the EU average (58%) in 2019 (European Commission, 2020b). For 2025, the EU is targeting to increase this to 70% for the 16-to-74 age group and to 80% by 2030 (European Commission, 2020c). Within the European semester 2020, Slovenia has been recommended to focus investments and developments on strengthening digital skills (European Commission, 2020d). Slovenia updated the national Digital Slovenia 2020 development strategy, an umbrella strategy comprising the key strategic developments, and adopted the Digital education action plan 2027.

Projects supported by the Recovery and resilience facility (RRF) will primarily focus on the modernisation of vocational education, with the basic goal of adapting education to digital and sustainable transition and increasing the resilience of the education system. Digital, green and entrepreneurial competences will find a new place in education programmes, computer science and informatics will be strengthened.

Performance of the education system largely depends on the quality of teaching, yet the teaching profession is faced with many challenges. Although teachers estimated that they managed to achieve the set goals, they experienced distance teaching, imposed by COVID-19 pandemic, as demanding and stressful and 70% of them believe the quality of teaching had declined (Cedefop and ReferNet, 2021a). Slovenia is facing a teacher shortage in certain fields, which is expected to be a more severe challenge due to a high number of teachers approaching retirement age (European Commission, 2020e).

Training of teachers and in-company trainers will be a priority. Amendments to the promotion rules of education staff were adopted to support modernising their career development (Cedefop and ReferNet, 2021b).

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<sup>(101)</sup> Slovenia's national reform programme (Republic of Slovenia, 2020, p.16).



# Acronyms and abbreviations

<b>ACS</b>	<i>Andragoški Center Slovenije</i> [Slovenian Institute for Adult Education]
<b>AE</b>	adult education
<b>AMIF</b>	European Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund
<b>Cedefop</b>	European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training
<b>CMEPIUS</b>	Centre of the Republic of Slovenia for mobility and European education and training programmes
<b>CPD</b>	continuing professional development
<b>CPI</b>	<i>Center RS za poklicno izobraževanje</i> [Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for VET]
<b>CVET</b>	continuing VET
<b>EACEA</b>	European Education and Culture Executive Agency
<b>EPALE</b>	electronic platform for adult learning in Europe
<b>EQAVET</b>	European quality assurance in vocational education and training
<b>EQF</b>	European qualifications framework
<b>ESF</b>	European Social Fund
<b>ESI</b>	ESI European skills index
<b>Eurostat</b>	Statistical Office of the European Union
<b>GDP</b>	gross domestic product
<b>GZS</b>	<i>Gospodarska zbornica Slovenije</i> [Chamber of Commerce and Industry]
<b>ICT</b>	information and communications technology
<b>ISCED</b>	international standard classification of education
<b>ISIO</b>	<i>informativno svetovalna dejavnost v izobraževanju odraslih</i> [adult education and guidance centre]
<b>IVET</b>	initial vocational education and training
<b>JŠRIPS</b>	<i>javni štipendijski, razvojni, invalidski in preživninski sklad Republike Slovenije</i> [public scholarship, disability and maintenance fund of the RS]
<b>LFS</b>	labour force survey
<b>LLL</b>	lifelong learning
<b>MDDSZ</b>	<i>Ministrstvo za delo, družino, socialne zadeve in enake možnosti</i> [Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities]

MIC	<i>medpodjetniški izobraževalni center</i> [intercompany training centre]
MIZŠ	<i>Ministrstvo za izobraževanje, znanost in šport</i> [Ministry of Education, Science and Sport]
MNZ	<i>Ministrstvo za notranje zadeve</i> [Ministry of the Interior]
NAKVIS	<i>Nacionalna agencija republike Slovenije za kakovost v visokem šolstvu</i> [Slovenian quality assurance agency for higher education]
NEET	a person not in education, employment or training
NPI	<i>nižje poklicno izobraževanje</i> [short vocational upper secondary education programmes]
NQF	national qualifications framework
NRP	<i>Nacionalna referenčna točka</i> [national reference point]
NVQ	<i>nacionalne poklicne kvalifikacije</i> [national vocational qualification]
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OS	occupational standard
OZS	<i>Obrtno-podjetniška zbornica Slovenije</i> [Chamber of Craft and Small Business]
PI	<i>Pedagoški Inštitut</i> Educational Research Institute
PIAAC	Programme for the international assessment of adult competences
PT	<i>poklicni tečaj</i> [vocational bridging programmes]
PTI	<i>poklicno tehniško izobraževanje</i> [vocational technical upper secondary education programmes]
PUM-O	<i>Projektno učenje mlajših odraslih</i> [project learning for young adults programme]
QA	quality assurance
RIC	<i>državni izpitni center</i> [national examinations centre]
RRF	Recovery and resilience facility
SC	sectoral committee
SEN	special education needs
SME	small and medium-sized enterprise
SPI	<i>srednje poklicno izobraževanje</i> [vocational upper secondary programmes]
SPOT	<i>Slovenska Poslovna Točka</i> Slovenian Business Point
SQF	Slovenian qualifications framework

ŠR	national school of leadership in education
SSI	<i>srednje strokovno izobraževanje</i> [technical upper secondary programmes]
SURS	<i>Statistični urad Republike Slovenije</i> [Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia]
SVRK	<i>Služba vlade za razvoj in evropsko kohezijsko politiko</i> [Government Office for Development and European Cohesion Policy]
TZS	Chamber of Commerce
UMAR	<i>Urad Republike Slovenije za makroekonomske analize in razvoj</i> [Institute of Macroeconomic Analysis and Development of the RS]
VET	vocational education and training
VNFIL	validation of non-formal and informal learning
VSI	<i>višje strokovno</i> [higher vocational programmes]
WBL	work-based learning
ZIP	<i>Začetna integracija priseljencev</i> [initial integration of migrants]
ZRSŠ	<i>Zavod Republike Slovenije za šolstvo</i> [National Education Institute]
ZRSZ	<i>Zavod Republike Slovenije za zaposlovanje</i> [employment service of Slovenia]

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## Vocational education and training in **Slovenia**

### Short description

This short description contributes to better understanding of vocational education and training (VET) in Slovenia. It provides insights into its main features and highlights system developments and current challenges.

Slovenia has a strong VET tradition; participation at upper secondary level is the highest in the EU. The VET system in Slovenia is attractive, flexible and offers a variety of learning modes and progression opportunities for learners; the share of early leavers is kept low. The importance of raising adult skills levels is growing, as is the need to focus on strengthening digital skills and broadening opportunities for upskilling and reskilling.

Slovenia is responding to challenges, including those posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, with a focus on modernising vocational education. Its basic goal is adapting education to the digital and sustainable transition and increasing the resilience of the education system.

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