

**Strategy for Lifelong Learning and Guidance
2021-2030**

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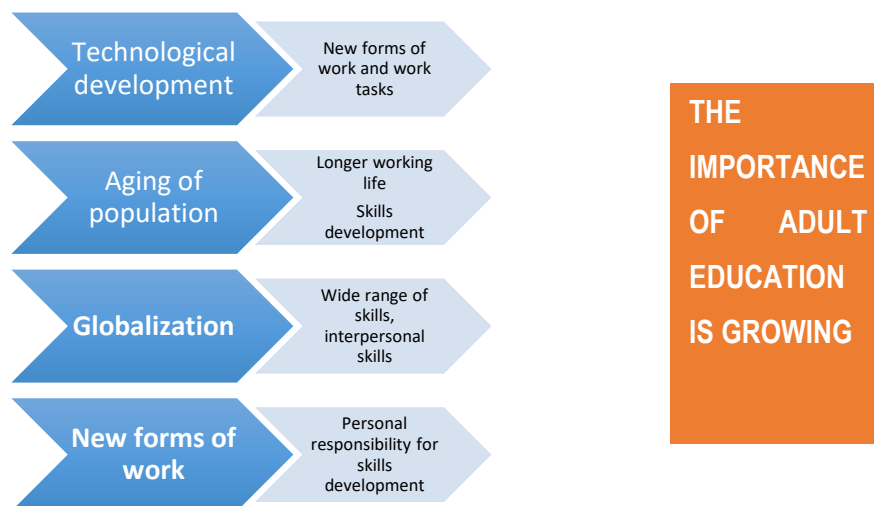
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1 Introduction

1.1 Attitude and perception of the role of education and the development of LLL principles

The development of lifelong learning (LLL) policies in Slovakia is linked to the shaping of the renewed EU agenda for the promotion of adult education (AE) and lifelong learning in the 1990s, which led to the promulgation of the Memorandum for LLL (EC 2000). The Lisbon meeting of the European Council concluded that a successful transition to a knowledge-based economy in the EU must be accompanied by a move towards lifelong learning (hereafter LLL). Slovakia was at that time in the process of accession to the EU (2004) and had already engaged in the consultation process for the preparation of the Lifelong Learning Memorandum. It can therefore be said to have been at the birth of a renewed focus on adult learning and had the opportunity to be inspired in the development of its own Lifelong Learning policy by the good practice of developed EU countries in terms of processes "from above" at supranational level, in particular by the activities of the EC and, indirectly, by other international organisations, in particular UNESCO and OECD. Lifelong learning¹ was defined in 2000 by the European Commission and the Member States in the framework of EU Employment Strategy as any targeted learning activity whose purpose is the continuous improvement of knowledge, skills and overall competences in order to increase the participation of adults in learning. To track participation in education beyond initial education, there has been significant investment in data collection at EU level, through the Labour Force Surveys (LFS) and the Adult Education Surveys (AES).

In Slovakia, there remains a weak awareness of both the functions and benefits of LLL culture and, in particular, of appropriate and effective forms of public support for adult participation in learning. However, the motivation to implement change in the approach to adult learning and skills development is generally well understood, especially in connection with discussions on the future of economic and social development, for example in the context of the Drivers of Growth² debate:



Source: adapted from OECD (2019), Getting Skills Right: Engaging low-skilled adults in learning

1.2 Process for the preparation of a strategic document for the promotion of LLL

The preparation of the strategic document to support participation in lifelong learning in Slovakia was carried out in a relatively short period of time (January – July 2021) by a working group. This working group, when working on the document, was able to draw on the direct links of its members to practice and activities in this area in recent years. The working group had at its disposal background information for the development of the strategy not only from its own expert and research activities, but also from the long-term activities of the Lifelong Learning Department of MESRS and the European Policy Department of the State Vocational Education Institute (SVEI), which have fostered debate among experts and the wider public on various aspects of the development of lifelong learning (LLL) policies. Several years of experience of the organisation and collaborating experts on topics such as

¹ Lifelong education should be translated as 'lifelong learning (LLL)' as it is closest to the content and intent of promoting adult access and participation in all forms of learning, including those available in non-formal and informal settings. The term LLL has since become established, but some actors are beginning to use the term LLL.

² For instance, OECD (2019), Getting Skills Right: Engaging low-skilled adults in learning.

skills development and upskilling, skills support for lower-skilled people, schemes to support adult participation in learning (e.g. individual learning accounts, digital skills support, etc.) have created an opportunity for collecting and disseminating information from practice and gradually mapping the needs in the field of LLL. Activities included:

- working groups to support the EU's "Upskilling pathways" initiative;
- activities of SVEI team within the Slovak support for EPALE platform;
- involvement of LLL Department of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic and SVEI in applied projects and related professional seminars and public awareness activities (BLUESS, MOVED projects, AIVD activities);
- implementation of the PIAAC project, discussions in working groups, cooperation with the National Institute for Certified Measurements in Education (NICME);
- promotion of LLL Week and related seminars, conferences and round tables;
- Successful involvement of LLL Department of MESRS SR and the European Policies Department of SVEI in international mutual learning activities organised by the EC and Cedefop for public administrations in the framework of the "Upskilling Pathways" initiative;
- organisation of an international seminar on individual learning accounts;
- activities such as round tables with leading figures in the field of LLL expertise and skills (Alan Tuckett, John Martin), and others.

Such expert and popularization activities created an environment for building LLL community and fostering discussion on how to support and build the adult learning ecosystem in Slovakia as a key pillar of LLL. Communication with partners in the activities of the Department of Lifelong Learning (DLLL and SIVE) and the activities of other actors (non-profit sector, Slovak Academy of Science (SAS) allowed for a closer focus on identifying specific areas for effective state intervention and support for adult participation in education from public funds. Based on the mapping of practices in Slovakia and abroad and the evaluation of the first LLL activities in the period 2007-2019, the team of authors considered it extremely important not to underestimate the risk of implementing new projects and creating structures without the pilot stage of the projects and without a link to practice. It is also important to recognise that professional public administration in the field of LLL and adult education has not yet been sufficiently recognised and capacitated, but this was considered by the group of authors as a natural counterpart of the evolutionary construction of public administration in the field of supporting LLL policies in the transition to a knowledge based society. In other words, the team of authors considers gradual capacity building, together with pilot testing of implementation practice, as the correct approach in the Slovak context.

In order to promote higher and more even participation in LLL, the strategy is clearly aimed at addressing priority issues in adult education. The concept of LLL presupposes understanding of inclusion needs, and the Lifelong Learning and Guidance Strategy (hereafter referred to as LLLG strategy) stresses the critical importance of improving inclusiveness of education so as not to produce further generations of adults who leave compulsory school attendance with negative attitudes to learning and often with inadequate basic skills. A specific problem of inclusion is the position of marginalised Roma communities. In this area, LLL strategy links the proposed measures with the Strategy for Roma Equality, Inclusion and Participation 2030. The working group has actively communicated with authors of this Strategy.

SWOT analysis for the strategy development process

Strengths:	Weaknesses:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Long-term activities and communication with stakeholders; - Linking with applied research, mapping the needs of target groups; - Close contact with LLL and adult education (AE) policies of other EU countries; - Communication with public administration partners from partner countries/EU institutions; - Linking with good practice in developed EU countries and emphasis on its transferability into Slovak conditions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Short time period for the implementation of the strategy document itself, institutional uncertainty; - Unclear direction for the development of institutional capacity for LLL with systematic support for inter-ministerial communication and cooperation; - Pressure from employers' representatives to manage LLL processes with non-transparent funding.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discussions with the EC, 4 strategies, clarification of terms but also objectives of LLL and AL policies, support; - Employers' interest in the topic of LLL and in specific skills areas, especially digital skills; - Support for a general change in the conception of education and support for the transformation of the whole educational system. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - LLL is a topic that is generally relevant, but awareness of LLL support system is very low. In discussions with stakeholders, there was often an overlap between professional and personal views which made substantive discussions difficult. - It is important to recognise that a certain 'maturity' of the environment and a basic awareness of the functions of LLL among the general public is needed to implement new approaches to public funding for adults. This is why this strategy emphasises pilot implementations for new and yet untested instruments for financing LLL.

2 Basic principles of the Lifelong Learning and Guidance Strategy

The basic principles of the Lifelong Learning and Guidance Strategy 2021-2030 are:

1. **Ensuring lifelong access for every citizen to opportunities to increase and maintain skills.**
2. **Increasing the flexibility of formal education, building a flexible and open system of learning pathways and an effective adult education system.**
3. **Increasing access to learning opportunities and individualised support for learners.**
4. **Increasing inter-ministerial cooperation and coordination and applying participatory and innovative solutions involving LLL stakeholders.**
5. **Building evidence by collecting data and conducting research with a focus on LLL for informed decision-making and skills system management (tracking graduates, collecting data on AE participants, analysing barriers).**

The overarching objective of LLL strategy is to ensure that every citizen has lifelong access to learning opportunities to develop their skills and competences throughout their lives, "from cradle to grave", at every stage of his/her life and taking into account individual needs and circumstances, so that everyone can realise his/her potential in the personal, professional and civic life.

A trans-ministerial strategy for LLL, linking different sectors and levels of government and key actors from different spheres, is an essential element for acceleration and convergence of the direction of education and skills development policies in order to realise the development of the Slovak society based on an inclusive approach and increasing equity in adult participation in education.

Building a culture of lifelong learning is a key and supporting theme of education policies. In order to achieve real change, it is important to build on the forms of learning and education that have a tradition in Slovakia and, at the same time, to implement pilot activities in an innovative way in areas that respond to new challenges as well as to good practice in other EU countries. With regard to the common labour market within the EU, the context of LLL policies is particularly important in developing an effective adult learning system.

LLL strategy has therefore been conceived as a tool for promoting the principle of inclusion, skills development and management and the implementation of an effective adult learning system.

Therefore, 2 main areas have been identified for near future to achieve accessibility of LLL:

1. Building an effective adult education system in the context of a lifelong learning culture in the Slovak Republic, with an emphasis on the promotion of non-formal education and an individualised approach

A culture of lifelong learning means creating an environment in which lifelong learning is a guiding principle of education policy and enables every citizen to learn throughout life, in different contexts and for different reasons. Key principles for building a culture of LLL include a holistic understanding of lifelong learning, recognition of lifelong learning as a human right, a focus on supporting vulnerable groups, transformation of schools and universities into LLL institutions, access to technology and support for learning initiatives at local level.³

To support AE segment, 3 approaches have been identified for the main areas of intervention:

- **support for selected target groups:** specific to low-skilled people;
- **support for selected skill areas:** basic, digital, civic;
- **support for participation and support for removing barriers to participation:** individual learning accounts, barriers in formal education, basic, digital skills.

There are a number of barriers in Slovakia that prevent different groups of its population from enjoying the full opportunities and benefits of education. The Lifelong Learning and Guidance Strategy 2021-2030 will help to create an environment in which its citizens can develop their personal, civic and professional potential throughout their lives through various forms of learning, fulfil their economic and social needs and contribute to Slovakia's economic growth and its strong society.

2. Increasing the flexibility of formal education systems

Traditionally, the view of the educational environment of both the professional and the general public in Slovakia has been closely linked to the institutional framework of formal education - "schooling". New needs in the field of education and skills development and the principle of LLL require opening and transformation of the components of the education system, including formal education. Only in this way can the conditions for the lifelong development and use of relevant skills and competences be achieved. The strategy therefore includes elements of transforming the traditional and fragmented "school system" and moving towards an open and transparent education, training and qualifications system. To achieve positive developments in the education system and increased participation in LLL, it is necessary to identify and eliminate areas that contribute to creating barriers to adult participation in learning across the lifecycle, including the return of discouraged adults with low levels of skills and qualifications.

LLL Strategy complements documents adopted in the Slovak Republic in recent years, in particular:

- Slovakia's Vision and Development Strategy 2030
- National Programme for the Development of Education and Training
- National Programme for the Development of Education and Training "Learning Slovakia"
- National Skills Strategy for Slovakia

³ Embracing a culture of lifelong learning – Contribution to the Futures of Education initiative, UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2020.

- Strategy for Lifelong Learning 2007
- Strategy for Lifelong Learning 2011
- National Programme for Active Ageing 2014 - 2020
- Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic 2030
- Zero Action Plan of the Strategy for an Inclusive Approach in Education and Training for 2021
- Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma until 2030
- New Youth Strategy of the Slovak Republic (2021-2030) (in preparation)

The Strategy also reflects many international documents and important studies related to lifelong learning, in particular:

- Porto Declaration, 2021
- The Porto Social Commitment, 2021
- Council Conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020)
- European Pillar of Social Rights, 2017
- A Skills Agenda for Europe, European Commission, 2019
- Council Recommendation on 'Upskilling pathways: new opportunities for adults', European Commission, 2016
- Memorandum on Lifelong Learning, European Commission, 2000
- Communication on Achieving the European Learning Area by 2025, European Commission, 2020
- Education and Training Monitor – Slovakia, European Commission, 2020
- Embracing a culture of lifelong learning, UNESCO, 2020
- Recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning, European Commission, 2018
- Council Recommendation on policies to reduce early school leaving, European Commission, 2011
- Council Resolution on a renewed European agenda for adult learning, European Commission, 2011
- Other reports and documents in the field of education and training.

3 Context – analytical section

On the basis of international practice, it is recommended to view the field of lifelong learning through the issue of acquisition and use of skills throughout the life of individuals. Slovakia has gaps in both the acquisition and use of skills. While measured adult participation in learning is average, it is rather the structure that is problematic. The existing adult education system marginalises the low-educated.

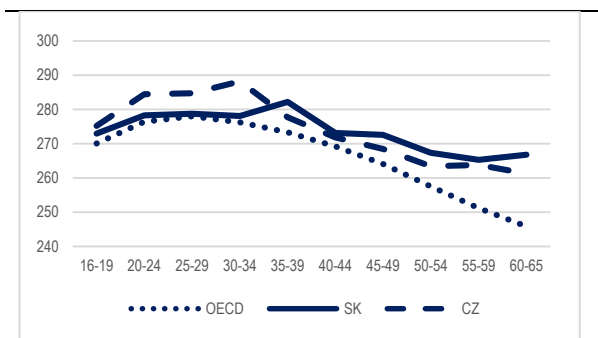
Skills in the population – current situation

The Slovak population is one of the most highly trained with sufficient skills, but younger generations show a deterioration. The share of the population with at least secondary education is one of the highest in Slovakia in European comparison.⁴ Measures of adult skills show that younger cohorts are average in the quality of skills

⁴ In 2020, in the 25-64 age group, the share in Slovakia was 92.7%, EU average 82.3% (Eurostat, [edat?lfse?03]).

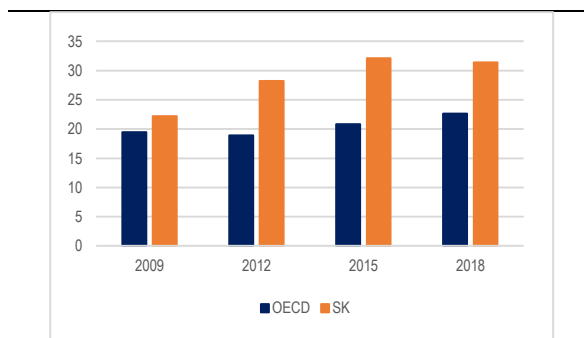
acquired, and it is the older cohorts that drag the overall average.⁵ The skills of 15-year-olds measured in PISA tests have long been lagging behind and are largely influenced by socio-economic background. One reason for this is low enrolment in pre-primary education⁶ and a lack of attention to early childhood care. Barriers to participation are highest for children with social or health disadvantages.⁷

Figure 1: Average reading literacy by age group level (PIAAC measurements)



Source: OECD, Education GPS

Figure 2: Proportion of 15-year-olds below basic in reading literacy (PISA tests)



Source: OECD, Education GPS

There is room for improvement in the building and use of skills. The employment rate of the working age population is affected by lower female employment.⁸ Graduates find employment at a higher rate than the average of graduates in EU countries.⁹ However, the problem of utilisation of existing skills includes a relatively high occupational mismatch¹⁰, especially at secondary level. The persistent influence of socio-economic background on individuals' educational pathways contributes to a growing share of young early school leavers¹¹ with poor labour market prospects. Unemployment in the low-educated category is the highest in the EU¹² and up to two-thirds of low-educated young people are neither in employment nor in education.¹³ Digitalisation and automation threaten jobs, but can also increase mismatches or prevent the adoption of technological innovations.¹⁴

⁵ The average for reading literacy in the last PIAAC measurement (2012) was 274 for Slovakia, 266 for the OECD. Numeracy for Slovakia 279, for OECD 262.

⁶ For the age group from 4 years to the start of compulsory schooling, the enrolment rate for children in Slovakia in 2019 was 82.6%, compared to EU27 average of 93.4% (Eurostat, [educ_uae_enra10]).

⁷ A Review for Vulnerable Groups (OJEU, 2019).

⁸ The employment rate for women in Slovakia in 2020 was 66.1%, EU average 68.8%, for men 78.7%, EU average 78.9% (Eurostat, [lfsi_emp_a]). Labour market statistics in general have been affected by the pandemic, but comparisons between countries have not been significantly affected.

⁹ The share of graduates in the age group 20-34 who were employed within three years of completing their degree was 80.4% in Slovakia in 2020, compared to EU average of 77.4% (Eurostat, [edat_lfse_24]). Compared to the EU, Slovak secondary education graduates are better employed than tertiary graduates compared to EU countries. The 2019 pre-pandemic figures for Slovak secondary education graduates are 83.8% and for the EU average 74.8%, for Slovak HE graduates 81.6% and for the EU average 85%.

¹⁰ The degree of occupational mismatch depends on the mapping of fields of study with occupations (ISCO), figures reported by Eurostat based on its own methodology (<https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/experimental-statistics/skills>).

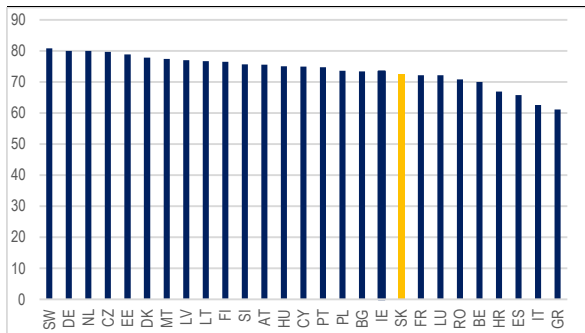
¹¹ Since 2010, the share of young early school leavers has risen from 4.7% to 7.6% in 2020 (this is the 18-24 age group with the highest number of primary school graduates not participating in any further education and training). EU average for 2020 is 8.8% and is decreasing over time (Eurostat, [edat_lfse_14]).

¹² In the 20-64 age group with at most primary education, the share of unemployed in 2020 was 29.7%, compared to an EU average of 12.6% (Eurostat, [une_educ_a]).

¹³ For the age group 20-34 years, the value for Slovakia in 2020 is 62.5%, the EU average is 39.3% (Eurostat, [edat_lfse_21]).

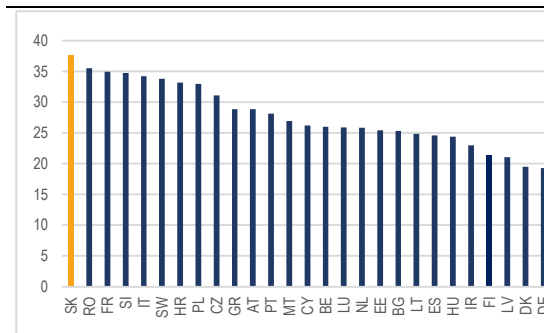
¹⁴ Survey on European businesses on the use of AI-based technologies, 2020.

Figure 3: Employment aged 20-64, %, 2020



Source: Eurostat, [lfsi_emp_a]

Figure 4: Incompliance between studied fields of study – age category 15-34 for secondary and tertiary education in total (ISCED3-8), %, 2019

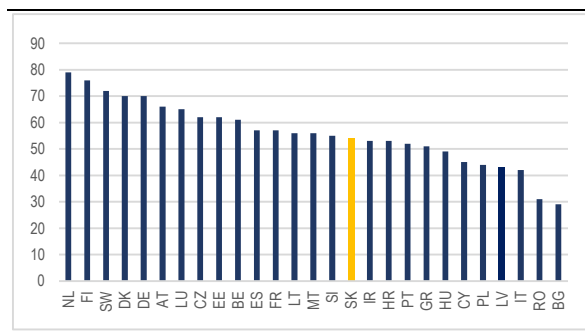


Source: Eurostat, Experimental Statistics

Slovakia needs to strengthen basic digital skills. The readiness of the education system to respond to technological advances also depends on the level of pupils' digital skills, with a significant proportion of pupils falling below the basic level in the most recent measurement.¹⁵ Measures of adult skills show a lag in problem solving in IT environments¹⁶. The Digitalisation Index (DESI index) in the human capital component includes an indicator for the level of basic skills in the population aged 16-74, where the Slovak Republic is slightly below average¹⁷. However, the acquisition of basic digital skills is essential for further education (e.g. online courses), effective participation in the functioning of the state (e-government, e-health) and will limit further marginalisation of vulnerable groups.

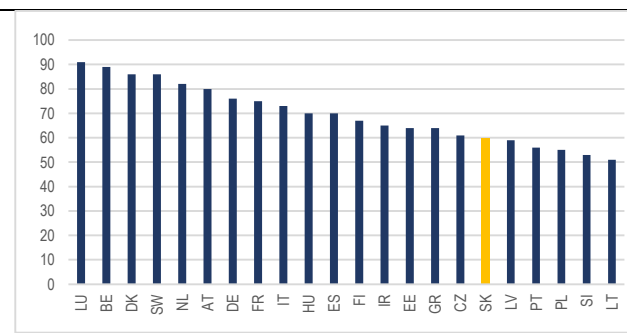
Insufficient attention is being paid to civic skills despite their importance for the state. Civic skills, including media and financial literacy, help build confidence in the institutional arrangements of a democratic society. One indicator of civic cohesion is participation in elections, which in Slovakia is still below the average among European countries.

Figure 5: Percentage of population aged 16-74 with basic digital skills, 2019



Source Eurostat: [tpepr_sp410]

Figure 6: Participation in elections¹⁸, %



Source OECD, Better Life Index

Measuring adult participation in learning

Adult participation in education in Slovakia is better captured in surveys with a longer reference period. The indicator for measuring adult participation in learning with a reference period of 4 weeks shows very low

¹⁵ The share of pupils failing to reach level 1 was 12% in ICILS tests, compared to an average of 17% in the participating countries, e.g. only 2% in the Czech Republic (NICEM).

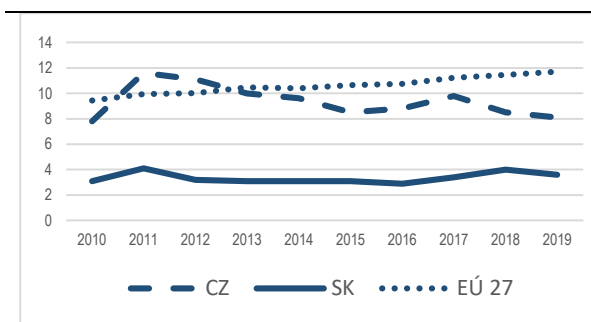
¹⁶ PIAAC measurements

¹⁷ The share of the population with at least basic skills in Slovakia is 54%, compared to the EU average of 56%.

¹⁸ Parliamentary or presidential elections, 2016 data for Slovakia.

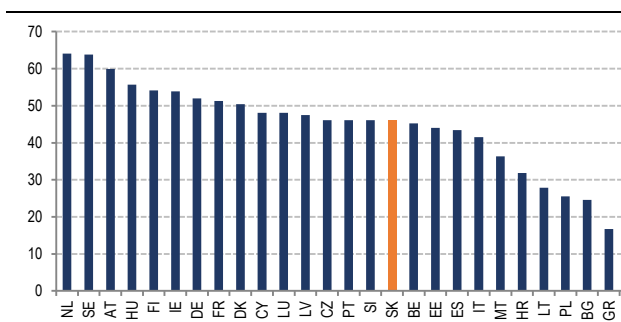
participation in Slovakia¹⁹, with participation being below average in the long term. When the reference period is extended from 4 weeks to 12 months, participation is roughly at the average of European countries.²⁰ The average number of hours reported by respondents as time devoted to training is the lowest.²¹ It means that short learning activities are predominant in Slovakia.

Figure 7: Adult participation in education in the last 4 weeks in %



Source: Eurostat, [trng_lfs_01]

Figure 8: Adult participation in education in the last 12 weeks in %, 2016

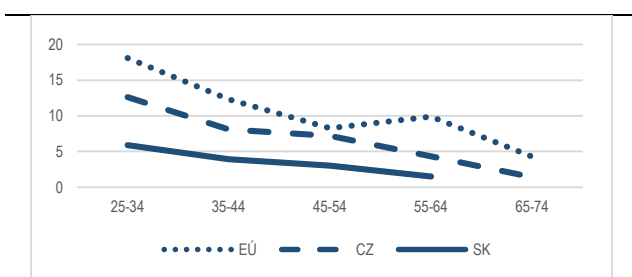


Source: Eurostat, [trng_aes_100]

In comparison with other countries, learning pathways in Slovakia are shorter. Most graduates in Slovakia complete their formal education in the shortest possible time without breaks, which means that there are few students over 25 studying in Slovak schools²². Measured adult learning activities in Slovakia are thus mainly trainings, courses, seminars, lectures, workshops, etc. (so-called non-formal education).

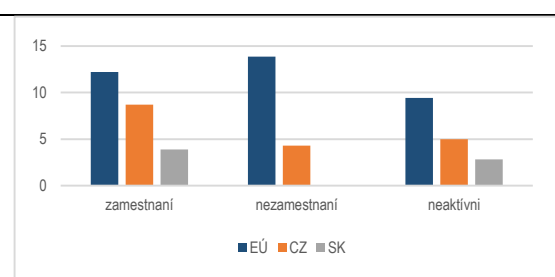
Adult participation in education decreases with age and increases with education, with the largest participation among the employed. Motivation to learn decreases with age and Slovakia follows this trend. In contrast to European countries where the highest participation is among the unemployed, in our country it is among the employed. Slovakia also follows the trend in which adult participation in education increases with the level of education, which in the case of Slovakia is also related to the fact that education takes place mainly in companies and employment increases with the level of education.

Figure 9: Adult participation in education according to age in %, 2019



Source: Eurostat, LFS, [trng_lfse_01]

Figure 10: Adult participation in education in % according to the position in the labour market, 2019²³



Source: Eurostat, LFS, [trng_lfse_02]

To reach the target set by the EC, Slovakia should increase overall adult participation in education by 5% by 2025²⁴. The newly proposed key indicator for measuring adult participation in learning in the European context

¹⁹ The population aged 25-64 years is taken into account. In 2020, the value for Slovakia is 2.8%, the EU average is 10.1% (Eurostat, [trng_lfse_01]).

²⁰ The figure for Slovakia is 46.1%, EU average is 43.6%. In addition to the length of the reference period, part of the difference in participation between the two surveys is due to the different wording of the question on learning activities. In contrast to LFS (4-week reference period), in AES2016 (12-month reference period) the question for non-formal learning includes on-the-job training and interest-based learning.

²¹ The figure for Slovakia is on average 49 hours, EU average is 113 hours. Even if we look only at non-formal education, the number of hours in Slovakia is the second lowest (SK 36 hours, the EU 69 hours).

²² In Slovakia, the figure was 1.5%, compared to an average of 6% in EU countries. The figures are based on AES survey last conducted in 2016.

²³ The share of unemployed participants in adult education was too low and does not meet the criteria for statistical disclosure.

²⁴ European skills agenda

will have a reference frame of 12 months. The target for 2025 is set at 47%, the estimate of Slovakia's current position reflecting the adjustment of the indicator²⁵ is 42%.

In the complementary indicators for adult learning, Slovakia lags significantly behind, fulfilment of the 2025 targets is questionable. Other indicators will include participation of low-educated adults in education in the last 12 months. The target for this indicator is 30% (average for EU countries), the latest measurement shows a zero value for Slovakia²⁶. The second indicator is the participation of unemployed adults in education in the last 4 weeks, the target is set at 20%. The 2020 value for Slovakia is also set at zero²⁷. The last indicator monitors the level of basic digital skills for the 16-74 age group, the target is set at 70%. In 2019, Slovakia reached the value of this indicator at 54%.

Indicators for the European Learning Area for Skills (European Skills Agenda)

Indicator (%)	Target – EU average	Current situation in SR
Adult participation in education 25-64	50	42
Adult participation in education 25-64 - low educated ²⁸	30	0
Adult participation in education 25-64 - unemployed	20	0
Share of population 16-74 with basic digital skills	70	54

4 Background to the development of LLLG Strategy

The National Skills Strategy for Slovakia²⁹ was elaborated by the Organisation for Economic Development and Co-operation (OECD) during 2019 and was officially presented to the general public of the Slovak Republic in the presence of senior OECD officials and representatives of the European Commission by the Minister of Education in January 2020. The document was developed on the basis of findings and recommendations from interactive working meetings, group and bilateral discussions of nominated experts mainly from the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic; the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic; the Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic, the Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic; the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for Investment and Informatisation of the Slovak Republic and other government agencies.

OECD Skills Strategy notes that the Slovak Republic still faces a number of complex skills challenges. The skills of the younger generation lag behind OECD average in reading and science, with a negative long-term trend. There is a significant mismatch between skills demand and supply in the labour market, and skills shortages are particularly acute in sectors with strong demand for skills in science and technology. The adult learning culture is underdeveloped and underfunded, adult participation in learning is low and participation is lowest among those who would need it most.

The document is based on the **National Programme for the Development of Education and Training**, which identifies three key areas, namely:

1. equipping the younger and older generations with the right skills for the future,
2. ensuring inclusion and equal opportunities in skills development,
3. strengthening the governance of the skills strategy.

²⁵ On-the-job training will not be included as a category in measures of adult learning participation.

²⁶ Zero values may represent observations not statistically captured in surveys, or values so low that they are not reported with respect to statistical data processing standards (Eurostat, [trng_aes_102]).

²⁷ Eurostat, [trng_lfse_02].

²⁸ With the highest level of lower secondary education (primary school) attained.

²⁹ <http://www.oecd.org/publications/oecd-skills-strategy-slovak-republic-bb688e68-en.htm>

5 Objectives and content of LLLG Strategy

The National Skills Strategy was developed through consultations with stakeholders from different sectors and areas relevant to the skills area. It is thanks to this approach of trans-ministerial and inter-ministerial communication that the National Skills Strategy for Slovakia and its basic principles of development are further used as a basis for addressing the current key documents of the Slovak Republic, i.e. the **Strategy for Lifelong Learning and Guidance for 2021-2030**.

The Strategy focuses on an individual's learning pathway and strengthening their motivation to learn based on the cradle-to-grave principle. It identifies key tools for future development in skills enhancement beyond the initial education and training system. The objectives of LLLG Strategy are:

Objective 1: Strengthen inclusiveness of adult learning and improve learning pathways for all, including adults with low levels of basic skills

Objective 2: Increase participation and equity of adults in learning, i.e. opportunities also for adults with low levels of skills and/or educational attainment

Objective 3: Support the development of further vocational training

Objective 4: Link education and the labour market more effectively, with an emphasis on expected changes in the structure of jobs

Objective 5: Increase the efficiency and flexibility of the qualification system of the Slovak Republic

The key proposals for action in LLLG Strategy 2021-2030 to achieve these objectives are divided into four thematic areas:

1. Qualifications

- Second-chance education and F-study branches,
- Increasing the attractiveness and quality of vocational education and training (VET) – VET Centres of Excellence
- Slovak Qualifications Framework (SKKR) and National Qualifications System (NQS)
- The system of validation of the results of non-formal and informal learning
- Increasing the flexibility of the qualification system with smaller qualifications and micro-qualifications (micro-certificates)
- Introduction and promotion of short cycle tertiary education³⁰ – SKKR 5

2. Basic skills and civic education

- National initiative for improving basic skills and pilot intervention programmes
- Promoting adult civic education

3. Promoting motivation for participation in LLLG

- Establishing a coherent system of lifelong guidance
- Strengthening motivations of individuals to participate in LLL – Individual learning accounts (pilot scheme)

4. Building a skills management system and identification of LLLG needs

- Establishment of a comprehensive graduate tracking system

³⁰ Short cycle programmes are a separate type of education. i.e., they are study programmes that are neither 1st, 2nd nor 3rd cycle of higher education. They are a new type of study at university without the award of a degree. Within EHEA (European Higher Education Area), a bachelor's programme is considered as first cycle, a master's programme as second cycle and a doctoral programme as third cycle. For more information, see: <http://uis.unesco.org/en/glossary-term/isced-5-short-cycle-tertiary-education>, <https://ehea.info/page-three-cycle-system>

- Promoting the sustainability of the sector councils' management system with a focus on transferring innovative processes and labour market requirements into LLL

The strategy contains 55 measures divided into fifteen thematic units. The individual objectives of LLLG Strategy and the corresponding measures will be detailed in action plans with a timeframe for the implementation of the measures and the financing of the individual measures after the approval of the document by the Government of the Slovak Republic. The action plans for the implementation of LLLG Strategy will be drawn up and submitted to the Government of the Slovak Republic for approval by 31 March 2022, 2025 and 2028, with an evaluation of the results of the interim monitoring of the previous period. A preliminary estimation of the financial resources needed for the implementation of the individual measures of LLLG Strategy is attached as Annex 5; the cost estimate up to 2027 also includes the financial resources of the EU Structural Funds.

The inter-ministerial discussions during the preparation of the Strategy also revealed the need to ensure that the development of digital skills is supported along three axes through the relevant ministries – Informatisation, Labour and Education:

- Digital skills necessary for citizens of the Slovak Republic for electronic communication with the state (e-Slovakia) – the competence of the Ministry of Investment, Regional Development and Informatization of the Slovak Republic,
- Digital skills necessary for adaptation and sustainability in the labour market – (up-skilling and reskilling) - the competence of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the SR,
- Digital skills as a part of basic or transferable skills – the competence of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic.

In order to ensure inter-ministerial coordination of lifelong learning in the light of the recommendations of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) for the Slovak Republic formulated in the National Skills Strategy (2020), it is proposed to extend the competences of the current Council of the Government of the Slovak Republic for Vocational Education and Training and its transformation into the Council of the Government of the Slovak Republic for Lifelong Learning with the involvement of all relevant actors.

Annex 1 – PROPOSAL OF MEASURES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF LLLG STRATEGY

1.1. Second-chance education and F-study branches

Structural indicator monitored:	Early-school leaving	
	Measures	Who
1	Implementation of the lower secondary vocational education (LSVE) programme with an integral part of primary school completion	MESRS SR
2	Allowing pupils to remain in primary school after completing compulsory school attendance until the age of 18, with maintained normative per pupil of primary school	MESRS SR
3	Change of the financing of second-chance education - flexible normative	MESRS SR
4	Establishment of an educational programme for the acquisition of lower secondary education – second-chance education	MESRS SR
<p>Context:</p> <p>Given the complexity of education for low-educated adults, this reform area focuses on interventions for young early-school leavers. The early-school leaving indicator includes two groups of young people: those without lower secondary education (LSE) and those with lower secondary education but no upper secondary education. The proposed measures in this area primarily target early school leaving without lower secondary education. Secondly, the implementation of the proposed measures is expected to improve the second category, namely increasing the share of young people with upper secondary education. Direct interventions designed to improve the indicator of the rate of upper secondary completion in the population are included in the part „Increasing flexibility in the acquisition of qualifications “.</p> <p>Currently, there are two separate compensatory instruments for the group of young people without completed primary education: second-chance education courses³¹ (SCE) and lower secondary vocational education courses (LSVE, two-year apprenticeship courses, hereafter referred to as F-study branches). Second chance education courses allow for the acquisition of lower secondary education (SKKR/EQF 2/ISCED2) and thus enable further education at higher levels. The lower secondary vocational education programmes (two-year F-study branches)³² do not allow the acquisition of basic education but contribute to the employability of graduates in low-skilled occupations on the labour market. Both instruments are proving ineffective in practice³³. The need for intervention in this area is also supported by the increasing trend of young early-school leavers, with early-school leavers up to 12 times more likely to be unemployed than 15-24 year olds who have completed compulsory education properly³⁴. Consequently, they are among the particularly challenging target group of low-skilled adults whose education requires a specific approach to developing basic skills and, consequently, to developing vocational skills for the labour market. The principle of combined F-study branches will enable the acquisition of lower secondary vocational education.</p> <p>Based on the results of the State School Inspection and the application practice of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic, there is an opportunity for primary schools to provide courses for individuals who have not obtained lower secondary education for obtaining this level of education. Pursuant to Section 31a of the Amendment to Act No. 245/2008 Coll.³⁵, it is recommended to create combined F-study branches for obtaining lower secondary education so that the graduate of the combined F-study branches would also have the opportunity for further education in the future (for example,</p>		

³¹ Education for lower secondary education (Section 42(4) of the School Act)

³² Decree of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic No. 251/2018 Coll. on the system of fields of education for secondary schools and on the subject competence of the fields of education

³³ Review of Expenditures on Vulnerable Groups (2019), State School Inspection (SSI), (2018)

³⁴ Assessment of the implementation of the 2011 Council recommendation on policies to reduce early school leaving, <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/72f0303e-cf8e-11e9-b4bf-01aa75ed71a1>

³⁵ Amendment Act available at: <https://www.nrsr.sk/web/Dynamic/DocumentPreview.aspx?DocID=499246>

the possibility to participate in courses offered by employment offices). Furthermore, it is recommended to optimise the offer of F-study branches in order to streamline the supply of training in skills that lead to better employability of F-branches graduates on the labour market. To improve the transition towards further levels of education, it is also proposed to align the content of education in the F-study branches with programmes offered in the secondary vocational schools (e.g. H-study branches). Graduates of the combined F-study branches can thus continue their education smoothly without having to start their studies again. In order to reduce the number of early-school leavers, it is also important to reduce the drop-out rate of young people from primary school after the end of compulsory education and to keep them in primary school for as long as possible, taking into account their individual capabilities. It is important, for example, to prevent them from leaving for combined F-study branches, which increases the level of segregation and may appear to be a more attractive form of education from their point of view. It is proposed to allow pupils to remain in primary school, regardless the length of compulsory school attendance, until the age of 18, and to provide funding so that schools have the capacity to individually support pupils who leave primary school, despite their potential to leave the school later. As far as the second-chance education (SCE) is concerned, following the recommendation of the Review of Expenditures on Vulnerable Groups, it is proposed to introduce a flexible normative which would take into account individual needs of those seeking this type of education.

Impact on structural indicator:

The proposed measures are expected to reduce the share of young people without primary school education and at the same time increase the share of young people with at least secondary education by partially eliminating the "deadlock" in the permeability of the education system in Slovakia. At the same time, there will be an optimisation of the branches of lower secondary vocational education (LSVE) and rationalisation of workplaces, which is not the primary objective of the measure, but has the potential to increase employability of those young people who do not continue their education. The above measures need to be implemented with a synergistic effect towards the establishment of a system of validation and recognition of prior learning outcomes as well as programmes to enhance not only basic skills in adult education.

Measure 1: Implementation of LSVE programme with an integral part of primary school completion

Monitored output indicator:

Introduction of combined F study branches and related legislative adjustments

Is a legislative change required? Yes

Is an inter-ministerial coordination required? No

Risk factor (critical success factor): pupils' low awareness of their educational options in case of non-completion of lower secondary education (LSE).

Description of the measure:

The issue of modification of lower secondary vocational education programmes (F-study branches) has arisen on the basis of suggestions from the application practice, which shows that the basic known problem of the education disciplines in question is their further permeability within the vertical or horizontal permeability of the educational system. Their complementarity with existing programmes for the completion of primary school (lower secondary education, so-called second-chance education courses) has also proved inadequate because of the different content of the two programmes.

In order to partially eliminate the permeability, or the so-called "dead end" of F-study branches, the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic proceeded to create combined F-study branches of education, which include in their content also the components of the programme for the completion of primary school. The programme is differentiated into two levels:

1. the pupil has not completed primary school (PS) and at the same time s/he has completed school attendance in grade eight or a lower one;
2. the pupil has not completed grade 9 or s/he has failed to complete grade 9.

The length of study depends on the input knowledge of individual pupils in F-study branches, where in the first case, the study lasts three years, and in the second case, two years respectively. Basic skills leading to lower secondary education (SKKR 2) are not oriented towards the profile subjects of the second cycle of primary school, but towards individual literacies and skills that are needed for the needs of the labour market and society. As a result, lower secondary education is obtained by means of a board examination, which entitles the graduate to enter higher levels of education. In accordance with SKKR, the graduate obtains a qualification at the level SKKR2 in the second sub-framework of SKKR (vocational education and training (VET) sub-

framework). The F-study branches thus combined will be listed in parallel with the existing F-study branches and second-chance education (SCE), so that providers and candidates can choose the appropriate form with regard to their needs.

Related legislation:

- Decree No. 292/2019 Coll. establishing criteria for determining the maximum number of pupils in the first year of secondary school.

Under the forthcoming amendment to Act No. 61/2015 Coll. on Vocational Education and Training and on Amendments and Additions to Certain Acts, as amended by Act No. 209/2018 Coll., it is proposed that the performance plan, i.e. the determination of the highest number of pupils in the first year of secondary schools for individual fields of study and individual teaching fields, should also include F-study branches. The regulation of the F-study branches in question should be regulated separately in compliance with the Decree No 292/2019 Coll., which lays down the criteria for determining the maximum number of pupils in the first year of secondary schools. It is also important to take into account that these branches fulfil a social function, where pupils remain at school under pedagogical supervision and are offered to acquire at least some level of qualification recognised on the labour market, while there is no alternative for these target groups within the Slovak Republic. The problem is the absence of the systems of recognition and validation of prior learning, up-skilling and re-skilling that could provide tailor-made programmes for these target groups in a targeted non-formal education context. In the context of combined F-study branches, a specific solution for the future could be to reintroduce the possibility of obtaining an apprenticeship certificate.

Following on from the combined F-study branches, there would be the possibility of continuing with further study at a higher level - in an apprenticeship at the level SKKR3. This measure will achieve vertical permeability of these combined F-study branches with apprenticeship courses at a higher level of education, whereby it will be possible to obtain an apprenticeship certificate more efficiently as a basic document for the establishment of a trade licence or for employment in the labour market in the content and sectoral follow-up fields of education.

Measure 2: Allowing pupils to remain in primary school after completing compulsory school attendance until the age of 18, with maintained normative per pupil of primary school

Monitored output indicator:

Adjustment of the normative per pupil in primary school even after the completion of primary education up to the age of 18 years in Government Regulation No. 630/2008 Coll.

Is a legislative change required? Yes

Is an inter-ministerial coordination required? Yes

Risk factor (critical success factor): lack of funding to increase normative funding

Description of the measure:

The group of young early school-leavers without lower secondary education is not a homogeneous group and measures relevant for this group are also contained in other areas of the strategy (e.g. career guidance, basic skills, segmentation of fields of secondary vocational education (SVE), etc. However, there is a presumption that some of them would be able to complete primary education beyond the 10 years defined as the threshold for compulsory school attendance (CSA), possibly with individual support. Nevertheless, the current legislation allows for primary education beyond the compulsory school attendance (CSA) in two ways: (a) if a pupil completes the compulsory school attendance at the age of 16 in the eighth grade and there is a presumption of completing primary education by the age of 17 (Art. 22(2) of the School Act) or (b) in secondary education courses of a maximum duration of 1 year (second-chance education) with financing of 10% of the pupil's primary school normative.

The change in legislation, organisation and funding of compensatory instruments for the target group has caused a drop in this type of education in primary schools and a shift of the offer of SCE to secondary schools (primarily as a complement to F-study branches, which have significantly higher per-pupil normative³⁶). It seems more effective to reinforce the retention of as many at-risk pupils as possible in primary schools, with a reinforcement of the funding to support them. A legislative change is proposed to allow pupils up to the age of 18 to remain and not leave primary school in the mainstream (or integrated) category, while retaining normative funding at the level of the primary school pupil. This will create a prerequisite for reducing the 'dropping out' of pupils into second-chance education or F-study branches where there is a capacity on the part of the school and the

³⁶ Despite the fact that 93% of SCE courses were being provided at secondary schools (SS) in 2018, only 42% of schools offering F-study branches delivered SCE courses (Review of Expenditures on Vulnerable Groups). Besides considering F-study branches as being segregating, it also means that availability of SCE courses is low. Reasons for this situation include low funding, increased staffing requirements, or the difficulty of organising this type of study. The 10% normative per pupil also applies to secondary schools (SS) providing SCE courses.

pupil to complete primary education in the mainstream. Maintaining funding will thus allow schools to respond to the possible individual needs of pupils in mainstream education, or as integrated pupils with specific educational needs, in individual education, etc., and to apply for support measures for pupils from socially disadvantaged backgrounds (assistants, mentors and tutors, etc.).

Measure 3: Change of the financing of second-chance education – a flexible normative

Monitored output indicator	Introducing a flexible normative
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Is a legislative change required? Yes

Is an inter-ministerial coordination required? Yes

Risk factor (critical success factor): lack of funding to increase normative funding

Description of the measure:

Adults with incomplete lower secondary education who wish to return to the formal system in order to obtain basic education require support that differs significantly from the proposed compensatory measures for young people in this category. In our view, the current system of second-chance education is not set up for adult education, for example by clarifying the qualifications of teaching staff, whose training must include preparation for working with adults. Research suggests that the skills of adults in this category may be at a level that does not comply with the minimum ability to undertake SCE courses in their current form, and the barriers they face require specific measures. For this reason, the Strategy contains measures for this target group in the part dealing with basic skills.

For the existing SCE courses, we propose a flexible form of funding as recommended by the Review of Expenditures on Vulnerable Groups, the amount of which would be based on the verified initial knowledge based on an appropriate diagnostic tool (including the diagnosing for learning disabilities) and the subsequent individual need of the participants in this type of education and training (in compliance with the reforms outlined in the Recovery Plan, Inclusive Education component). For further professional discussion in order to formulate measures regarding the future of forms, organisation, financing, setting and evaluation of the quality of SCE, we strongly recommend a broad representation of ministries and institutions that have long been involved in interventions for the target group, as well as pedagogical and research experts who have experience in working and mapping the situation on the ground.

Measure 4: Establishment of an educational programme for achieving lower secondary education – second-chance education

Monitored output indicator:	Early leaving from education and training
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Is a legislative change required? Yes

Is an inter-ministerial coordination required? Yes

Risk factor (critical success factor): lack of funding to implement the training programme

Description of the measure:

The Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic will create conditions for the implementation of second-chance education in terms of non-formal education in primary schools through the programme for the acquisition of lower secondary education (LSE). It will be possible to obtain lower secondary education and thus the possibility to continue further studies at secondary school by passing an external test, which will also be open to pupils of special schools and adult individuals who can obtain lower secondary education and continue their studies at secondary schools, by passing a board examination in the framework of a lower secondary vocational education programme or by passing a board examination in a programme of education intended for obtaining lower secondary education organised by a primary school.

The education programme for lower secondary education organised by the primary school will be intended primarily for individuals who have not acquired lower secondary education in the framework of primary school education due to health, family and other reasons and for individuals who have been out of the education system for a long period of time. The possibility of validating acquired non-formal education and informal learning by means of a board examination, without the obligation to

attend a course, is a prerequisite for emphasising real competences over the formal characteristics of learning. The modification rationalises the existing course for lower secondary education, creating the preconditions for the trainees to learn according to their real educational needs.

Furthermore, the proposed modification of external testing reflects the recommendations related to changing the diagnostic process to be based on a longer-term examination of the individual and an assessment of their development through diagnostic examinations that take into account the abilities of individuals from socially disadvantaged backgrounds or individuals with a different mother tongue, and which will consist of recognising each individual's strengths and weaknesses for the purposes of inclusive education. Indeed, the incorrect placement of some individuals in special schools for pupils with intellectual disabilities is also due to the absence of appropriate diagnostic tools that take sufficient account of the social, cultural and linguistic backgrounds of these individuals. According to current research, the proportion of pupils educated in special education in the Slovak Republic is almost four times higher than the EU average. This over-representation of some children in special classes and special schools has a major impact on their later entry into the labour market. To conclude, education is an important tool for improving equality and reducing poverty.

1.2. Increasing the attractiveness and quality of VET - Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs)

Monitored structural indicator	Percentage of 20-24 with at least secondary education Employment 20-64 Employment of graduates 20-34 (within 3 years of completing their degree) Skills mismatch	
	Measures	Who
1	Supporting CoVEs' capacity building in pilot sectors of the economy	MESRS SR
2	CoVE as an innovator in education	MESRS SR
3	Piloting collaboration with selected sector councils and the organisations hosting these sector councils in the development of the Analysis and Anticipation of the Demand for Knowledge and Skills in the Workplace (AADKSW) in the light of technological innovations, and the resulting reflection of results in knowledge of AADKSW by the curriculum expert committees into education and the National Qualifications System	MESRS SR in co-operation with other ministries/institutions
<p>Context: Centres of Excellence in VET (CoVEs) are not a new idea at the EU level. They are innovative units that aim to provide first-class and high quality initial and continuing VET, involving all relevant actors in VET coordination process. CoVE aims to cumulate all elements of VET coordination, including its transversal elements (career guidance, definition of learning content for the practical part of learning), so as to maximise quality and innovation in education in line with the needs of the labour market and society. Vocational education and training centres are in fact secondary vocational schools which distinguish themselves from other traditional secondary vocational schools by their better material, technical facilities and personnel, by offering adult education programmes, retraining courses, training for the disadvantaged, the long-term unemployed or training for teaching staff. A secondary vocational school may become a vocational education and training centre if the municipal or regional education department agrees to this and if the relevant trade or professional organisation decides on this³⁷.</p> <p>The infrastructure of VET centres is well developed; every industry or service sector in Slovakia is covered by study and apprenticeship courses or adult education programmes.</p> <p>VET centres also offer adult education programmes. If a school offers study and apprenticeship courses in initial VET, it may also offer them in the form of non-formal education under the Lifelong Learning Act, following the granting of so-called 'automatic accreditation'.</p> <p>CoVE is a superstructure of individual centres of VET (CeVETs), with the ambition to create about 20 such centres for different areas of the economy. An added value to the current state-of-play will be the setting up of further professional development of professional skills of pedagogical staff (PS) and training of instructors and chief instructors, providing supra-company training for small and medium enterprises and self-employed persons if there is no strong and significant employer on the labour market.</p> <p>Following the example of the German-speaking countries as well as based on the knowledge from the application practice, the Ministry indicates disparities in the training provided. Some training programmes cannot be implemented by the existing form of the dual training system (DTS), i.e. practical training at the employer and theoretical preparation at school, because some sectors are mainly made up of small and medium-sized enterprises (e.g. construction, services, forestry), where neither the enterprise nor the school disposes with suitable material, technical or personnel resources. The part of the educational programme that cannot be provided by the employer or the school or neither of them is carried out in the so-called 'third place' of the educational process.</p> <p>Furthermore, there is cooperation with universities, or career orientation of primary school pupils and cooperation with primary schools in polytechnic education. CoVEs will also be the institutions for validation and recognition of prior learning and master examinations.</p> <p>Anticipation of labour market needs and analysis of graduate employability are key to streamlining VET provision. Available data for the analyses regarding the employability of graduates (see proposals for graduate tracking measures in the relevant thematic area) is an important but not sufficient tool. Even macroeconomic prognosis on labour market needs and analyses based on administrative data from labour offices, social insurance offices and other information systems cannot provide more detailed information on the knowledge and skills demanded directly at the workplace and, in particular, on the anticipation of the knowledge and skills needed for the future. Such analyses are not systematically carried out by any institution in Slovakia. Neither the sectoral councils set up in accordance with the Employment Services Act, nor the professional and trade organisations, which have been</p>		

³⁷ Act No. 61/2015 Coll. on Vocational Education and Training.

assigned a substantive remit for individual fields of study and apprenticeship in accordance with Annex 9 of the Decree implementing the Vocational Education and Training Act, have the conditions for collecting such data, nor the necessary staff and financial capacity to fully link the areas of education and work.

The impact on the structural indicator:

The absence of a system of validation and recognition of prior learning and the lack of linkages between initial and continuing VET have a major impact on labour market disparities and skills shortages. The formal education system is not fully able to respond effectively to labour market needs and cannot objectively cover labour market needs due to demographic developments³⁸. Non-formal education and informal learning, on the other hand, has no real link to prior learning in a formal setting.

At the same time, it is necessary to promote all forms of implementation and practice of working conditions in practical training and to increase the share of practice in training programmes in line with the new Council recommendation on VET³⁹.

A secondary effect is to support small and medium enterprises and self-employed persons and to increase their share in VET⁴⁰ and the dual education system, where Slovakia reports low numbers when being compared with countries with traditional dual education⁴¹.

Measure 1: Support for CoVEs capacity building in pilot sectors of the economy

Monitored output indicator:	System change - pilot launch of CoVEs
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Is a legislative change required? Yes

Is an inter-ministerial coordination required? Yes

Risk factor (critical success factor): coordination of pilot and legislative adjustments of the acts on VET and LLL. Without amendments of legislation the implementation of CoVEs will only remain in the pilot phase without sustainability. There is a need to secure the support of trade and professional organizations (TPO).

Description of the measure:

Gradual transformation of VET Centres to CoVEs within the intentions defined above in the following areas:

- Mechanical Engineering - 3 CoVEs
- Electrical Engineering - 3 CoVEs
- Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) - 3 CoVEs
- Civil Engineering - 2 CoVEs
- Services - 3 CoVEs
- Food industry - 2 CoVEs
- Agriculture - 1 CoVE
- Wood processing - 1 CoVE
- Transport, Telecommunications - 1 CoVE
- Chemistry - 1 CoVE

The above mentioned CoVEs should be piloted in the third quarter of the year 2022 after the adoption of the new Act on LLL and the entry into force of the amendment to the Act on VET. In accordance with the Framework Plan of Legislative Tasks of the Government of the Slovak Republic for the 8th Legislative Term, the task of the MESRS SR is to submit a new Act on Lifelong Learning to the Government of the Slovak Republic in the first quarter of 2022. The Act should provide for a new classification of qualifications, a revision of the National Qualification System (NQS), a model for authorisation of educational institutions and validation and recognition of prior learning with a link to Act on VET.

³⁸ https://www.cvtisr.sk/buxus/docs/JH/Vyvojove_tendencie_20.pdf

³⁹ <https://okvalite.sk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/Odporucanie-Rady-o-OVP-2020.pdf>

⁴⁰ <http://monitoringmsp.sk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Anal%C3%BDza-syst%C3%A9mu-du%C3%A1neho-vzdel%C3%A1vania-v-Slovenskej-republike-final.pdf>

⁴¹ In contrast, motivating employers is considerably more challenging. In addition to the aforementioned benefits related to the preparation of their own highly qualified workforce and significantly lower labour turnover, motivating employers also requires financial interventions from the state due to the fact that employers (especially small and medium enterprises) do not have sufficient economic power for the initial phase of the dual training system DTS implementation or overall VET support, as is the case in Germany, Austria, Luxembourg or Switzerland. The financial mechanisms under the current legislation are tax incentives and a contribution to compensate for part of the costs of practical training in VET (direct payments).

Measure 2: CoVE as an innovator in education	
Monitored output indicator:	Systemic change
Is a legislative change required? No	
Is an inter-ministerial coordination required? No	
Risk factor (critical success factor): cooperation of relevant actors	
Description of the measure:	
<p>Introduction of CoVEs into practice in 2024 on the basis of a pilot phase, further support to CoVEs in the area of completion of material and technical support (MTS) and personal capacities, setting up quality assurance cycles for initial and continuing VET, special status of CoVEs in the framework of secondary school performance plans, inclusion in the network and changes in the school network. The specific grant schemes to support innovation within CoVEs after 2024 should:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Promote regional development and smart specialisation strategies in collaboration with other education and training institutions (e.g. traditional universities as well as universities of applied sciences). Together with employers provide a broad portfolio and level of skills needed to implement these strategies. 2. Be the drivers of innovation in local ecosystems in a framework that includes public and private organizations, as well as coordination and sharing of infrastructure and resources aimed at providing cross-cutting and technical skills to support innovation, as well as innovative education. Processes and products for both initial and continuing vocational education and training. 3. Actively participate in knowledge triangles with universities, research centres and businesses to be at the forefront of research and technological development. 	

Measure 3: Piloting collaboration with selected sector councils and the organisations hosting these sector councils in the development of the Analysis and Anticipation of the Demand for Knowledge and Skills in the Workplace (AADKSW) in the light of technological innovations, and the resulting reflection of results in knowledge of AADKSW by the curriculum expert committees into education and the National Qualifications System	
Monitored output indicator:	Concept document on cooperation Revised national curricula and qualification standards
Is a legislative change required? No	
Is an inter-ministerial coordination required? Yes	
Risk factor (critical success factor): availability of information on advanced procedures for collecting these data abroad (even under the constraints of COVID-19).	
Description of the measure:	
<p>Current instruments to support the alignment of VET and the labour market come across systemic weaknesses - institutional and financial instability, lack of coherence of activities, instability of staff and a lack of relevant data.</p> <p>Traditional study branches commissions set up at the State Vocational Education Institute (SVEI) focus on curricular changes in relevant groups of secondary VET study branches. Participation of labour market representatives is thus oriented towards adjustments to the status quo rather than radical systemic changes in the structure of study and training branches. SVEI does not have the personnel and financial resources for systematic labour market surveys, unlike similar institutions abroad.</p> <p>A key outcome for informing the education and skills system is the Analysis and Anticipation of the Demand for Knowledge and Skills in the Workplace (AADKSW), including expected innovations that would reduce as much as possible the systematic lag of the education system against future labour demand. Such data-driven outcomes, as well as the sector's trust in the sector council's expertise, are a necessary starting point for reflecting anticipated and evidence-based identified innovation requirements into state education programmes and the National Qualification System, and prospectively, in conjunction with the Accreditation Agency the Higher Education, into tertiary education as well. The planned piloting of the cooperation of sectoral councils in the three sectors of the economy means also strengthening the synergies between sectoral councils as innovation carriers, professional and trade organisations operating in the dual education system, and curriculum expert commissions as implementation units of changes in the educational and qualification system of secondary VET.</p>	

The concept paper based on stakeholders' consensus will be based on the methodologies used abroad and the findings of the comparative study and the recommendations on the setting up of AADKSW methodology.

Relevant, valid and reliable data for the analysis and anticipation of workplace demand for knowledge and skills (AADKSW), and related changes in the division of labour, in the light of technological innovations, presuppose a demanding field survey in workplaces, including contacting relevant respondents abroad. Recommendations for the AADKSW survey methodology must take into account examples of good practice from abroad, while leaving room for specificities, whether sectoral or national, that will enable the organization hosting the sectoral councils to maximize the benefits of AADKSW.

Based on stakeholder consensus, in addition to the legal and financial frameworks of the contract between the government (central government representatives) and the organization hosting the sector council, the concept document will specify the roles of the sector council in auditable targets, set key performance indicators (KPI) with priority in securing field survey data directly from enterprises.

Three sectors are candidates for piloting: firstly, the automotive industry (given its significant position in the economy, and then IT (given its key importance for the necessary diversification of the economy and the potential for development in Slovakia, including eastern Slovakia). The third sector should represent one of the traditional industrial segments, such as the chemical industry with a rich history of cooperation between schools and enterprises.

The piloting will result in 3 interim and 3 final reports on the piloting (including the outputs of the sectoral councils) and a document evaluating the results of the piloting. The MESRS (possibly in a cooperation with an external evaluation team) will assess the results of the piloting and outline proposals for the way forward. The results of the piloting will help to re-set or re-adjust the relations of the sectoral councils and the organisations hosting these sectoral councils towards the Government Council of the Slovak Republic for VET, the Regional Councils, the Employers' Council for the dual education system and with all organisations contributing to the coordination of VET for the labour market according to Section 28 of the Act on VET, so that the new VET management strategy contributes significantly to the streamlining of VET and to a better compliance between the demand and supply on the labour market. The identified impacts of technological challenges on the demand for knowledge and skills in the piloted sectors will be continuously reflected into the education and qualification system translated by MESRS SR.

1.3. Developing digital skills of Slovak citizens

Monitored structural indicator		DESI index (indicators 2a1 to 2a3) PIAAC - problem solving in ICT environments Percentage of adults 25-64 participating in education
	Measures	Who
1	Defining a cross-ministerial national digital skills strategy its measures and recommendations for ministries.	Ministry of Investments, Regional Development and Informatization of the Slovak Republic (MIRDI) SR In cooperation with MESRS / Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (MLSAF) / Ministry of Economy (ME) / Slovak National Coalition for Digital Skills and Jobs (SNCDSJ)
<p>Context: The strategy would build on European documents, in particular the DIGCOMP 2.1 - Digital competences reference framework, Educational Action Plan - 2020, the European Skills Agenda - 2020, the recommendations of the National Skills Strategy⁴², the results of the IT Fitness Test⁴³, the outputs of the national project IT Academy - Education for the 21st century, the findings of PIAAC⁴⁴, as well as the conclusions of the study on the current state of digital skills of employees in small and medium-sized enterprises⁴⁵. The strategy will identify a national coordinator for the area, with a particular focus on further adult education, from basic to advanced digital skills. The area of digital skills falling within the comprehensive education system will be coordinated by the MESRS in cooperation with the Slovak National Coalition for Digital Skills and Jobs (SNCDSJ) within the framework of their strategic documents.</p>		

⁴² <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/sk/resource-centre/content/narodna-strategia-zrucnosti-pre-slovensko>

⁴³ <https://itas.sk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/IT-Fitness-Zaverecna-Sprava-2020---A4-1.pdf>

⁴⁴ PIAAC - Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC)

⁴⁵ <https://www.mirri.gov.sk/aktuality/digitalna-agenda/pocitacova-gramotnost-slovenskych-friem-je-pre-uspesnu-digitalnu-transformaciu-krajiny-klucova/index.html>

1.4. National initiative for basic skills improvement and pilot intervention programmes

Monitored structural indicator:	Early school leaving NEET (economically inactive young people not participating in education or training) Participation of low-educated adults in education Basic skills of low-educated adults (PIAAC) Employment of low-educated Early school leaving	
	Measures	Who
1	Embedding the concept of basic skills (BS) in the LLL Act	MESRS SR
2	Pilot implementation of tools for mapping, assessing and testing basic skills levels for low-skilled adults	MESRS SR
3	Pilot a funding scheme for non-formal education providers in BS for low-skilled adults (non-profit and other organisations with potential for outreach to the target group).	MESRS SR
4	Institutional capacity to support basic skills training programmes from public sources: National Network for Basic Skills	MESRS SR
<p>Context:</p> <p>Basic skills are an area of adult education that has not yet been identified as an intervention topic for education policies in Slovakia, despite the fact that the lack of basic skills represents a significant barrier not only to access to participation in further education and training, but also to obtaining and maintaining a quality job, civic participation, building family background, fulfilling parental responsibilities, sufficient health care, etc. A low level of skills has a multiplier negative effect not only on the individuals concerned but also on the economy and society, which is already signalling labour shortages and the negative effects of intergenerational poverty.</p> <p>Basic skills do not have a clearly defined scope; a key component of basic skills is reading comprehension, mathematical literacy and command of the Slovak language. Basic skills should be understood as a set of skills, knowledge and abilities that are essential for every citizen to be able to fulfil his or her personal work and civic needs and responsibilities without difficulty and to a full extent. Today, we therefore consider digital and media literacy to be an essential part of basic skills.</p> <p>The target groups for basic skills training are the whole population but in terms of interventions and support programmes from public sources, these are primarily adults with low levels of skills, which may or may not be associated with low educational attainment, and young people, early school leavers, young people not in employment or further education (NEETs), migrants, older generations, people in prison, marginalised communities, or target groups that are currently deficient in an area of basic skills. For example, the COVID pandemic has highlighted significant media literacy issues in a large segment of the population, including both higher educated adults and teachers as potential target groups for media literacy intervention.</p> <p>The use of the concept of basic skills is consistent with the necessary transformation of the education system from one focused on formal outcomes to one focused on learning outcomes in terms of skills.</p> <p>The impact on the structural indicator:</p> <p>The lack of basic skills is one of the key barriers to the use of existing tools for the low-skilled (such as unemployment schemes, VET, non-formal education, etc.). Increasing basic skills is expected to increase all structural indicators, including improving the labour market position of the low-educated and consequently their quality of life and reducing their social marginalisation.</p>		

Measure 1: Embedding the concept of basic skills in LLL Act	
Monitored output indicator	Legislative change
Is a legislative change required? Yes	
Is an inter-ministerial coordination required? Yes	
Risk factor (critical success factor): lack of understanding and support for the concept of basic skills and the need for government intervention in this area on the part of the professional community	

Description of the measure:

Embedding the concept of basic skills in LLL Act - every adult citizen has the right to access learning opportunities to achieve and maintain basic skills at different stages of his/her life. This will create legislative support for the creation of support in BS and can be expected to increase citizens' awareness of their own need to maintain BS, i.e. to support the demand for BS.

Measure 2: Pilot implementation of tools for mapping, assessing and testing the level of basic skills for low-skilled adults.

Monitored output indicator:	Implemented pilot scheme for basic skills (BS) assessment Pilot implementation of assessment and testing system of BS
Is a legislative change required? No	
Is an inter-ministerial coordination required? Yes	
Risk factor (critical success factor): challenging target group, communication barrier: language barrier and/or poor literacy, poor awareness of the importance of working with the target group	
Description of the measure: Pilot implementation of tools for BS assessment: introduction of a system for BS assessing and testing of low-skilled adults in cooperation with selected entities which have experience with activities related to the target group. Assessing the current state of BS is crucial for mapping learning needs and designing appropriate learning formats. The BLUESS project highlighted the absence of information on basic skills levels. Pilot implementation of BS assessment tools will support the transfer of previous experience and allow mapping BS status of adults with low levels of educational attainment as a prerequisite for interventions.	

Measure 3: Pilot a funding scheme for non-formal education providers in BS for low-skilled adults (non-profit and other organisations with potential for outreach to the target group).

Monitored output indicator	Number of funded providers
Is a legislative change required? No	
Is an inter-ministerial coordination required? No	
Risk factor (critical success factor): complexity and administrative rules inconvenient for actors from non-profit sector	
Description of the measure: There is a growing number of low-skilled adults in Slovakia who lack the basic skills to enter the labour market or to undertake vocational training or education within employment services or to undertake second chance education. The role of actors able to deliver non-formal education in the field of BS is crucial. In Slovakia, but also in other EU countries, actors from the non-profit sector with an experience of working with low-skilled adults, who represent the most difficult target group for AE, have proven to be effective. Activities for this target group are generally subsidised by the state in other EU countries due to the weak financial situation of the participants. Given the difficulty of reaching the target group and their low motivation to participate in education and the need for a personalised approach, it appears to be an effective form of stimulating the supply of education, i.e. the providers. In Slovakia, the number of organisations with experience in this field is very low and stimulating the offer will also fulfil the objective of capacity building for education in BS. In particular, informal basic skills courses, such as Slovak language courses for adults also available for adults with low literacy or for foreigners, mathematical literacy courses, orientation on basic working habits, etc., are likely to be suitable for pilot programmes of BS courses. Support in BS courses can significantly contribute to greater participation and success in formal second-chance education. The pilot scheme will be subsidy-based, responding to the needs of target groups in a regional and local context. The cooperation of providers with municipalities will be welcomed, but will not be a condition for funding in the case of proven experience of providers in field work with the target group.	

Measure 4: Institutional capacity to support basic skills training programmes from public sources: National Network for Basic Skills	
Monitored output indicator:	Creating a national network and focal points for BS support
Is a legislative change required? No	
Is an inter-ministerial coordination required? Yes	
Risk factor (critical success factor): lack of support for creating a coordination structure (personnel, financial)	
<p>Description of the measure:</p> <p>To support AE activities, there is a general need to build and support institutional capacity at different levels of public administration, which is absent in Slovakia. For the basic skills area, there is a need to recognise the increased need for cooperation, networking and possible coordination between different levels of public administration on the one hand and key actors in the provision of BS on the other. Institutional patronage of training in BS at the national level with adequate capacity at different levels of public administration where professional capacity will be gradually built up in the area of AE and specifically in BS support is a necessary condition for a functional ecosystem of AE for BS.</p> <p>Under the proposed measure, the main focal point for BS will be established at the MESRS, followed by focal points at the national level at other ministries, at the Higher Territorial Units (HTU) (and, if necessary, at selected local governments, e.g., for supporting marginalised Roma communities with the possibility of including representatives from relevant associations). The focal points will form the National Network for BS. The representatives of the focal points will nominate members of the Working Group responsible for BS, and will cooperate mainly through information sharing, suggestions for the implementation of programmes and the production of information reports for the decision makers and for the community of key actors in the field of adult education in BS. Establishing partnerships with HTU and municipalities as coordinators for monitoring the status of basic skills at the regional level can build on previous contacts within the recommendation of Upskilling Pathways, in which HTU will have their representatives.</p> <p>The activities of the BS Working Group will support the transfer and sharing of information on basic skills development and a system for early identification of needs in the light of regional specificities.</p>	

1.5. Slovak Qualifications Framework and National Qualifications System

Monitored structural indicator	Participation of adults in educations	
	Measures	WHO
1	Redefining the role and status of the National Qualifications Register	MESRS SR
2	Revitalisation of the www.kvalifikacie.sk portal as a comprehensive information source on qualifications in the Slovak Republic	MESRS SR
3	Linking national databases of qualifications and learning opportunities with the Europass portal	MESRS SR
<p>Context:</p> <p>The Slovak Qualifications Framework (SKKR) and the National Qualifications System (NQS) became part of the Slovak Republic's education system in 2015 as a result of the national project Creation of the National Qualifications System in the Slovak Republic (2012-2015), which was implemented by the State Vocational Education Institute (SVEI). Both tools were created to provide Slovak citizens with opportunities for easier understanding of qualifications in a national and international context and to open the way for greater flexibility in the acquisition of qualifications. The impetus for their creation was the EU Recommendation on the establishment of a European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning, which was reflected in the Lifelong Learning Act 568/2009. The Slovak Qualifications Framework gives a comprehensive picture of the qualifications system in the Slovak Republic, promotes lifelong learning and facilitates the educational and labour mobility of Slovak citizens within the EU (which is why Slovak diplomas and certificates of qualifications have been labelled with the relevant SKKR/EQR level since 2019).</p> <p>The National Qualifications Framework is the register of qualifications in the Slovak Republic. The qualification standards described here provide information for candidates on the requirements that need to be met to obtain each qualification. Within the national project, 1000 qualification standards were developed. After the interruption of further development of the National Qualifications System (NQS) due to the lack of funding for the work of the sectoral councils, it was resumed in 2019 with funding from the state budget, while the occupational standards of the National Occupations System and the qualification standards of the NQS continue to be created in parallel. The updated 2018 Recommendation on the European Qualifications Framework https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/SK/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32017H0615(01)&from=SK emphasises transparency and quality assurance of qualifications (Annex IV). There is a need to define the position of NQS within the Slovak Qualifications System, to resolve the link between NQS, National Occupations System (NOS) and Information System of Further Education (ISFE), etc., to define/add criteria for the development of qualification standards (needs analysis), to distinguish the role and position of professional qualifications (qualifications of the 4th sub-framework of SKKR). In the context of the preparation of the system of validation of knowledge and skills and the modification and revision of the qualification system of the Slovak Republic described in measures 1.1 - 1.7, it is necessary to remove these ambiguities in the new LLL Act (pursuant to the Legislative Plan of the tasks of SR Government in the 1st quarter of 2022). The National Qualifications Framework, qualifications with defined qualification and assessment standards are key for the development of new higher education (HE) study programmes as well as for the alignment of existing study programmes with new quality standards determined by The Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education (SAAHE), with an emphasis on expected learning outcomes related to labour market requirements. The process of alignment of study programmes with the new quality standards must be completed by 31 August 2022⁴⁶. Therefore, it is very important to clarify the defined relationships, describe and update the qualifications as soon as possible so that the adjustment of existing and the creation of new study programmes is directed towards meeting the requirements of the labour market.</p> <p>It is also necessary to reflect the obligations of the Slovak Republic arising from EU legislation, in particular the newly adopted Decision on a common framework for the provision of better services in the field of skills and qualifications (Europass), 2018 https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/SK/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32018D0646&qid=1613666555210, which obliges Slovakia to link national databases of qualifications (and other databases, e.g. learning opportunities) with the Europass portal.</p>		

⁴⁶ The Standards for the Internal Quality Assurance System for Higher Education were approved by the Executive Board of the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education on 2 July 2020 and entered into force on 1 September 2020. Every higher education institution is obliged to align its internal system with these Standards for Internal System within 24 months of their entry into force. Art. 13 of the Standards for the Internal Quality Assurance System for Higher Education available at: <https://saavs.sk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Standardy-pre-vnutorny-system-zabezpecovania-kvality-2.pdf>

Impact on the structural indicator: The current state of NQS and the Qualifications Framework does not match their original purpose for which they were created. Moreover, both instruments are difficult to understand for the professional and lay public, because of the parallel use of qualification standards in the Further Education Information System, and the unclear relationship between educational, qualification and occupational standards. One of the obligations of the Slovak Republic towards EU member states is transparency and clear quality assurance measures in the definition of qualifications. A clear structure and roles of NQS and the individual sub-frameworks of qualifications are essential for a functioning validation system that enables qualifications to be obtained outside the formal education system.

Measure 1: Redefining the role and status of the National Qualifications System

Monitored output indicator	New Act on lifelong learning
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Is a legislative change required? Yes

Is an inter-ministerial coordination required? Yes

Risk factor (critical success factor): Insufficient of support for the legislative change

Description of the measure:

The expert group will propose the substantive content of the new LLL Act; inter-ministerial coordination will be needed. The starting point for these proposals can be the input analyse of the national project Creation of the National Qualifications System; the analysis of the National Qualifications System in Learning Slovakia, the current EU legislation and the current needs related to the further development of the qualification system in Slovakia, e.g. in relation to the development of the validation system (recognition of qualifications).

LLL Act will also include:

- SKKR sub-frames,
- the role and status of NQS and qualification standards,
- updated procedures for the development of qualifications,
- entities entering into the development of NQS,
- the relationship between NQS and the Information System for Further Education (ISFE).

Measure 2: Revitalisation of the www.kvalifikacie.sk portal as a comprehensive information source on qualifications in the Slovak Republic

Monitored output indicator:	Creating centralised information portal on the qualification system in the Slovak Republic
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Is a legislative change required? No

Is an inter-ministerial coordination required? Yes

Risk factor (critical success factor): failure to reach agreement on linking the portal to other information sources

Description of the measure:

Part of the outputs of the national project Development of the National Qualification System was the creation of the Information System of the National Qualification System (portal www.kvalifikacie.sk). In the context of planning further development of the portal www.kvalifikacie.sk, which may in near future include linking with the Information System for Further Education, linking with www.sustavapovolani.sk, or other information resources regarding qualifications and adult education for the labour market, it is necessary to better inform about the system of qualifications in the Slovak Republic, the Slovak Qualifications Framework and the current developments in this area in the Slovak Republic and the EU towards both the professional and the general public. In the future, it should be supplemented with information related to the introduction of the system regarding recognition of the results of previous education and learning and related micro-certificates and micro-qualifications (see Measures 1.5 and 1.6).

Measure 3: Linking national databases of qualifications and learning opportunities with the Europass portal	
Monitored output indicator:	Linking Slovakia's education and skills data with EU skills platforms
Is a legislation change required? No	
Is an inter-ministerial coordination required? No	
Risk factor (critical success factor): Insufficient coordination in linking information sources and databases	
<p>Description of the measure:</p> <p>EU Decision 2018/646 dated 18 April 2018 on a common framework for better skills and qualifications provision (Europass) https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/SK/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018D0646&from=EN obliges member states to link their databases of both qualifications and learning opportunities (educational opportunities) to the Europass online platform. Data on both qualifications and learning opportunities are visualised in the Europass online platform in the 'Courses' section which can be updated or completed as required. The link serves to better inform end-users (students, employers, educational institutions) in the EU about Slovak qualifications and learning opportunities in the Slovak Republic. The fulfilment of this task is regularly monitored by the European Commission.</p> <p>Proposed databases to be linked to the Europass system: National Qualifications System, HE Portal, National Classification of Education⁴⁷, ISFE.</p>	

⁴⁷ National Classification of Education available at: <https://www.minedu.sk/data/files/3841.xlsx>

1.6. System of validation of non-formal education and informal learning

Monitored structural indicator:	Participation of adults in education Employment 20-64 Unemployment of the low educated	
	Measures	Who
1	Introducing descriptors of lower levels into SKKR	MESRS SR
2	Draft act on the recognition of prior learning outcomes – introduction in the Act on LLL (permeability of the education system)	MESRS SR
3	Equalisation of qualifications at the level of apprenticeship certificate	MESRS SR, SVEI, employers
4	Extension of the General School Leaving Examination for adult education - Amendment to the School Act	MESRS SR, NICEM, SPI
5	Extension of the Vocational School Leaving Examination for adult education - Amendment to the Act on VET	MESRS SR, NICEM, SVEI
6	Introduction of the Master's Examination	MESRS SR, SVEI, employers
7	Introduction of professional technician specialist (SKKR 6) and professional engineer (SKKR 7)	MESRS SR, universities, employers
<p>Context:</p> <p>The current system of qualifications validation in the Slovak Republic does not fully respect the Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal education and informal learning (2012/C 398/01)⁴⁸. It focuses exclusively on obtaining a certificate on qualification - a document on the basis of which a person can apply for a trade licence in a given field. A national validation system that includes all four parts, i.e. identification, documentation, assessment and certification, needs further development of the tools and their validation, as the only possible way to obtain a certificate confirming professional competence at present is passing an examination.</p> <p>The introduction of new systemic elements for the recognition of qualifications on the basis of knowledge, skills and competences acquired through practice - in other words, by validating the learning outcomes of prior learning - implies defining the main tools of this system. The Council Recommendation of 20 December 2012 on the validation of non-formal education and informal learning (2012/C 398/01) proposes that member states include the following elements in the validation of non-formal education and informal learning, thus enabling each individual to use any of them, either individually or in combination, depending on his/her needs. The framework concept for a system for the recognition of prior learning outcomes acquired by individuals through non-formal education and informal learning, in the form of qualifications or credits leading to qualifications or in other appropriate form, is based on four key stages of the process, which consist of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> identification of learning outcomes, documentation of learning outcomes, assessment of learning outcomes, certification (certificate) of learning outcomes based on learning outcomes assessment. <p>These systemic steps will be introduced at all levels of the education system above lower secondary education from EQF/SKKR2 to EQF/SKKR7.</p> <p>Furthermore, systematising the Slovak Qualifications Framework (hereinafter referred to as SKKR) is being implemented in relation to SKKR referencing report to the European Qualifications Framework (hereinafter referred to as EQF). It clarified that the Slovak Qualifications Framework is the national qualifications framework of the Slovak Republic. The SKKR was linked to the EQF in 2017 through the referencing process. Changes and clarification of the typology of qualifications identified and recognised in the Slovak Republic were proposed. The four sub-frames of SKKR adopted by the report correspond to the relevant parts of the Slovak Republic's education system and are characterised by a single qualification type:</p>		

⁴⁸ [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/SK/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32012H1222\(01\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/SK/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32012H1222(01))

1. sub-framework of general-educational qualifications - is regulated by Act No. 245/2008 Coll. on education and training (School Act) and on Amendments and Supplements of certain Acts as amended,
2. the sub-framework of vocational qualifications - this is regulated by Act No 61/2015 Coll. on Vocational Education and Training and on Amendments and Supplements to Certain Acts, as amended,
3. the sub-framework of higher education qualifications - this is regulated by Act No 131/2002 Coll. on Higher Education and on Amendments and Supplements to Certain Acts, as amended
4. the sub-framework of occupational qualifications - is regulated by Act No 568/2009 Coll. on Lifelong Learning and on Amendments and Supplements to Certain Acts, as amended.

The impact on structural indicator:

The introduction of these measures will accomplish a systematic approach to the recognition of non-formal education and informal learning outcomes at all levels of the SKKR. The operationalisation of the systemic elements of the SKKR will allow for a new perspective on the qualifications provided and recognised in the SR; until now, the focus has been on the level of education attained, rather than the level of qualification achieved. Looking at the achievement of learning outcomes through qualifications represents a new systemic element - **what matters most are the learning outcomes** (knowledge, skills and competences) **achieved by a given candidate for a qualification**. Other aspects, such as the form of study, the length of study or the number of credits achieved are not decisive.

These measures open up opportunities for **more flexible forms of qualification accomplishment in different life situations of individuals** (e.g. change of job, career promotion, the need for employers to acquire new qualifications, the acquisition of qualifications by early leavers or those who find the formal qualification system inappropriate, etc.).

Measure 1: Introducing descriptors of lower levels into SKKR

Monitored output indicator

Extension of SKKR to include lower level descriptors

Is a legislative change required? Yes

Is an inter-ministerial coordination required? Yes

Risk factor (critical success factor): challenging knowledge transfer, need to strengthen staff and professional capacity of SVEI

Description of the measure:

The measure promotes a coordinated approach and assessment of basic skills in the SR, while the definition of lower levels of the SKKR will help in the design of training programmes for the low-skilled.

As regards the assessment of adult skills, the SR participates in the international PIAAC research, which aims at assessing basic skills and competences of adults that determine their success in life and at work. The international research involves testing of adults aged 16-65 in three main areas focusing on reading literacy, mathematical literacy and problem-solving skills in a technically advanced environment. Final results from the Round 1 of the 2012 survey are alarming: more than 10% of respondents were at the bottom of the reading literacy scale. In Slovakia, as many as 11.8% of adults have only the lowest level of reading literacy and 13.8% have only the lowest level of mathematical literacy. Slovakia is among the countries with one of the highest proportions, up to 21.7%, of people who have no experience with ICT or lack the basic computer literacy necessary to use ICT in everyday life.

SKKR is a tool that enables a common understanding and refinement of learning outcomes, taking into account different learning pathways. SKKR is described in the form of a table containing eight reference levels of knowledge, skills and competences defined by national descriptors. The levels of SKKR are based on a hierarchical principle, i.e. each level reflects an increase in requirements, building on the level below and includes the descriptions of that level. The growth of demands for learning outcomes at each level is related to the complexity and depth of knowledge and understanding, the degree of support required in the performance of activities or during learning, the degree of integration, independence and creativity required, the extent and complexity of the application of knowledge or practice, the degree of transparency and dynamism of situations within practice or learning.

For SKKR level 1, the context of learning is simple and stable. The focus is on the mastery of basic general knowledge, its easy reproduction and the acquisition of basic competences. Performance includes the simplest, repetitive activities performed under direct supervision in unchanging conditions. Education is acquired during compulsory school attendance.

In general education (primary and lower secondary education, general upper secondary education), so-called 'general education qualifications' are acquired and are traditionally understood mainly as evidence of educational attainment.

Thus, SKKR level 1 means the acquisition of a general education qualification, the evidence of the qualification being a certificate from the 4th year of primary school with a clause.

Measure 2: Draft act on the recognition of prior learning outcomes – introduction in the Act on LLL (permeability of the education system)

Monitored output indicator:	Adoption of a new Act on the recognition of previous learning outcomes, or related Amendment to the LLL Act
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Is a legislative change required? Yes

Is an inter-ministerial coordination required? Yes

Risk factor (critical success factor): need to strengthen staff capacity of SVEI

Description of the measure:

The aim of the proposed amendments is to systematize the qualifications identified and recognized in the Slovak Republic and to clarify their typology – i. e. setting up a system of validation.

Certain new systemic elements of the recognition of qualifications based on knowledge, skills and competences in the verification of professional competence, i.e. in the validation of learning outcomes of previous learning, are modified. The competence of the trade organisation and the professional organisation of a given qualification is emphasised in order to approve VET strategy for the employer, as well as for the System of Verification of Qualifications - simultaneously in accordance with HTU development plan.

Measure 3: Equalisation of qualifications at the level of vocational certificate

Monitored indicator	CeVET providing qualifications (SKKR 3) by validating non-formal education and informal learning
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Is a legislative change required? Yes

Is an inter-ministerial coordination required? Yes

Risk factor (critical success factor): lack of interest in these qualifications, need to strengthen the staff capacity of SVEI

Description of the measure:

It is proposed to ensure that the Centres of Vocational Education and Training Centre (CeVET) are provided with such material and technical equipment which will enable them to provide vocational education, preparation and training for a qualification (or for a group of similar qualifications) for which validation of the results of non-formal education and informal learning (recognition of previous learning) and verification of vocational competences at the level of a vocational certificate (or qualifications at higher levels) will be ensured.

At present it is possible to align the level of education and qualification obtained in the formal education system with the level of qualification obtained in further education or through the verification of professional competence - according to a conversion table linking the level of education and the level of the SKKR. It can be noted that the qualifications in the 2nd sub-framework of vocational qualifications and the 4th sub-framework of professional qualifications of the SKKR are identical at the level of an apprenticeship certificate, i.e. SKKR 3. This measure allows candidates to obtain directly an apprenticeship certificate (qualifications at SKKR and EQF level 3) under certain fulfilled conditions - this is a direct compliance between the documents obtained about the qualification in the formal education system and the assessment of the results of non-formal education and informal learning; the measure will help extend the qualification of the labour force on the labour market.

Key to the success of the measure is the introduction of uniform and standardised methodologies for skills assessment or validation procedures. Professional evaluators will assess all elements of validation of non-formal education and informal learning. The quality of CeVET is the competence of the relevant trade organisation or the relevant professional organisation.

Measure 4: Extension of the General School Leaving Examination for adult education	
Monitored indicator	Introducing the possibility of obtaining a level of education by non-formal education and informal learning at SKKR level 4 (general education qualifications sub-framework)
Is a legislative change required? Yes	
Is an inter-ministerial coordination required? No	
Risk factor (critical success factor): staff capacities at NICEM; capability to prepare School Leaving Examination tests based on real learning outcomes and in compliance with SKKR level 4; specific features of adult education; availability of the School Leaving Examination at different dates of the calendar year	
<p>Description of the measure:</p> <p>The introduction of the School Leaving Examination for adult learners is intended to ensure the permeability of the education system, as it will also allow candidates to continue their studies at a higher level of the SKKR. Candidates would also obtain a higher level of education and a general education qualification.</p> <p>Keys to the success of this measure are uniform and standardised methodologies for skills assessment/validation procedures and trained, professionally proficient assessors for all elements of validation of non-formal education and informal learning.</p>	

Measure 5: Extension of the Vocational School Leaving Examination for adult education - Amendment to the Act on VET	
Monitored indicator	Introducing the possibility for obtaining a level of education by non-formal education and informal learning at SKKR level 4 (sub-framework of vocational qualifications)
Is a legislative change required? Yes	
Is an inter-ministerial coordination required? Yes	
Risk factor (critical success factor): staff capacity at SVEI; ability to prepare Vocational School Leaving Examination tests based on real learning outcomes and in compliance with SKKR level 4; specific features of adult education; availability of the School Leaving Examination at different dates of the calendar year	
<p>Description of the measure:</p> <p>Vocational School Leaving Examination is an institute for the completion of vocational education and training in secondary schools, regulated in the legislation of EU member states that have introduced dual education into their education system. This Vocational School Leaving Examination should consist of the theoretical part of the School Leaving Examination and the practical part of the School Leaving Examination in such a way that it does not include general subjects (Slovak language, literature, foreign language, etc.) which the adult had already passed, for example, as part of his/her previous studies at secondary school or general subjects recognised in the framework of the validation of non-formal education or informal learning.</p> <p>The introduction of the Vocational School Leaving Examination is intended to ensure the permeability of the education system, as it will also allow candidates to continue their studies at a higher SKKR/ISCED level. Candidates would also obtain a higher level of education and a vocational qualification at SKKR level 4.</p> <p>Key to the success of the measure are uniform and standardised methodologies for skills assessment/validation procedures and trained, professionally proficient assessors for all elements of validation of non-formal education and informal learning.</p> <p>Starting from SKKR 4 qualification levels, it is necessary to transform CeVET into CoVEs (see chapter 1. 2) and to introduce a new institute of a supra-company training centre (SCTC⁴⁹), the aim of which is to promote, in particular, the entry of small and medium size enterprises and self-employed persons into the education system and the System of Validation. Another aim is to increase the quality and attractiveness of VET in the lifelong learning system and the overall coordination of VET and further adult education by employers, trade organisations and professional organisations. Adequate material and technical equipment and facilities for training and the verification of competence in a given qualification seem to be the key factors. The competence</p>	

⁴⁹ The proposal of Act No 61/2015 Coll. regarding the establishment of a supra-enterprise training centre in Section 22a. The proposal of the Act is available at: <https://www.nrsr.sk/web/Dynamic/DocumentPreview.aspx?DocID=499224>

of the trade organisation and the professional organisation is to approve VET strategy for the employer and for the System of Validation.

Individual measures concerning the completion of initial VET will be implemented in connection with the national project Dual education and increasing the attractiveness and quality of VET. The outputs of the national project have formed the basis for further systemic measures in the field of leaving secondary education. Unified tasks in the final examinations and the introduction of the institute of the vocational school leaving certificate will constitute a systemic package of validation of qualifications in line with labour market needs and cross-cutting competences, both of which will be experimentally validated.

Measure 6: Introduction of the Master's Examination

Monitored indicator:

CeVET providing qualifications (SKKR 5 and SKKR 6) by validating non-formal education and informal learning

Is a legislative change required? Yes

Is an inter-ministerial coordination required? Yes

Risk factor (critical success factor): staff capacity at SVEI; ability to prepare the Master's Examinations based on real learning outcomes and in compliance with SKKR 5 and SKKR 6; specific features of adult education; availability of the Master's Examinations at different times of the calendar year

Description of the measure:

Key to the success of the measure are uniform and standardised methodologies for skills assessment/validation procedures and trained, professionally proficient assessors for all elements of validation of non-formal education and informal learning.

At these levels of qualifications, SKKR 5 and SKKR 6, it is also necessary to transform CeVETs into CoVEs and to introduce a new institute of a supra-company training centre (SCTC), which aims in particular to promote the entry of small and medium size enterprises and self-employed persons into the education system and the System of Validation of Qualifications. Another aim is to improve the quality and attractiveness of VET in the lifelong learning system and the overall coordination of VET and adult further education by employers, trade organisations and professional organisations. Adequate material and technical equipment and facilities for training and the verification of professional competence in a given qualification is a key factor. NVQs are a tool for raising the level of innovation in VET and increasing the competitiveness of industry and services in the labour market. Competence of the trade union and professional organisation to approve the VET strategy for the employer and for the System of Validation of Qualifications.

In the framework of the Centres of Excellence (CoVEs), in addition to SCTC at the level of large enterprises, there is a need to create opportunities for CeVET (as stated above) and to extend existing competences for validation and recognition of previous learning outcomes (Measure 3). This competence needs to be progressively extended to the levels of qualifications at SKKR 5, which represent the portfolio of the so-called master craftsmen. In the framework of the optimisation of the existing infrastructure, the Centre of Excellence would thus prepare Master's Examinations for these qualifications, as well as provide training in further professional development for teachers of vocational subjects and master craftsmen. At the same time, the Centres of Excellence need to cooperate with technical colleges and supra-company training centres in those areas of the economy where there is a shortage of qualified staff on the labour market. The centres of excellence would cover the Master's Examinations, the content of which should in any case be the responsibility of the individual associations, both in terms of process and organisation and logistics. Furthermore, the Master's Examination should be accompanied by the introduction of permeability and the recognition of higher vocational education with the first degree of higher education.

The pilot phase of the CoVEs will be implemented during the new programme period 2021-2027. Consequently, knowledge and experience from the pilot phase should be reflected in legislation. The newly established CoVEs do not result in a reduction in the number of existing CeVET.

Measure 7: Introducing professional technician specialist (SKKR 6) and professional engineer (SKKR 7)

Monitored indicator

Qualifications at SKKR levels 6 and 7 through validation of non-formal education and informal learning

Is a legislative change required? Yes

Is an inter-ministerial coordination required? Yes

Risk factor (critical success factor): personal capacities at universities; ability to prepare validation of previous learning outcomes based on real learning outcomes and in compliance with SKKR level 6 and SKKR level 7; specific features of adult education; availability of validation based on the professional portfolio of the validation candidate

Description of the measure:

Key to the success of the measure are uniform and standardised methodologies for skills assessment/validation procedures and trained, professionally proficient assessors for all elements of validation of non-formal education and informal learning.

In the case of the qualifications of professional technician specialist and professional engineer, it will be possible to recognise HE credits⁵⁰ (ECTS) for the knowledge, skills and competences acquired during his/her previous professional practice experience, in the context of his/her non-formal education and informal learning. It should be noted that the outcome does not have to be either an obtaining particular degree of education or particular academic degree; this is a distinction between a degree of education and a level of qualification.

It is therefore necessary to increase the attractiveness of VET in the lifelong learning system, as well as the overall coordination of VET and further adult education by employers, trade organisations and professional organisations. The competence of the trade organisation and the professional organisation is to approve VET strategy for an employer and for the System of Validation of Qualifications.

⁵⁰ If the recognition of credits should result in the award of an academic degree, according to Act No. 131/2002 Coll., this can only be done by a higher education institution

1.7. Increasing the flexibility of the qualifications system with smaller qualifications and micro-qualifications (micro-certificates)

Monitored structural indicator:	Early school leaving Unemployment rate among the low-educated NEETs (economically inactive young people both in education or training) Adult participation in education	
	Measures	Who
1	Segmentation of existing formal qualifications acquired in secondary vocational schools (SVS)	MESRS SR
2	Supplementing the fourth sub-framework with "minor" qualifications required by the labour market	MESRS SR in co-operation with other sectors and stakeholders
3	Identification of skills in demand by the labour market that complement or deepen qualifications already acquired, including those that can also be acquired through 'mainstream' training courses or courses with a high proportion of self-study (micro-certificates and micro-qualifications)	MESRS SR in co-operation with other sectors and stakeholders
4	Clear definition of terminology related to the need to increase flexibility of the education and qualifications system and the evidence of qualification acquisition	MESRS SR in co-operation with other sectors and stakeholders
<p>Context:</p> <p>Acquiring a qualification in formal education at a secondary vocational school requires several years of study. This is in compliance with our tradition of providing general education and broad vocational base in VET. This paradoxically reflects the challenges not to underestimate the development of basic skills and key competences, which is currently strongly emphasised in education policies. In the past, when economy of the state was centrally regulated, there was an obligation to be employed, so VET graduates were virtually guaranteed a job, even at the expense of the efficiency of the enterprise. In a market economy, the traditional model of continuous vocational training is problematic, as it is not possible to order enterprises to employ graduates they do not need. Modularisation of VET programmes and a possibility of acquiring both 'minor' qualifications and 'major' qualifications by accumulating acquired 'minor' qualifications is proving to be a better alternative in a turbulent labour market.</p> <p>Acquiring qualifications by studying at the secondary vocational school requires several years of study. Achieving the 'large' multiannual qualifications associated with education at ISCED level 3 is increasingly a problem. Early school leavers do not have an opportunity to acquire a 'smaller' qualification that demonstrates their knowledge and skills they have already acquired, which would be sufficient for them to be successfully employed. The inability to obtain relevant 'lower' qualifications is closely linked to the high unemployment rate of low-educated young people. Furthermore, the recent pandemic has confirmed the need for change. Distance learning can cope with general education and theoretical vocational training, but it certainly cannot fully replace extensive practical training. This has led to proposals to reduce the amount of practical teaching as a solution to the consequences of the quarantine. However, this would not contribute to the quality of graduates or the credibility of the study programme, and it could question the proof of qualification. The possible alternative is to fulfil the requirements of the programme in terms of general and vocational theoretical education and simultaneously to allow the graduate to achieve 'minor' qualification. Admittedly a full qualification, but from the point of view of the extent of the original programme only a partial qualification that corresponds to a suitably chosen segment of the originally intended qualification. Increasing the flexibility of the education and qualification system is a necessity. This requires three parallel activities: the segmentation of existing formal qualifications provided by SKKR, the continued development of vocational qualifications and the introduction of micro-qualifications (micro-certificates).</p> <p>The segmentation of original formal qualifications will provide a safety net for learners struggling to complete full study programme, and will also provide an opportunity to build a range of programmes for adult learners who need qualifications that are more focused and achievable in a shorter timeframe than required by a standard course of study or apprenticeship. Segmentation will also allow for continuing adult learning (a return to education) and the expansion of qualifications through the gradual accumulation of smaller qualifications. Segmentation can also facilitate the modularisation of formal education at the secondary vocational schools (SVS). Although modularisation is not equally appropriate in all disciplines and 'smaller'</p>		

qualifications are not always the solution to the problem of incompliance between supply and demand in the labour market, it will be beneficial for the majority of disciplines.

It appears that the intention to design SKKR in such a way that its three sub-frames corresponding to the existing streams of the education system (general, secondary vocational, higher education) are complemented by a fourth sub-framework. It would enable the implementation of both 'smaller' and new qualifications focused on the knowledge, skills and competences currently required in jobs. Such qualifications (so-called occupational qualifications) are naturally 'smaller' than those acquired in current study programmes at SVS as they target fewer or even only a single job and may not fulfil the requirements for degree award. At the same time, many new, perhaps as yet unnamed, qualifications are expected to emerge which may be significantly different from those identified in the above-mentioned process of segmentation of qualifications currently provided by SVS. Unfortunately, the absence of analyses of the current and prospective situation in the labour market has resulted in the fourth sub-framework not yet being fulfilled. However, such an analysis is a prerequisite for the reform of VET and lifelong learning.

Micro-qualifications (micro-certificates, another translation of the original term used is micro-credentials) necessary for the support of VET and lifelong learning represent a burning topic in the European policy. They would take account the need for even small changes in employability, or the acquisition or development of just one specific skill, if such a skill is relevant for the needs of the labour market. Experience from some foreign systems shows, that documenting qualifications as the outcome of even very short courses (e.g. lasting only 10 hours) is useful for both employees and employers. The original idea of 'micro-certificates' did not presuppose any central regulation, but now that this has happened due to EU measures, the risk of over-regulation and terminological conflicts should be avoided. We propose to use both terms micro-qualifications and micro-certificates. Let the term micro-certificates correspond to the term micro-credentials. In the case of evidence of the acquisition of learning outcomes, which should be regulated, included in the qualifications framework and the register of qualifications, we propose to refer to micro-qualifications. Consequently, some micro-certificates will serve as an evidence of the acquisition of micro-qualifications according to the regulation of SKKR, and therefore we will use the term micro-qualifications instead of micro-certificates. This leaves room for unregulated learning activities and the awarding of micro-certificates, e.g. also in the form of electronic badges which can be used in Europass, and for the acceptance of emerging micro-certificates at any level of the SKKR.

All three initiatives are interlinked and aim to increase flexibility in the acquisition of qualifications. This would create the conditions to reduce the risk of low skills and youth unemployment and promote lifelong learning, especially for those adults who need to deepen or broaden their qualifications as a result of technological challenges. While all three initiatives are characterised by efforts to increase granularity, the difference lies in the emphasis on how these qualifications are implemented and what their purpose is. At the end of such a reconstruction of the qualification system, it will be necessary to achieve a consistent understanding of the concepts of qualification, evidence of qualification, evidence of education, evidence of a degree, qualification prerequisites and qualification requirements. At present, the understanding is ambiguous, often different from the understanding of this concept in the European context, which is even reflected in an ambiguity in school legislation. The consensus reached will be reflected in legislation.

Impact on the structural indicator:

The proposed measures aimed at increasing the flexibility of education and skills system, will create the conditions for strengthening lifelong learning and increasing employability. The measures can be positively reflected in indicators measuring participation in lifelong learning, unemployment rate and the share of population with qualifications at least at EQF/SKKR level 3. Greater variability and flexibility in the offer of education and skills can help to reverse the negative trend in the share of the population without qualifications required by the labour market.

Measure 1: Segmentation of existing formal qualifications acquired in secondary vocational schools (SVS)

Monitored output indicator:

Number of segmented study branches and identified qualification segments (qualification units)

Is a legislative change required? Yes

Is an inter-ministerial coordination required? No

Risk factor (critical success factor): Insufficient number of curriculum methodologists in SVEI to cover all VET programmes and lack of funding to recruit necessary external experts for the curriculum expert committees

Description of the measure:

The essence of segmentation can be explained as follows: after a successful completion of the final examination at the end of the training in the three-year apprenticeship in butchery (2954 H), the pupil achieves secondary vocational education. According to the current legislation, the proof of the acquired degree is the final examination certificate and the proof of the acquired qualification is the apprenticeship certificate. On the labour market, graduates can take up a variety of jobs. As experience shows, butchers are in demand on the labour market for a variety of jobs. Specifying job classifications, e.g. butcher, bone maker, meat smoker and others, can be seen as a demand for a qualification that is a segment of the butcher qualification. The qualifications named in such a way do not distinguish between the set of training courses offered by schools, and studying at the secondary vocational school can only provide evidence of the "butcher" qualification, which includes training for such qualifications. Evidence of minor qualifications cannot yet be obtained at the secondary vocational school. The task of segmenting formal qualifications, in this case 'butcher', is to identify suitable minor qualifications and to make it possible to provide evidence obtaining of such qualifications as well. To do this, legislation need to adjusted in a relation to the national curriculum and school education programmes by defining relevant standards. Such segmentation would enable:

- pupils who are at risk of failing the whole programme to concentrate on obtaining a minor qualification that guarantees them a place on the labour market (e.g. an education certificate for "bone maker" qualification, even though these pupils will not obtain education certificate for "butcher" qualification);
- perceive lower qualifications as building blocks for broadening and deepening qualifications in later education and training, and also as a starting point for efforts to validate acquired experience at work;
- use identified segments and established qualification standards as a support for modularising those programmes provided in VET induction where appropriate.

Furthermore, segmentation provides opportunities (see Measure 4) for differentiating educational certificates (degree of education) between study programmes and training branches. It will also open up the possibility for obtaining a degree certificate on completion of studies by passing a final examination in modification with the requirements for a minor qualification and obtaining trade certificate as evidence of a minor qualification.

The segmentation of existing qualifications provided by SVS is the task for the creators of state education programmes. At the same time, it is necessary to be sensitive to the specific features of individual study branches, as some programmes and qualifications are more suitable for segmentation than the others. The experience of curriculum methodologists and curriculum expert commissions at SVEI is crucial for assessing the meaningfulness of the identification of qualification segments and, in particular, the possibility of acquiring both the degree and the minor qualification.

Measure 2: Supplementing the fourth sub-framework with "minor" qualifications required by the labour market

Monitored output indicator	Number of qualifications included in the fourth sub-framework of SKKR
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Is a legislative change required? Yes

Is an inter-ministerial coordination required? Yes

Risk factor (critical success factor): the quality of stakeholder cooperation, in particular the ability of sector councils to anticipate future labour market needs based on analyses of workplace developments as a basis for the creation of occupational qualifications and the ability of the SVEI, in cooperation with external experts, to support the creation of respected qualification standards.

Description of the measure:

In our VET model, the problem of insufficient development of basic skills or key competences was not dominant. On the contrary, the opposite problem has gradually become more prevalent: the need to better target workplace requirements. Similar situation arises in the need for developing occupational qualifications. Occupational qualifications are generally specified in more detail and, similarly to the National Occupations Classification and Occupational Standards, they aim at the descriptions of qualifications required by particular occupation. They are closely related to the demand for knowledge and skills immediately visible as relevant to the labour market. Using the example of the segmentation of qualifications from Measure 1, the qualification of a bone maker or a butcher may take away from less relevant knowledge and skills such as those relating to the economics and psychology of sale or the principles of arranging and promoting goods, which are included in the qualification of the butcher.

The fourth sub-framework of the NQF was designed to counterbalance the first three sub-frameworks comprising formal 'major' qualifications requiring several years of study. However, the fourth sub-framework not only seeks to formulate qualification standards reflecting efforts to segment the 'big' qualifications, but also seeks to reflect on future developments and identify new

qualifications related to new knowledge and skills in demand in the changing labour market. The qualifications of the fourth sub-framework thus emphasise the development of expertise for immediate use at work. However, this does not mean ignoring the need for personal development of the learner, or underestimating the importance of general education, or even pressing for a shortening of secondary education. At the same time, vocational qualifications promote the accumulation of 'minor' qualifications as building blocks for broadening and deepening qualifications, whether through further education or through validation of otherwise acquired knowledge, skills and competences. In the future, especially in the case of modularised programmes in SVS, the qualifications of the fourth sub-framework could contribute to better setting of SVS study programmes that would comply with learners' needs.

Creating occupational qualification standards depends on labour market research, graduate tracking, occupational surveys and anticipation of future changes in the activities required in workplaces. Initiating, supporting and evaluating data collection on the current state and anticipation of the future state of workplaces must become a key task of sector councils. Without relevant information from employers, and especially their strategic units, it will not be possible to fill the fourth sub-framework of the SKKR with relevant and respected qualifications. The current insignificant performance of SKKR is the result of the absence of systematic surveys of workplace activities. The 'Qualifications Verification System' project and the revitalisation of the sectoral councils could significantly help to make SKKR more functional.

Measure 3: Identification of skills in demand by the labour market that complement or deepen qualifications already acquired, including those that can also be acquired through 'mainstream' training courses or courses with a high proportion of self-study (micro-certificates and micro-qualifications)

Monitored output indicator	The number of identified micro-qualifications
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Is a legislative change required? No

Is an inter-ministerial change required? Yes

Risk factor (critical success factor): Human and financial resources to absorb foreign experience, especially research know-how.

Description of the measure:

The European Skills Agenda of 1 July 2020 (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0274&from=EN>) lists the promotion of the development of micro-qualification (translated as microcertificates) as one of its 12 main activities. They were also included in another European document, the Digital Learning Action Plan of September 2020 (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/SK/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0624&rid=3>). It is in the IT sector where there is an acute demand for retraining workers to adapt to new technological challenges. The Council's recommendations, based on the results of the ongoing expert consultation, should be adopted as early as 2021. Micro-qualifications are acquired after completion of courses or modules. They are a rapid response to the need for specific skills in the labour market, which is particularly important in crisis situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic. They are expected to stimulate interest in lifelong learning by being accompanied by a possible course,

- accessible to all age groups;
- supported and facilitated by guidance, and
- lead to the recognition of learning outcomes as respected proof of qualifications (e.g. also as a consequence of inclusion in the national qualifications framework (SKKR) and associated quality assurance), and thus lead to increased employability.

Micro-qualifications are a reflection of the recognition of the need for more detailed segmentation. While the occupational qualifications that are currently being created can be seen as a medium level of specification and can be seen as an important support for retraining, either of the unemployed or of the employed whose qualifications are losing their usefulness in the labour market, micro-qualifications are more likely to be complementary to existing qualifications or the result of personal development. It is precisely in the context of Slovakia's inevitable digital transformation that the creation of micro-skills proves to be a very suitable tool for the gradual improvement of the digital skills of the entire population, not just workers. Micro-qualifications may or may not be building blocks of professional qualifications and may or may not be acquired alongside studies at secondary vocational schools. They are undoubtedly also expected to become attractive to adults and adult education providers. Furthermore, they may be a suitable complement to learning supported by individual learning accounts.

There is an urgent need to support the creation of micro-qualifications and respective courses in the context of digital skills, and the Digital Coalition's contribution to this initiative could be a decisive impetus to overcoming the digital competitiveness gap.

The national project 'Qualifications Verification System' and the explicit extension of the fourth sub-framework of the SKKR to include micro-qualifications can be helpful in supporting the creation of micro-qualifications as well.

Measure 4: Clear definition of terminology related to the need to increase flexibility of the education and qualification system and the evidence of qualification acquisition

Monitored output indicator	Approval of legislation changes
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Is a legislative change required? Yes

Is an inter-ministerial change required? Yes

Risk factor (critical success factor): Differences in opinion between experts and ministries in subsequent legislative alignment efforts.

Description of the measure:

The term qualification is used in a number of contexts in Slovakia and the diversity in the treatment of this term is reflected in legislation as well. The School Act (245/2008), the Act on VET (61/2015), the LLL Act (568/2009), the Higher Education Act (131/2002), as well as the laws of other ministries, e.g. the Trade Licensing Act (455/1991), deal with the term qualification and its derivatives (proof of qualification, proof of education, proof of degree, qualification certificate, qualification prerequisites) from a specific perspective, which variously reflects our traditions and sectoral practices.

Compatibility of terminology with EU policies needs to be clarified as well. Despite the UK's departure from the EU, the influence of the Anglo-Saxon world is also strong in VET and LLL. It can be seen strongly in the idea of a National Qualifications Framework and in the view of qualifications as the result of learners' recognition of meeting standards. Linked to this is the understanding of general education programmes as providing qualifications when officially respected standards are met, even if they are not primarily focused on the development of vocational skills. It is still uncommon in Slovakia to perceive a document of education (or a degree) as a proof of qualification as well, or to accept that the completion of any accredited educational programme implies the award of a qualification, or that the completion of education at the secondary vocational school could also lead to the acquisition of more qualification documents as a result of the fulfilment of a set of standards.

1.8. Short cycle tertiary programmes - SKKR level 5

Structural indicator monitored		Participation of adults in education
	Measure	Responsibility
1	Introduction of short cycle courses into legislation	MESRS SR
2	Promoting short cycle courses in the context of performance contracts	MESRS SR
3	Inclusion of short learning programmes in accreditation standards	SAAHE
<p>Context:</p> <p>The current system of funding universities does not support their differentiation in terms of creating conditions for a profiling different from the currently supported single research university model. However, international practice shows that a university environment allowing the profiling of some departments into career-oriented universities (Fachhochschule, College of Sciences, Community College) offering career-oriented (not only) bachelor programmes has its justification by making educational pathways more flexible, by better linking education and the labour market and by making it more attractive for adults seeking educational opportunities to complement their skills beyond initial education.</p> <p>Currently, legislation allows Slovak universities to offer vocationally oriented bachelor degree programmes, but these do not target adults returning to education. The education spending review approved by the government in October 2017 included a measure to create career-oriented bachelor's programmes in order to increase the share of bachelor's graduates without going on to a master's degree. Slovakia has the highest share of master's students in the total number of university graduates (84% vs. the average of European OECD countries at 41%), which represents a significant burden on public finances with regard to the question to what extent a master's degree is necessary for certain professions. Short higher education programmes are completely absent from the Slovak education system, while in neighbouring Austria, for example, the share of graduates in such programmes is as high as 46 % of the total number of higher education graduates in the adult population.</p> <p>Stronger support for the development of career-oriented programmes, including the introduction of short cycle tertiary education, also has the potential to increase interest in returning to formal adult education in the context of lifelong learning, particularly in the face of dynamic labour market changes. Compared to other countries, 1.5 % of adults in Slovakia are educated in the formal system, compared to an EU average of 6 % (e.g. up to 14 % in Denmark and Sweden). The low participation of adults in formal education in Slovakia is also largely influenced by the 'cultural' norm, where most graduates reach the desired level of education in the shortest possible time. It can be assumed that the indirect costs of learning in the form of work and family responsibilities for adults, directly influenced by the length of the educational programme, constitute a barrier.</p> <p>Expanding the supply of short higher education programmes not only in terms of length but also in terms of programme orientation reflecting labour market needs, together with other measures included in this strategy (e.g. career guidance, cooperation with employers), will support the supply of learning opportunities for adults and at the same time make opportunities for reskilling and upskilling more flexible. This will support individuals' motivations to respond flexibly to changes due to automation and digitalisation.</p>		
<p>Impact on structural indicator:</p> <p>The legislative introduction of the possibility to offer short higher education study programmes and subsequent support for implementation will allow for a more flexible way of acquiring vocational skills at higher education level for adults returning to the formal education system for retraining or upskilling.</p>		

1.9. Establishing a comprehensive graduate tracking system

Structural indicator monitored:	Employability 20-64 Employment of graduates 20-34 (within 3 years of graduation) Unemployment of low-educated persons NEETS (economically inactive young people not in education or training) Skills mismatch (ISCED 5-8, 15-34)	
	Measure	Responsibility
1	Development of a new concept for a graduate tracking system (GTS)	MESRS in co-operation with MLSAF, SAAHE
2	Establishment of a graduate tracking system based on the annual administrative data collections and evaluation, including their targeted processing for stakeholders needs	MESRS in co-operation with MLSAF
3	Provision of a national survey on the employability of HE graduates	MESRS, SAAHE
4	Provision of a national questionnaire survey on the employability of graduates from secondary education	MESRS
5	Piloting of "A Track of Our Graduates" scheme in 10 HEI faculties and 10 secondary schools	MESRS, SAAHE
6	Support for the enhancement of research and analytical capacities for GTS purposes	MESRS, MLSAF
<p>Context:</p> <p>Data on the labour market employability of graduates and information on their views on the education provided is a valuable resource for schools to adjust the curriculum of the programmes provided and for parents and pupils to choose an educational pathway. Such feedback is also an essential contribution to improving the performance of schools as a whole. Self-evaluation of schools based on feedback enhanced by graduate tracking data is a significant contribution to the improvement of school development plans and to the monitoring of school performance, whether by local or national authorities. Graduate tracking should therefore be required for school self-evaluation processes, in quality assurance systems and should be supported by the State School Inspectorate and the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education (SAAHE). In the sense of the Council Recommendation of 20 November 2017 concerning the tracking of graduate employability (2017/C 423/01), the term "graduate" refers to a person who has completed any level of higher education or vocational education and training (at level 4 of the EQF and above)".</p> <p>Despite significant improvements over the past two years, Slovakia faces challenges that require urgent action. The European Union is also calling on us to do so. In an effort to improve the availability and quality of data on graduates, the Council Recommendation of 20 November 2017 proposes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the collection of relevant anonymised administrative statistics from databases on education, taxes, population and social security - the development of longitudinal surveys on graduates - enabling anonymised data from different sources to be linked to create a comprehensive picture of graduate outcomes. <p>As recommended, data should be collected in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - socio-biographical and socio-economic information; - information on education and training; - information on employment or further education and training; - relevance of education and training for employment or lifelong learning; - career progression. <p>European Graduate Tracking Instrument (EGTI) will be a pan-European tool for collecting data on university graduates, which should benefit from the experience of piloting in eight countries under the Eurograduate project. With data collection foreseen for 2022, a preliminary stress test of readiness has already been carried out in all Member States and a roadmap is being</p>		

developed to address gaps. The test has demonstrated Slovakia's solid potential for mastering the EGTI, but also the need for some improvements, especially in electronic communication with graduates.

A 2016 report by Cedefop, the EU Agency for the Development of Vocational Education and Training, mapped Slovakia's readiness to institutionally manage the anticipation of future skills needs (<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/4187>), and hence the need for systematic data collection on vocational education and training (VET) graduates. It recommends Slovakia to strengthen:

- the institutional background by improving coordination in governance, including through the balanced participation of employer representatives (e.g. also sector councils), and paying more attention to sub-national to local labour markets;
- implementation processes, through improved coordination of data collection itself, strengthening analytical capacity, establishing support structures for systematic research on how graduates use the skills acquired in the formal education and training system, and also systematic mapping of employers' requirements through representative employee surveys;
- sustainability of research activities through stable funding and feedback functionality by taking into account the requirements of stakeholders (schools and decision-makers at national and sub-national level) on the quality and structure of information.

Slovakia has long lacked a systemic solution, which has so far been replaced mainly by data on unemployment of graduates registered at labour offices. The obligation to take into account information on the labour market application of secondary school graduates, established by law, has started to be systematically and systematically fulfilled thanks to ESF projects, which contributed to the creation of the portals www.trendyprace.sk and, in particular, www.uplatnenie.sk in February 2020, which linked data from the information system of the Ministry of Education, the information system of employment services, the information system of the Social Insurance Institution and the information system on the price of labour. As a result, anonymised individual trajectories - career paths of school leavers with precise stages of employment, unemployment, use of active labour market policy measures, as well as diverse work-related information - are available, as well as cumulated data on specific secondary or higher education institutions, faculties and programmes, allowing comparisons of the wages of graduates of specific schools and their chances of being employed. As the data are anonymised, it is not possible to link them to any additional data from the graduate surveys. Such surveys usually provide more detailed qualitative data on the relevance of the training provided or on knowledge and skills gaps, and complement analyses of administrative data.

It is necessary to build on the experience of the Centre for Scientific and Technical Information of the Slovak Republic (CVTI), which in the past has carried out questionnaire surveys on the employability of graduates, but it is necessary to ensure their relevance for use by schools and also compatibility with European activities, in particular the forthcoming EGTI. Questionnaire surveys of secondary school graduates are not yet supported by the Ministry of Education and its directly managed institutions do not yet have the necessary experience with them, although for technical secondary schools in particular there is an urgent need to investigate the risk of knowledge and skills obsolescence and the impact of technological developments on the skills needed as a result of technological change. At the same time, there is also a need to support the collection of information on graduates by individual schools as part of efforts to improve the provision of education. They should be incentivised to do this financially and also by rewarding the self-evaluation efforts of secondary schools by the State Education Inspectorate and the head teacher.

The criticism of Cedefop and the demands of the European Union clearly call for a new comprehensive solution, with stable institutional, financial and staffing arrangements. Measures 2-5 respond to the needs of tracing university graduates and secondary school leavers by using and linking administrative data, national questionnaire surveys of university graduates and secondary school leavers and specialised surveys of individual schools. Action 6 responds to the requirement to improve staff capacity.

There is no consistent terminology in Slovakia and terms such as tracer studies, graduate tracking and employer surveys are translated in a variety of ways. The term 'graduate tracking system', which would be equivalent to the term 'graduate tracking system', has an unpleasant connotation and we therefore propose to refer to graduate tracing. In the context of the proposed need to defragment and strengthen coordination, we suggest talking about the need to create a comprehensive graduate tracking system that would include the whole population (after all, almost everyone is a graduate of a programme at some level of education (ISCED) or qualification programme (EKR/SKKR)). It must use multiple research tools, including analyses of administrative data, questionnaire surveys of graduates and employers, extraction of a panel of experts, or interviews with individual graduates.

Impact on structural indicator:

Thanks to the proposed measures, individual school, as well as social partners, will receive feedback on the effectiveness of their education programmes, which can be used to adapt state education programmes, school education programmes and

university programmes. Sensitivity to feedback can become a relevant component of school self-evaluation processes and education quality assurance systems.

Measure 1: Development of a new concept for a graduate tracking system (GTS)

Structural indicator monitored	Document proposing a new comprehensive GTS model
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Legislation change required? No

Is inter-ministerial coordination required? Yes

Risk factor (critical success factor): Differences of opinion between sectors can delay or complicate consensus

Description of the measure:

In light of the identified weaknesses, there is a need to ensure institutional support for GTS and stable funding for GTS, to strengthen coordination of data collection and to improve stakeholder outreach techniques. There is a need to

- address the linking of ad hoc survey data and anonymised existing administrative datasets (www.uplatnenie.sk);
- ensure the possibility of electronic communication with alumni, eliminate inefficient and costly contacting alumni by conventional mail and propose measures to increase the return rate for questionnaire surveys to 50%;
- propose a model to support schools in introducing tools to communicate with their alumni (e.g. use of 'alumni clubs') in order to keep a record of current e-mail addresses and to carry out tracking surveys of their own alumni;
- support analytical capacity to strengthen feedback and facilitate the use of tracing results in the correction of training programmes.

The aim is to clearly define the responsibilities of the institutions under the responsibility of the MESRS and the MLSAF, to secure funding from the state budget for data collection in the framework of national surveys, and to create a financial scheme for schools to support the tracing of their own graduates, especially when specific information is needed that is not appropriate to collect through national surveys.

Measure 2: Establishment of graduate tracking that is based on annual collection and evaluation of administrative data, including targeted processing for stakeholders' needs

Structural indicator monitored	Data type as at www.uplatnenie.sk and outcomes for stakeholders
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Is legislation change required? Yes

Is inter-ministerial coordination required? Yes

Risk factor (critical success factor): Allocation of funds to provide tracking and to increase analytical capacity for targeted stakeholder outreach.

Description of the measure:

The current funding of data collection and processing from the ESIF should be replaced by long-term sustainable annual funding of data collection, processing and dissemination from the state budget. The existing output on the portal www.uplatnenie.sk should be supplemented in cooperation between the Ministries of Labour and Education with targeted outputs - targeted information to stakeholders (secondary schools, secondary school founders, universities, SAAHE, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, social partners).

The entitlement to information on the results of school graduates' tracking should be legislated for the State School Inspectorate to strengthen its control functions and for SAAHE, where it will be relevant information for accreditation decision-making.

Measure 3: Provision of a national survey on the employability of HE graduates

Structural indicators monitored	Data on relevant and missing knowledge and skills after HEI graduation
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Is legislation change required? No

Is inter-ministerial cooperation required? No
Risk factor (critical success factor): Allocation of funds and provision of electronic communication capability.
<p>Description of the measure:</p> <p>In the last survey on the employability of university graduates from 2014 and 2018, the Centre for Scientific and Technical Information of the Slovak Republic (CVTI) collected data on completed studies and their retrospective evaluation, work during and after graduation, opinions on the relevance of education and job opportunities (https://www.cvtisr.sk/skolstvo/vysoke-skoly/uplatnenie-absolventov-vysokych-skol-na-trhu-prace.html?page_id=28928) between December 2019 and February 2020 through an online questionnaire survey. The return rate of 16.2%, below international methodological recommendations, was due to the unavailability of graduates' electronic addresses. Therefore, the invitation to respondents to complete the online questionnaire had to be delivered by conventional mail. The lack of contacts also complicates the design of the research sample and compromises its representativeness.</p> <p>To achieve at least the 50% return rate recommended by the international consensus, it is necessary to ensure electronic contacts with alumni, including the addition of the student's private e-mail address to the student register and subsequently to the central student register. Until the situation regarding electronic communication with the population as a whole is clarified, the most viable route will be to encourage universities to maintain contact with alumni. The obligation for universities to provide CVTI or even other authorised research bodies with the electronic addresses of alumni would not be perceived as an excessive administrative burden if schools were incentivised to create and maintain (also via social networks) alumni clubs (see below Action 6). The need to address the possibility of initial electronic contact, re-contact and linking of research data is also important in the context of the forthcoming European EGTI survey mentioned above. Barring delays due to the Covid-19 pandemic, data collection should start already in 2022.</p>

Measure 4: Provision of a national questionnaire survey on the employability of graduates from tertiary education	
Structural indicator monitored	Data on relevant and missing knowledge and skills after secondary school graduation
Is legislation change required? No	
Is inter-ministerial cooperation required? No	
Risk factor (critical success factor): Allocation of funds and provision of electronic communication capability	
<p>Description of the measure:</p> <p>Unlike in the higher education sector, where the MESRS requires and supports graduate surveys, no directly managed organisation of the MESRS has a similar agenda for secondary school leavers. Despite the fact that a high proportion of the secondary school population goes on to university, surveys of secondary school graduates are necessary and, in the case of SVS graduates, particularly so. There is an urgent need to obtain feedback on the relevance of the knowledge and skills acquired and perceived to be lacking in the workplace, either currently or prospectively, as secondary school graduates are by the nature of their skills more vulnerable in the labour market than graduates of higher education or grammar schools. A specific challenge for surveys of SVS and HE graduates is the problem of horizontal mismatch.</p> <p>Funding, institutional support and capacity building, whether at CSTI or SVEI, and the problem of contacting survey respondents need to be resolved. The obligation for secondary schools to provide CSTI, SVEI or even other authorised research bodies with the electronic addresses of alumni would not be perceived as an excessive administrative burden if schools were incentivised to set up and maintain Alumni Clubs (see below Action 6).</p>	

Measure 5: Piloting of the "A Track of Our Graduates" scheme in 10 HEI faculties and 10 secondary schools	
Structural indicator monitored	Completion of piloting with output reports on relevant and missing knowledge and skills upon completion of training
Is legislation required? No	
Is inter-ministerial cooperation required? No	
Risk factor (critical success factor): allocation of funds	

Description of the measure:

Contacts with school alumni in Slovakia have historically been more of a social affair, and only over time have alumni clubs with a broader scope begun to form. Nowadays, also thanks to the Internet and the boom of social networks, conditions are being created so that Alumni Clubs can become an important tool for obtaining unique information. It is an under-exploited potential allowing to improve the quality of the education provided thanks to feedback of a different nature than that provided by conventional alumni surveys or even staff surveys. A specific challenge for graduate surveys is the problem of high over-qualification (vertical mismatch), which can be seen both from domestic administrative data and comparatively also from Eurostat data on graduate workers in secondary education jobs. Alumni clubs allow for the freshest data on graduate contact opportunities and allow for specialised surveys that better match the needs of the school, but also allow for more detailed research compared to national surveys.

The piloting will involve 10 HEIs or faculties of HEIs and 10 Secondary Schools and will consist of four phases:

1. Building an Alumni Club, as a social (discussion) space for gathering information for the set objectives according to a centrally determined framework and own specifications.
2. Developing an analysis of alumni views in the form of a report as a plan (or the basis of a plan) for school improvement.
3. An evaluation conference aimed at sharing experiences and identifying 'examples of good practice'.
4. Development of recommendations for the implementation of the "footprint of our alumni" activity in quality assurance procedures; prospectively in accreditation procedures in the case of higher education institutions.

It is necessary to secure institutional support from the Ministry or directly managed organisations and funding either through a project development scheme or by increasing the budget of the CSTI or SVEI respectively.

Measure 6: Support to increase research and analytical capacity for GTS purposes

Structural indicators monitored

Number of stakeholders involved in graduate tracking

Is legislation required? No

Is inter-ministerial cooperation required? Yes

Risk factor (critical success factor): Allocation of funds for training, sufficient staff capacity.

Description of measure:

The research capacities currently used for graduate tracking under the competence of the MLSAF and MESRS have the potential to also cover employer surveys, allowing for a complementary view to graduate surveys, as they capture employers' views. However, there is a need to develop research and analytical capacity on feedback from secondary school leavers, both in the context of national surveys and local surveys (e.g. 'Tracking our Graduates'). Foreign experience with longitudinal surveys and with using data for effective feedback for school improvement would be of great benefit, as our experience with tracing and using the data in education policy in the Slovak Republic is so far short in time. It is therefore necessary to initiate face-to-face or online training using the know-how of international organisations (e.g. the CEDEFOP/ETF/ILO manual "Carrying out tracer studies") and examples of good practice from abroad.

A particular challenge is the tracing of vulnerable groups who have dropped out of formal education before attaining at least lower secondary vocational education, which requires synergies with local governments, especially municipalities, and the third sector with experience of working with marginalised groups. Increasingly, there is also a need to map the level of basic skills, key competences but also basic life skills as a prerequisite not only for increasing employability but also resilience in coping with the challenges of everyday life. Slovakia does not yet have a sufficiently strong institutional background and staff capacity for these tasks. "Meanwhile, the Council's 'Recommendation of 20 November 2017 on tracking the employability of graduates' explicitly refers to improving the availability and quality of data on 'the activities of graduates and, where relevant, non-graduates ... vocational education and training'".

1.10. Supporting the sustainability of sector councils' management, with a focus on the transfer of innovations and labour market requirements into LLL

Structural indicator monitored		Defining the quantitative and qualitative requirements of the workforce and the LLL system
	Measure	Responsibility
1	Establishment of a sustainable system of management and activities of sectoral councils in the Slovak Republic in order to support alignment of the LLL system with the needs of the labour market	MLSAF SR in cooperation with other sectors and social partners

Context:

In 2010, the National Occupations System (NOS) was launched in the Slovak Republic as a comprehensive information system for describing the standard labour market requirements for individual jobs. The NOS specifies the requirements for professional knowledge, professional skills and abilities/competences needed to perform work activities in jobs on the labour market. The creation and updating of the NOS, in accordance with developments on the labour market, is ensured and coordinated by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic (MLSAF SR). It cooperates in its development with state administration bodies, territorial self-government bodies, employers, representatives of employers and representatives of trade unions and representatives of educational institutions. The NOS is the basic system framework for the creation of a systemic solution for the transfer of labour market needs into the system of lifelong learning (LLL). In order to ensure the creation and updating of the NOS, the MLSAF established the Alliance of Sector Councils, whose remit includes, in particular, the establishment of sector councils according to the relevant sectors of the economy and the evaluation of their functionality and effectiveness. The Sector Council is a voluntary independent professional and expert association of representatives of employers, representatives of trade unions, educational institutions and other organisations, state and local government bodies. In particular, the Sector Council updates the NOS, determines the requirements for professional knowledge, professional skills and abilities/competences necessary for the performance of work activities in jobs on the labour market and creates the prerequisites for their transfer to the LLL system, cooperates in the preparation and implementation of education and training projects for the labour market. The above parameters are currently regulated by Act No 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services and on Amendments and Additions to Certain Acts. Currently, the Sector Councils Alliance and the Sector Councils are coordinated, methodologically guided and evaluated within the framework of the national project Sector-driven innovations for an efficient labour market in the Slovak Republic (SRI) under the coordination of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Slovak Republic.

The implementation of four successive national projects (NSP I, NSP II, NSP III and SRI) under the auspices of the MLSAF SR has shown that it is necessary to set up a system for the sustainability of the activities of the Alliance of Sector Councils and Sector Councils in relation to the implementation of the national projects, which would address the promotion of the alignment of the LLP system with the needs of the labour market on the basis of targeted monitoring of employers' needs for a skilled workforce.

Impact on structural indicator:

Investments in material and technical capacities, expert representatives of sectors and their comprehensive coordination through the Alliance of Sector Councils and Sector Councils will contribute to the continuous monitoring of changes and developments in the labour market and employers' requirements for knowledge, skills, competences of the workforce with their subsequent use in the LLL system. This will strengthen the flexibility of human resources to respond to developments in the labour market, to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills and competences needed for the labour market and will increase the competitiveness of the Slovak Republic.

Measure 1: Establishment of a sustainable system of management and activities of sector councils in the Slovak Republic in order to support alignment of the LLL system with the needs of the labour market

Structural indicator monitored	Proposal to amend Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services and related legislation Optimisation of the functioning of the Alliance of Sector Councils and Sector Councils
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Is legislation required? Yes

Is inter-ministerial cooperation required? Yes

Risk factor (critical success factor): competence overlap with the Ministry of Education and Science and Sport of the Slovak Republic and other ministries.

Description of measure:

The direction and development of the economy in the Slovak Republic responds to current trends in research and development, which inevitably has an impact on the emergence of new occupations, and schools and other institutions cannot respond quickly enough to these developments in the labour market by preparing a skilled workforce. New trends in research and development will result in the emergence of demand for highly skilled occupations in specific sectors. The Alliance of Sector Councils will participate in the development of measures to ensure that workforce training is effectively managed and produces the desired effects of high rates of employability. It is also necessary to pay special attention to sectors in the Slovak economy that have been understaffed for a long time and where the system of secondary vocational education and higher education in particular is unable to supply the labour market with the required number of skilled workers.

In this context, it is necessary to intensify cooperation between central government authorities, representatives of local government authorities, representatives of employers, as well as representatives of trade unions, and to strengthen mutual coordination in order to find solutions and improve the readiness of individual entities to respond promptly to labour market demands in the Slovak Republic. This solution is the Alliance of Sectoral Councils as a system framework for creating conditions for the sustainability of the management of sectoral councils in the conditions of the Slovak Republic, for developing and maintaining the NOS, for forecasting qualitative and quantitative needs of the labour market, for providing comprehensive information on labour market needs for the LLL system and labour market needs. Within the framework of creating conditions for the full functioning of the Alliance of Sector Councils, it is necessary to determine its optimised structure, scope of activities, competences and to amend the legislation establishing the scope of its competence.

The Alliance of Sector Councils will prioritise:

- coordinate the development and updating of the NOS;
- develop activities to achieve sustainable economic competitiveness of the Slovak Republic and to raise the standard of living of the population, primarily by setting standards for the range of professional knowledge, professional skills and competences required for the performance of work activities and setting qualification standards for the training of the workforce through the NOS;
- ensuring inter-ministerial coordination of activities related to monitoring labour market trends and defining quantitative and qualitative requirements for the workforce in relation to their skilled preparation for the labour market;
- to share information and experience and to actively engage in solutions for setting up the LLL system so that it better meets the requirements placed on employees in the Slovak labour market, development tendencies, innovative trends, and at the same time to be ready to respond to the requirements that will arise in the future, i.e. to create a knowledge database for national and international purposes;
- to fulfil the tasks of assessing the quality of the content of education providers in relation to current and future labour market needs;
- coordinate activities in relation to strengthening the motivation of individuals for LLL through individual learning accounts;
- coordinate the process of identifying, monitoring and anticipating labour market trends and, on this basis, defining the quantitative and qualitative requirements of the workforce and the LLL system in terms of their skilled preparation for the labour market;
- set priorities for the development of key competences in the LLL system, with a particular focus on digital skills, entrepreneurial skills, financial literacy and others.

Composition of the Alliance of Sectoral Councils:

- Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic;
- Ministry of Education, Science and Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic;
- Association of Employers' Unions and Associations of the Slovak Republic;
- National Union of Employers;

- Association of Industrial Unions and Transport;
- Association of Towns and Municipalities of Slovakia;
- Confederation of Trade Unions of the Slovak Republic;
- Joint Trade Unions of Slovakia.

Process management of the Alliance of Sector Councils:

- a project unit focusing on the preparation and implementation of projects in the field of aligning the LLL system with the needs of the labour market, training and education for the labour market and improving the quality and performance of training for the labour market;

- an analytical unit focusing on monitoring and anticipating labour market trends (job creation and destruction, disappearing and emerging occupations).

All data, outputs and recommendations of the Sector Councils Alliance will be publicly available and the Sector Data Alliance will provide individualised data to the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic with the possibility of further processing and use for their needs.

1.11. Promotion of civic education of adults

Structural indicator monitored:		Participation of adults in training
	Measures	Who
1	Strengthening the concept of civic education in the legislation for LLL	MESRS SR in cooperation with another sectors
2.	Strengthening personnel and material-technical capacities of the infrastructure providing civic education and their founders (HTUs, local governments)	MESRS SR in cooperation with another sectors
3.	Support to civic education providers	MESRS SR in cooperation with another sectors
<p>Context:</p> <p>Diversity of forms, methods, providers and ways of learning are parts of the culture of lifelong learning. Adult learning is an important element of lifelong learning and encompasses the full range of general and vocational formal and non-formal education and informal learning activities that adults undertake after initial education and training' (Council of the EU).</p> <p>The diversity of forms, methods, providers and modes of learning is part of the culture of adult learning.</p> <p>At the global level, adult learning is seen by UNESCO as an important tool for 'addressing urgent economic, social and environmental challenges'. UNESCO identifies three key areas of adult learning:</p> <p>(a) equipping adults with literacy and basic skills;</p> <p>(b) providing continuous training and development;</p> <p>(c) promoting active citizenship through community-based (liberal) education</p> <p>Civic education constitutes a part of lifelong learning, which, while not oriented towards strengthening economies in the sense of preparing human resources for the labour market, develops areas that have significant benefits for building strong democratic and inclusive societies, including physical and mental well-being of learners.</p> <p>Citizenship education, alongside education and learning itself, includes another important aspect, which is community building and the development of social contacts between individuals, and contributes to inclusion, especially of the most vulnerable groups. Civic education is education for civic life, focusing in particular on democratic living, personal civic responsibility and creative participation in economic, political, social and cultural life.</p> <p>Civic skills form an integral part of basic skills and key competences. It covers a wide range of topics which may include (the list is not exhaustive):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - education for democracy, active citizenship, human rights, development of critical thinking, - multicultural education, building openness towards other cultures, minorities, groups, against racism and intolerance, prevention of extremist expressions, - environmental issues (e.g. climate protection, nature and animal protection, waste management), - maintaining traditions, cultural heritage and historical awareness, - different types of literacy for practical life - digital literacy, media literacy, financial literacy, consumer literacy, health literacy, etc. (note: basic skills/literacy are described in a separate measure .1.4), - combating hybrid threats, protection and security. <p>The target groups for civic education can be the general public, but very often they are specific groups with different constraints, e.g. migrants, the disabled, the elderly members of ethnic groups, people in prison, etc. The current coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) has highlighted the need for adult education. In mitigating the consequences of the social and economic crisis that will follow the COVID-19 pandemic, adult education will be needed more than ever. The COVID-19 pandemic has also shown an increased need to support groups that do not have access to education or online learning - e.g. economically and socially disadvantaged communities, communities living in more remote and less accessible locations.</p> <p>The involvement of actors at international, national but also regional and local level is essential for the effective functioning of the adult education system.</p>		

At present, the organisers and providers of such training are mainly civic associations, schools and some other providers who specialise in the subject or address it in their projects. Civic education, often in combination with interest-based education, also takes place in libraries, cultural and awareness-raising centres, museums and galleries, which represent a suitable and accessible infrastructure for educational activities, especially in the local context and with a focus on selected target groups. However, the adult education carried out depends on the initiative and activity of the staff and is not covered or systematised in any way. One of the recommendations of the MOVED project (implemented by AlNova in 2019-20) for municipalities in the field of support for citizens' education was to support such education also by identifying an already existing "place where most of the educational events will take place - a learning centre (it can be e.g. a building of a primary school, a university, a cultural or outreach centre, a community centre, etc.). It is highly desirable to build on existing conditions, there is no need to set up new centres on greenfield sites when many already exist successfully. The recommendations of the BLUESS project (implemented by SVEI, 2019-21) also include the combination of basic skills development with other skills needed for life in an informal setting, and such facilities represent a suitable environment for motivating the target to enter education gradually. The aim to make the learning centre part of the cultural and social amenities of the city/region, just as the office, school, church, theatre, museum, library is a part of these, so the learning centre should be given this respectability" in the local or regional context.

The measures will support the field of education, which has not received systematic attention so far, despite the fact that it is one of the monitored areas in the international context (and is expected to be monitored repeatedly in the near future). By making more efficient use of the existing infrastructure, it can expand and revitalise this segment of education, and also promote cooperation between actors at local and national level in providing lifelong learning for their citizens.

Impact on structural indicator:

Investments in physical and technical capacities and human resources will contribute to the development of non-formal and informal adult education in areas not oriented towards the development of skills for the labour market, but which is beneficial for the development of a stronger civil and inclusive society.

Measure 1: Strengthening civic education in the legislation for LLL

Structured indicator monitored

New Act on LLL

Is legislation change required? Yes

Is inter-ministerial cooperation required?? Yes

Risk factor (critical success factor): sufficient support for the adoption of new legislation

Description of measure:

The current Act No. 568/2009 on Lifelong Learning does not pay any attention to civic education as non-accredited education. Currently, the MESRS does not have sufficient information on this area or data to be provided for the Slovak Republic in international surveys, e.g. for the preparation of the Global Report on Adult Learning (GRALE), which is prepared by UNESCO on the basis of national data every four years. The report examines how UNESCO's Member States contribute to addressing current and future challenges, including the Sustainable Development Goals, in their adult education policies.

The European Commission is expected to adopt legislation in the second half of 2021 aimed at strengthening skills for life, which will highlight the need to promote learning for all target groups, including seniors, and especially those most in need of access to learning, including through distance and online learning. It will give priority to non-formal, lifelong learning, intergenerational, intercultural and community-based learning. Local learning centres, libraries and the wider community and civil society will be supported..." The New Skills Agenda 2020.

Given the need to reinforce the importance of civic education, this section will be elaborated in the new LLL Act in terms of:

- terminology
- indicative areas of civic education
- indicative target groups
- specification of providers (introduction of the concept of community learning centre, use of existing infrastructure of schools, capacities of Third Age Universities, libraries, cultural and awareness centres, museums where appropriate)

At the same time, legislation will be introduced to change the collection of data on adult learning in the Department of Education (DALV) and will be complemented by targeted sample surveys that will provide relevant data based on the needs of the MESRS.

Measure 2: Strengthening personnel and material-technical capacities of the infrastructure providing civic education and their founders (HTUs, local governments)	
Output indicator monitored:	Completing infrastructure and increasing access to civic education
Is legislation change required? No	
Is inter-ministerial cooperation required? Yes	
Risk factor (critical success factor): effective cooperation between cultural and educational institutions sectors	
<p>Description of measure:</p> <p>According to the data of the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic, in 2019 there were more than 1800 local, municipal and city libraries and education centres, 93 museums and 25 galleries in Slovakia. Given this existing network of facilities under the competence of the HTUs and municipalities and the strong tradition of use of these facilities in Slovakia by specific target groups (e.g. seniors), this network will be used to strengthen the tasks in the field of lifelong learning. All these institutions have, among others, an educational function (within the meaning of Act No 189/2015 Coll. on cultural and educational activities, Act No 126/2015 Coll. on libraries, Act No 206/2009 Coll. on museums and galleries).</p> <p>Capacity building in the form of a national project will focus on the training of staff of the above institutions and their founders, and, according to the interest of schools, civic associations and other organisations, on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the roles and principles of non-formal and informal learning in the context of lifelong learning, - forms and methods of non-formal and informal learning, - the specificities of civic education, - the possibilities for coordination of lifelong learning activities at local and regional level and cooperation between actors in this field, - tools for promoting lifelong learning at local and regional level, e.g. the concept of learning cities, education festivals and fairs, etc. <p>Training activities will also serve to strengthen the cooperation of actors in adult education at local and regional level and joint activities in defining needs in LLL, promoting LLL, etc.</p>	

Measure 3: Support to civic education providers	
Structural indicator monitored	Funding schemes for civic education provider projects Number of programmes
Is legislation change required? No	
Is inter-ministerial cooperation required? No	
Risk factor (critical success factor): effective set-up of funding schemes for the completion of infrastructure and development activities under the European Structural Funds (ESIF)	
<p>Description of measure:</p> <p>The measure will enable the establishment of support schemes under the ESIF for funding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - completion of infrastructure providing civic education, e.g. information technologies to create access points to technologies for citizens, digital and other skills training, equipping organisations with technologies enabling participation of specific target groups, etc. - development of civic education activities (content preparation of educational and awareness-raising activities, lecturing, promotion, networking, international cooperation), - the implementation of educational activities in the field of civic education. <p>The beneficiaries of financial support will be organisations providing adult civic education, in particular civic associations and non-profit organisations, foundations, schools providing civic education outside their main activity, universities (in particular further education centres, third age universities), libraries, cultural and awareness-raising centres, and other organisations listed above.</p>	

1.12. Harmonisation of the lifelong guidance system

Structural indicator monitored:	Early school leaving Percentage of 20-24 with at least upper secondary education Share of 25-34 with tertiary education Share of 16-74 with basic digital skills Share of 25-64 of low-educated people participating in education Share of 25-64 unemployed with recent learning activity Employment 20-64 Employment of graduates 20-34 (within 3 years of leaving education) Unemployment of low-educated NEET (economically inactive young people not in education or training)	
	Measures	Who
1	Increasing accessibility and funding for lifelong guidance	MESRS SR in cooperation with another sectors
2	Information tools supporting lifelong guidance	MESRS SR in cooperation with another sectors
3	Capacity development for career management (both at an individual and system level)	MESRS SR in cooperation with another sectors
4	Trans-ministerial coordination of lifelong guidance	MESRS SR in cooperation with another sectors
5	Increasing the quality of lifelong career guidance	MESRS SR in cooperation with another sectors
<p>Context:</p> <p>Career counselling refers to services that help people of all ages manage their careers and make decisions about education, training, and career choices that are meaningful to them. The overall aim of careers guidance is to develop individuals' ability to manage their careers (called 'skills'). It includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - career education, - career information, - individual and group counselling, - skills assessment and psychometric testing, - cooperation with employers and - developing skills for job search and self-employment (CEDEFOP). <p>Guidance covers a range of activities that enable people of all ages and at all points in their lives to identify their skills, competences and interests, to make meaningful choices in education, training and work, and to manage their individual lives. pathways in learning, work and other settings. Counselling is therefore provided in a variety of settings: education, training, employment, community and private.</p> <p>Accessible and quality career guidance is an essential part of a functional lifelong learning system because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - it enables citizens to manage and plan their educational and professional pathways in line with their life goals and contributes to their personal fulfilment; - it helps education and training institutions to motivate pupils and students to take responsibility for their own learning and to set their own goals; - helps businesses and organisations to motivate employees to take advantage of and benefit from learning opportunities in and outside the workplace; - provides policy makers with important means to achieve a wide range of public policy objectives, - supports economies through workforce development in changing economic and social conditions; 		

- assists in the development of societies and active citizens who contribute to their social, democratic and sustainable development. (CEDEFOP)

In Slovakia, the counselling system is poorly developed, fragmented and unconnected. For a long time, counselling needs have been linked primarily to labour market needs and to directing or making changes in the career path of people with needs to address their current labour market situation (retraining for jobseekers through the labour offices).

Primary and secondary education: several national projects implemented have led to the development of usable guidance tools, methodologies and information materials, but did not allow for sustainable capacity building. Due to the low time allocation for educational counsellors in primary and secondary schools and the focus of the activities of the centres for pedagogical and psychological counselling and prevention, the availability of career counselling was very low. The predominant approach is focused on diagnosing pupils' interests and aptitudes, and career education is almost completely absent. Guidance for school-age pupils is crucial for the choice of educational path and has a high impact on their future life. The Research Institute of Child Psychology and Pathopsychology (RIPaP) has implemented several national projects focusing on counselling in target groups with special needs and on improving the quality of counselling services for school-age children and their families.

The development of the dual system in vocational education and training and labour shortages also lead to increased cooperation between schools and employers, but guidance is often replacing the recruitment of individual educational institutions in the struggle for students. The development of job fairs and information exchanges (e.g. Gaudeamus and others) is beneficial, which translates into an increase in the number of meaningful contacts of pupils with the world of work, but their preparation needs adequate methodological support. And there is also a need for the introduction of new forms of targeted counselling activities, which can be provided by networks of regional lifelong counselling centres in the structure of higher territorial units.

Higher education: The Higher Education Act introduces the obligation for universities to provide information and guidance services, but in practice career centres are present in only a few universities and their activities are often undersized. A system for tracking graduates after graduation from HEIs/colleges has not yet been established, which makes it impossible to assess the effectiveness of the various programmes and services (see measures in the Graduate Tracking component).

Employment services: the career guidance services provided through employment offices focus on measurable career management skills development, using modern multidisciplinary methods and local labour market information. The services are well accessible, especially to long-term unemployed citizens, and are mainly linked to the labour market. However, the services provided by the Job Centres remain inaccessible to the most vulnerable groups (socially excluded groups with low educational attainment, often not registered with the social security system) and unattractive to employed people who would be interested in changing careers. The development of the system of public employment services and vocational guidance services under the competence of the MLSAF SR is a separate draft measure of the LLL Strategy (1.13).

Adults (workers): experience with the operation of adult guidance centres in the past has not led to an improvement in the availability of career guidance, nor to an increase in the participation of adults in lifelong learning, and has highlighted the financial difficulty of sustaining such a solution (building and maintaining a new guidance infrastructure). Career counselling for adults is available at the Labour, Social Affairs and Family Offices (the Employment Services Act allows for the provision of counselling services to 'jobseekers', but only a few dozen citizens a year make use of it). Although the number of private providers of career guidance has been growing dynamically in recent years, such guidance is not available to everyone, especially for vulnerable groups. Exceptions are civil society associations and some providers who specifically target marginalised groups, but these are rare cases.

There is no systematic focus on lifelong guidance for adults in its entirety. Professional organisations that bring together counselling bodies and develop professional and promotional activities in the field of counselling, e.g. the Association for Career Counselling and Career Development, the Association of Lecturers and Career Counsellors, carry out useful work in this respect. A comprehensive system of lifelong career counselling reflecting regional specificities should be regional centres of lifelong counselling in the structure of higher territorial units, which, in addition to career counselling to different target groups, would support the education and development of career counsellors in the field of education, but also in other sectors through regular permanent education, mentoring, providing support, psycho-hygiene, supervision to career counsellors, etc. There is a need to take into account the regional specificities of each higher territorial unit. (NB: clear definition of the founder, competences and adequate financial budget).

People with disabilities: career guidance services for people with disabilities are provided sporadically in different sectors and there is no specific system for this type of support. In particular, it is problematic to provide systematic counselling to people who are not registered as jobseekers with the labour, social affairs and family offices or who are not registered at all and would therefore need a specifically targeted and delivered counselling service. In these cases, state instruments are partly replaced

by civic associations or local governments, e.g. through community centres, or on the basis of various project activities, which, however, cannot guarantee the sustainability of these activities after the end of the funding.

Impact on structural indicator:

A comprehensive approach to a lifelong guidance system will introduce, develop and systematize tools to support individuals in building individual learning and career pathways, as well as other areas (e.g. developing hobbies and individual talents) across the lifespan, including the introduction of tools to support the quality of guidance and its monitoring. The establishment of a coherent system of lifelong guidance is expected to improve all structural indicators monitored by improving the quality of educational and career pathway choices, support for job transitions triggered by structural changes in the labour market. An important aspect of the proposed measures is to change the perception of counselling as a tool linked exclusively to the labour market to a tool for the personal development of individuals and their application in society.

Measure 1: Increasing accessibility and funding for lifelong guidance

Output indicator monitored

Number of lifelong career guidance centres

Is legislation change required? No

Is inter-ministerial cooperation required? Yes

Risk factor (critical success factor): sufficiently flexible set-up of schemes for demand-driven ESF calls and quality assurance criteria in this area

Description of the measure:

Individual counselling has the potential to be the most effective form of service, despite its cost, and the key challenge is to increase its availability, particularly for adults. Counselling services should be easily accessible to all residents throughout the territory in the most appropriate and comprehensible form (self-service, individual counselling, distance counselling, career education and others). Services should be differentiated on the basis of an analysis of users' needs. Services should be proactively offered to citizens at key times in their lives (choice of school, entry into the labour market, unemployment, career change, retirement, etc.).

The measure proposes to reduce barriers to access to lifelong guidance services for adults through a combination of employment services (employment offices) and regional centres for lifelong guidance (e.g. HTUs in cooperation with non-profit and professional organisations).

At present, the implementation of employment services is provided under Section 7 of the Employment Services Act ("Jobseeker's Employment") and Section 43 of the Employment Services Act ("Professional Advisory Services"). Funding is provided by financial resources from the Human Resources Operational Programme. The output of the service provided is a career plan for the client, which contains concrete steps for achieving professional and educational goals. Coordination and methodological guidance of the network of adult career counsellors is ensured by a specific coordinating body or organisational unit within the Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family. So far, 182 professional counsellors have been recruited and trained to provide counselling services to the long-term unemployed and citizens in the least developed regions. By 2021, they have provided counselling services aimed at developing the employability of almost 90 000 jobseekers. To increase accessibility, a flat-rate allowance of approximately €5 is provided to participants in the counselling programmes for each counselling session to cover travel and other costs. Using existing structures for the provision of counselling services would bring significant savings in terms of accessibility: in the national projects of the COLSAF, approximately 90% of all costs are accounted for by the salaries of professional counsellors. However, the sustainability of ESIF funding remains an issue, as does the attractiveness of existing structures (e.g. employment services) for the target group of all adults.

In order to complement the current employment counselling services, it is proposed to create regional centres for lifelong counselling in the structure of higher territorial units on the basis of demand-driven calls, while meeting the set requirements for the implementation of such services (both quantitative and qualitative). In order to ensure the outreach of the provided services to groups with specific needs (e.g. low-skilled persons without registration at COLSAF, etc.), such a partnership will allow/require partnerships with other organisations active in this field (e.g. civic associations, local governments, professional organisations, etc.). Funding will be linked to the results achieved with the individual client and also scaled according to the type of client.

Funding: national project of the COLSAF, national project of the MESRS SR (lifelong counselling), demand-oriented calls for proposals

Measure 2 Information tools supporting lifelong guidance	
Output indicator monitored	Information portal for lifelong career guidance
Is legislation change required? No	
Is inter-ministerial cooperation required? Yes	
Risk factor (critical success factor): effective linkage between all relevant existing portals and resources	
<p>Description of the measure:</p> <p>Career information helps citizens to assess and compare their own skills, interests and needs with the possibilities and requirements of educational or employment opportunities, the labour market situation and the needs of employers, and to identify ways to take advantage of these opportunities and make informed decisions about their own educational and career paths - information on occupations, the labour market, education, training (including retraining), educational programmes. But it also includes information gained through experience (e.g. field trips, internships, shadowing, volunteering activities, etc.).</p> <p>To increase the availability and usability of information for career counsellors and clients, the aim is to create a single database that would link and standardise existing sources of information for career decision-making and allow open access to data. These databases, which are important for career decision-making, should be created at regional level. Their creation and use can be more efficiently ensured by regional data tracking by regional centres for lifelong guidance in the structure of higher territorial units. They would collect these data directly from the field based on regional specificities.</p> <p>Sub-steps are the promotion of open access and interoperability principles in existing publicly funded portals and data containing relevant information (e.g. National Occupations System, National Qualifications System, ISTP.sk, data from the National Project <i>Labour Market Forecasting</i>, Further Education Information System, educational databases, Europass, and others). The portal will also serve as a database of contacts to counselling centres, a source of information and materials on lifelong counselling and will link other resources in the field of skills development, education, career building, inclusion, etc..</p>	

Measure 3: Capacity development for career management (both at an individual and system level)	
Structural indicator monitored	National Skills Framework for Career Management developed Implementation of the national framework into the curriculum and training programmes of current and future teaching and further education staff Lifelong Guidance Counsellor qualification developed and its recognition
Is legislation change required? No	
Is inter-ministerial cooperation required? Yes	
Risk factor (critical success factor): coordination at multiple levels of the education system (including HEIs)	
<p>Description of the measure:</p> <p>Career management skills enable "the ability to collect, analyse and organise information about oneself, education and occupations in a structured way, as well as the skills to plan and implement life decisions and various changes." Developing skills for managing one's own career leads to greater autonomy, self-knowledge, increased motivation to learn and develop, better labour market participation and greater employability. For citizens outside the labour market, these skills contribute to better work integration, social inclusion and active citizenship. For firms, the benefit is an increase in adaptability, mobility, but also in the productivity of the workforce.</p> <p>For the coherence of the guidance system, the aim is to create a National Skills Framework for Career Management. Relevant ministries, social partners, experts and career guidance providers will be involved in its development. For maximum usability, it should include, where possible, observable/measurable indicators for the acquisition of individual competences and take into account the developmental perspective of the individual. Once developed and adopted, the framework will have implications in two areas: integration of the framework into the ISCED 0-4 national curricula in the framework of career education as a cross-cutting theme and integration of the framework into existing guidance programmes, e.g. by adapting existing tools, setting up an assessment system, etc., it will be necessary to develop training programmes based on the Career Management Skills Framework for the continuous training of teaching and professional staff in this field.</p> <p>The aim is also to develop training programmes based on the Career Management Skills Framework for the continuing education of teaching and professional staff, as well as the adaptation of the curricula of undergraduate teacher education. In the field of adult guidance, the priority is to introduce an appropriate form of accreditation for career counsellors - e.g. through</p>	

the recognition of the results of non-formal and informal learning within the National Qualifications Framework, which will also require the development of a qualification standard for Lifelong Guidance Counsellors..

Measure 4: Transministerial coordination of lifelong guidance

Monitored indicator	Functional National Forum for Lifelong Learning
Is legislation change required? No	
Is inter-ministerial cooperation required? Yes	
Risk factor (critical success factor): lack of understanding of the need for inter-ministerial coordination, "ownership"	
Description of the measure:	
<p>The measure will ensure a clear division of responsibilities between ministries, central and regional government (HTUs) and other actors. This also includes joint coordination and planning, sharing of information on methods, approaches and clients, involvement of experts, etc. Cooperation enables the development of a system whose different components are compatible with each other and understandable to the citizen throughout his/her lifetime. Coordination and cooperation lead to mutual inspiration, exchange of information and to an increase in the quality of career guidance in all sectors. Lack of cooperation and coordination leads to fragmentation, discontinuity and often a waste of resources.</p> <p>The aim is to establish a new National Forum for Lifelong Career Guidance (as a cross-sectoral platform bringing together public administration, local government, professional associations and experts), in which the interests of all relevant actors are represented. The secretariat and running of the National Career Guidance Forum can be entrusted to professional organisations or alternately provided by ministries. The National Forum will perform the following functions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - improving communication (a space for the various actors to inform each other about plans and ongoing activities in the field of career guidance) - promoting effective cooperation (e.g. interaction between the different actors in order to increase the coherence of the system, e.g. in the preparation of new national projects or in the preparation of training programmes for counsellors, etc.) - identifying citizens' needs (e.g. mapping existing services and identifying gaps in the system, defining the skills needed to manage one's own career, conducting surveys of citizens' needs, etc.) - improving the quality of the service (development of quality standards and a quality implementation and management system, development of qualification standards) - influencing policies (e.g. implementation of a strategy on lifelong career guidance, development of a common definition and terminology of career guidance) - participation in international dialogue (sharing experiences in European networks, e.g. CareersNET, ELGPN and others). 	

Measure 5: Increasing the quality of career guidance

Monitored indicator	Quality standards Quality of lifelong guidance services Setting up an evaluation system for career guidance clients
Is legislation change required? No	
Is inter-ministerial cooperation required? Yes	
Risk factor (critical success factor): agreement on the implementation of the standard within ministries	
Description of the measure:	
<p>The aim of the measure is to develop and implement a quality standard for career guidance providers that will ensure that the basic framework principles in career guidance are respected across all sectors. To reinforce the multidisciplinary nature of lifelong career guidance, the standard should cover the following areas of service quality.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Planning and management by objectives - Quality of the career information resources and tools used 	

- Linking the provider to the world of work
- Qualification and training of counsellors
- Impartiality, independent client guidance
- Active role of the client and development of career management skills
- Identification of the impact of the service
- Quality management and improvement

Implementation of this standard in the field of adult careers guidance will consist of the establishment of an independent body responsible for the award of quality accreditation for careers guidance providers. From 2020, the Association for Careers Guidance and Career Development provides such certification on a voluntary basis for careers advisers and organisations working in the field of careers guidance <https://rozvojkariery.sk/kvalita/>

The consistent implementation of a quality management system also implies requiring this form of accreditation for providers as a condition for access to public resources for career guidance (e.g. in demand-driven projects in the case of private career guidance providers).

Part of improving the quality of the career guidance services should be the evaluation of the effectiveness of the counselling service according to a set of indicators. The possibility of introducing outcome tracking in the form of client tracking (e.g. longitudinal tracking of the educational and career trajectories of pupils and students who have received different forms of career counselling and education) allows to compare the effectiveness of different counselling approaches.

1.13. Development of a system of professional counselling services within employment services

Structural indicator monitored:		Availability and effectiveness of employment and vocational counselling services
	Measures	Who
1	Strengthening the role of public employment services as an active mediator in overcoming economic and social change	MLSAF SR COLSAF
2	Introduction of functional client profiling tools for more efficient use of the services provided	MLSAF SR COLSAF
3	Increasing accessibility and quality of individualised professional counselling services provided by public employment services	MLSAF SR COLSAF
4	Use of modern methods and digital tools in the provision of employment services	MLSAF SR COLSAF
<p>Context:</p> <p>Public employment services provide support to all actors in the labour market, with the aim of strengthening economic development, responding to societal changes, increasing the adaptability and productivity of the population and, last but not least, leading to the inclusion of vulnerable adult groups. Matching supply and demand on the labour market is done through active communication between all relevant parties, providing information, placing jobseekers on the labour market and increasing their employability, and providing counselling for employees at risk of losing their jobs as a result of structural changes in certain sectors of the economy.</p> <p>The challenge is the changing role of public employment services. In particular, the strategy papers of the European Commission and the European Network of Public Employment Services emphasise the shift in development trends of employment services from the role of administrators and providers of benefits/contributions to proactive accompaniment of clients through career transitions. Modern employment services need to move from the original and still persistent reactive approach to a proactive approach aimed at preventing unemployment and activating clients throughout their working careers. The main aim is to move away from the traditional dichotomy of employed-unemployed, towards promoting the autonomy and long-term employability of clients, so that they are able to cope competently with the risks associated with career transitions, find meaningful work and increase their own productivity.</p> <p>This requires a change of approach, in particular to the systemic functioning of guidance services. The career guidance services provided through the Labour, Social Affairs and Family Offices (hereinafter 'the Offices') focus on the measurable development of career management skills, using multidisciplinary methods and information on the local labour market. The services are mainly available to unemployed citizens and are mainly linked to the regional labour market. However, they remain inaccessible to the most vulnerable groups (socially excluded groups with low educational attainment, often not registered with the social security system) and are relatively unattractive for employed people interested in a career change.</p> <p>Other changes in the labour market that need to be taken into account are the rise of the collaborative economy and automation, which are associated with an increased demand for highly skilled labour, creating new job opportunities and income opportunities through more flexible forms of work. Enhanced client profiling tools (see separate measure) can help to identify those clients who could benefit from new models of work, so that adequate support services can then be provided to them.</p> <p>The proposed measures further respond to these tendencies in the context of Slovak employment services and, in addition to increasing the efficiency and accessibility of counselling services for a wider range of persons, will contribute to the modernisation of public employment services, bring them closer to both the needs of clients and the requirements of the labour market, and will aim to increase the perceived quality of the public service provided by the PSVR offices.</p> <p>The aim is mainly:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to define and prioritise the development of employment services in the long term in a way that reflects the current and future needs of clients, the labour market and employers as far as possible; - ensure that all support measures in employment services (especially counselling and training) lead to the activation of the citizen in managing his/her own career, as this is more important for long-term retention in the labour market, eliminating the 		

risk of losing a job due to changes in the labour market, or obtaining a better quality job, than obtaining a specific certificate or qualification in the here and now;

- increase the availability, quantity and quality of personalised support through the modernisation of guidance services as well as vocational training and transferable skills programmes, as citizens need as low a threshold as possible to access quality support services regardless of their current life situation;

- increase support and inclusion of the most vulnerable groups.

Impact on structural indicators:

A comprehensive approach of professional counselling services will introduce, develop and systematize tools to support individuals in building individual learning and career pathways with an emphasis on the current as well as future needs of clients, the labour market and employers. By increasing the efficiency and accessibility of guidance services to a wider range of people and by modernising public employment services, improvements are expected in all structural indicators monitored. An important aspect of the proposed measures is to change the perception of counselling from a tool of the authorities, labour, social affairs and family to a tool for activating citizens in managing their own careers.

Measure 1: Strengthening the role of public employment services as an active mediator in overcoming economic and social change

Output indicator monitored

Increasing the staff capacity of professional advisers
Developing processes for working with clients

Is legislation change required? No

Is inter-ministerial cooperation required? No

Risk factor (critical success factor): setting up funding schemes

Description of the measure:

Today's society and economy are facing a number of changes linked to the need to increase the adaptability of the population. The smooth running of career transitions, which are much more frequent than at any time in the past, is primarily a matter of personal awareness and obtaining adequate support. Jobseekers and job changers, whether because they are at risk of losing their jobs as a result of changes in the labour market or because they are aware of the need to find better jobs, must be enabled to take control of their careers in order to ensure continued support for the economy, the required level of adaptability of workers and a sustainable quality of life. This requires people to have access to quality professional guidance services that actively contribute to developing skills for managing their own careers, up-skilling and making meaningful links between people's individual needs and specific labour market opportunities. This is particularly important for vulnerable groups who require individual support and appropriate tools such as individualised needs and skills assessment, development of self-awareness and desired skills, identification of career goals, assistance with job progression or finding a new job.

Changing employment services or supporting career transitions must also be targeted by employers. Small and medium-sized enterprises in particular often need more intensive assistance in promoting attractive vacancies, developing skills-based human resource management systems or developing retention measures. Public employment services must become an important partner for employers in selecting suitable candidates for the jobs they offer. Employment services must increase their own initiative in establishing contacts and cooperation with regional companies in order to provide them with effective assistance in the search, recruitment and selection of new employees.

It is also important to encourage full cooperation between public employment services and non-public employment services so that they complement each other in the provision of their services. For example, non-public employment services have greater capacity and flexibility than the authorities to work with the most difficult-to-employ clients, the furthest removed from the labour market, who require long-term individualised counselling intervention, ideally on the ground. Establishing functional cooperation between the authorities and well-established non-profit organisations would significantly increase, for example, the return of NEETs (not in education, employment or training) back into the employment service system and the labour market.

The aim is:

- to set up processes for working with clients so that the provision of services and the required development of human potential are prioritised to identify the client's needs in a timely manner, with a clear link to the services provided (counselling, education, benefits, supported employment, etc.);
- increase accessibility to services by increasing the staff capacity of qualified counsellors and by removing barriers such as low clarity, lack of clarity and promotion of services, lack of resources for participation in support measures;
- enhance the attractiveness of the services provided to employed persons, e.g. through increased visibility, digitisation of services that can be effectively delivered in this way to better suit the situation of employed persons;
- increase the early involvement of vulnerable groups in support measures and enable them to participate in several measures simultaneously, if their situation requires and allows it;
- improve the offer of counselling and training programmes/activities targeted to the specific needs of clients (specialised basic skills courses; development of transferable competences, courses in a national second language, creation of a career development plan, competency assessment, etc.);
- better link employment services to further training opportunities and to the formal education system.

The above-mentioned objectives are intended to help citizens cope more effectively with social and economic change, as well as to lead to the inclusion of the most vulnerable (e.g. long-term unemployed, marginalised or low-skilled people) in society.

The focus of public employment services on the provision of quality and individualised training and the provision of professional advisory services for the available workforce, as well as the prevention of job loss due to labour market changes, is seen as a sustainable, pro-client and, in the long term, efficient and cost-effective employment service tool.

Measure 2: Introduction of functional client profiling tools for more efficient use of the services provided

Output indicator monitored

Established client profiling system

Is legislation change required? No

Is inter-ministerial cooperation required? No

Risk factor (critical success factor): information system setup

Description of the measure:

Professional counselling services are often provided without taking into account the effective potential of the service (including clients who do not need professional counselling services due to leaving the register or those who would need a different type of service to return to the labour market).

The aim of this measure is to modernise the system of profiling clients of employment services, which assesses the needs of the client when entering the register of jobseekers so that the services offered can be adapted to the client from the very first moment of registration.

We propose to introduce profiling of jobseekers based on a combination of a statistical model and expert assessment. The assignment of a client to a specific group would take place in two phases:

1. The statistical model, based on the data from the jobseekers' registration, would propose the assignment of jobseekers to one of the groups based on the expected length of registration (expected length of registration: A - up to 3 months / B - from 3 to 6 months / C - from 6 to 12 months / D - more than 12 months).
2. Based on his/her own assessment (counselling intervention), the employee of the Office would confirm or modify the classification of jobseekers into one of the four groups. Modification of the classification would be possible depending on the educational attainment, length/number of previous registrations, regional aspect of job availability, mobility possibilities, disadvantages of the citizen, etc.

The output of the profiling would be the preparation of an action plan as well as a competency profile, which would form the basis for linking the available job positions with the skills and interests of the client for persons in groups B to D. The profiling would include the definition of development needs, strengths and barriers to employment. Upon completion of the profiling, the client would be assigned to a specific level of counselling support, with the frequency of meetings depending on the client's needs and the professional counsellor's assessment. A portfolio of services would be developed for the specific level of counselling support, and its use and service offerings would be flexible in response to the client's needs.

Such a model builds on previous experience and good practice from pilot projects implemented at labour, social affairs and family offices and from good practice abroad. To ensure the greatest possible effectiveness of employment services, profiling based on a statistical model and client needs assessment is essential, as it creates the conditions for active labour market measures, including counselling, to be provided in a systematic and individualised way according to what the client needs most.

Measure 3: Development of individualised professional counselling services within employment services

Output indicator monitored

**Increasing the staff capacity of professional advisers
Developing processes for working with clients**

Is legislation change required? No

Is inter-ministerial coordination required? No

Risk factor (critical success factor): setting up funding schemes, lack of expert advisors

Description of the measure:

Studies on the effectiveness of active labour market measures consistently show that career guidance is consistently among the most cost-effective active labour market policy instruments. Counselling services have been shown to support people in developing their own knowledge and skills, strengthen motivation to look for work, engage in retraining, change attitudes towards work, help identify specific needs and goals, develop skills for managing one's own career and thus increase the chances of finding a job, increasing qualifications or improving quality of life. These effects are demonstrable for all categories of jobseekers, including the long-term unemployed.

Professional counselling services are also used as a one-off intervention (counselling interview) or as a complementary service linked to the use of other active labour market measures (pre-placement assessment), given staffing capacities. This design of professional guidance services appears ineffective and insufficient in terms of the potential effectiveness of this instrument.

The principles of individualised professional guidance services under consideration are as follows:

- strengthening the client's responsibility for solving his/her own situation. The counselling process will be guided in such a way that the client analyses his/her own situation, identifies possible solutions and agrees with the solutions and measures leading to skills development/increase and deepening of qualifications and ultimately to employment, retention in the labour market or improvement of the labour market position.
- emphasis on client activation through maintaining a balance of support and control. Measures and tasks to be carried out for reintegration into the labour market are agreed between the professional counsellor and the client. In fulfilling the agreement, the client is provided with individualised support leading to increased motivation and retention in activities.

The aim is to move from a professional counselling service used as a short-term intervention tool to a longer-term approach of working with the client looking for a job or at risk of losing their job, focusing on their needs, activating and empowering them to take responsibility for their career.

The professional counsellor's work is less focused on providing information and more on supporting the client to make the right choices when looking for a way to get a job or otherwise deal with his/her life situation. The solutions that the client, guided by the counsellor, finds, are perceived as his/her own, and are trusted more than those recommended or ordered by a counsellor. The individual effects of the counselling process are long-term: the client becomes better prepared to work on his/her development, learns to manage his/her professional career and becomes prepared for future career changes in a dynamic labour market.

The main objective is to create services that, as far as possible, help citizens to develop their careers, improve their quality of life and support their integration into society and the labour market.

Measure 4: Use of modern methods and digital tools in the provision of employment services	
Indicator monitored	Created digital tools
Is legislation change required? No	
Is inter-ministerial coordination required? No	
Risk factor (critical success factor): setting up funding schemes	
<p>Description of the measure:</p> <p>The appropriate use of modern digital tools enables the quality delivery of employment services 'at distance' and increases their interest, comprehensibility and accessibility on a large scale.</p> <p>A clear portal with information on the labour market, job offers, job search or up-skilling opportunities, employment services provided or conditions for social benefits is one area that would greatly facilitate a personalised approach to clients. This would make it unnecessary to pay special attention to generic information in counselling sessions, thus creating more space for working with clients to focus on their needs, activate them, increase their motivation and strengthen their responsibility for their careers. This would also contribute to increasing the prevention of unemployment or facilitating career transitions for clients, as well as providing basic advice and information for the group expected to remain on the register of jobseekers for less than 3 months.</p> <p>Thanks to digitalisation, Job Offices would be able to provide expert advice via apps and remote access, which will significantly increase access to this service also for people who are jobseekers or have a handicap (e.g. health) that does not allow them to have regular face-to-face contact. In addition, digitisation will also allow important files to be kept entirely electronically, which will greatly simplify administrative work. The professional adviser would be left with most of his/her working time to work with the client.</p> <p>At the same time, job centres are aware that some clients do not have sufficient digital skills, so any digital services offered need to take this into account and ensure that modern tools do not become an additional barrier to accessing services.</p>	

1.14. Individual Learning Accounts as a tool for individualised support of individuals in further education (requalification) and a pilot scheme for strengthening adults' motivation to participate in learning

Structural indicator monitored:	Participation of adults in learning	
	Measure	Responsible
1	Preparation of a pilot scheme for ILAs	MESRS SR in cooperation with another sectors and stakeholders
2	Information campaign to support ILAs	MESRS SR
3	Defining criteria for adult education providers and launching registration	MESRS SR
4	Public procurement for the internet and mobile application of providers and their courses offer	MESRS SR
5	Preparation of the payment scheme	MESRS SR, in cooperation with other sectors
6	Implementation of training within the ILAs pilot scheme	MESRS SR
7	Data collection and subsequent evaluation	MESRS SR
Context:		
<p>Participation in adult education is at the average of EU countries according to the indicator with a longer reference period (see the analytical section). In terms of structure, Slovakia shows a low participation rate of adults in formal education, which is due to the habit of completing initial education by the age of 25 (the lower limit for the purpose of measuring participation). Non-formal education takes place mainly in companies and thus captures mainly the employed (a large share may be represented by compulsory education, certification, etc.). Schemes for the unemployed (REPAS, KOMPAS) have set a strong level of control on entry, which reduces incentives for participation. Overall, interest in structured training activities is low. The introduction of individual learning accounts reduces the financial barrier as one of the most significant barriers to participation in non-formal education. Motivating providers to use online forms of learning can also be part of the measure, as the organisation of non-formal education in the face-to-face form is also one of the barriers to participation in non-formal education for individuals.</p>		
Impact on structural indicator:		
<p>A pilot scheme to introduce ILAs accompanied by an information campaign will reduce financial barriers, strengthen awareness of course offer in the candidate's place of residence through a web and/or mobile application, and signal the state's interest in strengthening individual responsibility for an individual's skill level through an information campaign. It is expected that there will be an increase of interest in non-formal education courses and, consequently, an increase in the supply and diversification of its forms by providers. Changes will be reflected in higher participation in non-formal adult education and consequently an increase in the value of the target structural indicator - participation of adults in learning.</p>		

Measure 1: Preparation of the pilot scheme of ILAs	
Output indicator monitored:	Project documentation created for pilot scheme
Is legislation change required? No	
Is inter-ministerial coordination required? Yes	
Risk factor (critical success factor): effort to address several structural areas at the same time, the goal should stick to popularization of education by lowering the financial barrier	
Description of the measure:	
<p>A working group will be set up to define the parameters of the pilot scheme, including the methodology for evaluating the results in the light of the scheme's objectives. The introduction of individual accounts in the pilot phase with no restrictions for the 18+ population (e.g. income level, education level) accompanied by an awareness campaign will encourage participation in education activities defined by the state. The working group will identify the areas of training, recommend digital skills in the</p>	

pilot phase or skills according to the KOMPAS scheme's criteria (communication, vocational, language, etc.) and set up quality assurance mechanisms for the training or for training providers interested in providing training courses under the Individual Learning Accounts scheme. The pilot phase will test the elasticity of different demographic groups as well as the substitution rate of existing participation. The working group will specify which demographic characteristics should be monitored. Once the pilot is completed, efforts will be made to adjust the parameters to better capture groups that show below-average participation in the current statistics (unemployed, low-educated, 50+) and to limit substitution for private spending (e.g. restrictions based on income, depending on the results of the pilot). It is important to note that any restriction of participation by individual factors will require a system for verification of eligibility, for example, restrictions based on income or level of education, which could create barriers to participation.

Measure 2, 4, 5: Public procurement for a PR agency and launching the information campaign, Public procurement for mobile application of providers and their training offer, Preparation of the payment scheme

Output indicator monitored	Selection of a PR agency for the information campaign Selection of a mobile app administrator Ready payment scheme
Is legislation scheme required? No	
Is inter-ministerial coordination required? No	
Risk factor (success critical factor):	
Description of the measure: On the basis of the project documentation, tenders for a PR agency and a web and mobile app administrator will be launched. An electronic registration system for providers and a payment system (e.g. based on the experience with payments in dual education) will be prepared by a directly managed organisation of the MESRS. It will be important to avoid potential abuses but not to restrict the entry of new providers.	

Measure 3: Defining criteria for training providers and launching registration

Output indicator monitored:	Established methodology for the provision of training Providers registration system
Is legislation scheme required? No	
Is inter-ministerial coordination required? No	
Risk factor (critical success factor): pre-regulation for scheme entry by providers	
Description of the measure: A working group will be set up to define criteria for the delivery of training programmes in the ILAs scheme with an emphasis on quality assurance. Currently, one of the quality assurance tools for further education is accreditation of educational programmes under the Lifelong Learning Act. Only vocationally oriented training programmes that lead to obtaining, extension or deepening a qualifications necessary for the performance of professional activities are subject to the accreditation. As the pilot phase recommends digital skills or skills in line with the KOMPAS scheme criteria (communication, vocational, language, etc.), which are not subject to accreditation, it will be necessary to set criteria for training providers under the ILAs scheme that are administratively simple, but at the same time, ensure the quality of training and efficient public funding. The accreditation process verifies the content, staffing and material and technical resources for the training programme. In the case of the proposed training areas, the training content is standardised in a certain way. It is sufficient to publish framework standards that providers will follow. In this context, it is necessary to focus on the quality of lecturers and to set out clear conditions for the staffing of training. It may be possible to partly follow the criteria for accreditation of a training programme, e.g. setting out the required degree in the field, the required work experience, etc. For the provision of training programmes delivered under the ILAs scheme, we propose to build on the accreditation processes, such as the obligation to give an advance notice of planned training, to report trainees in a prescribed structure and to introduce an obligation to evaluate the training provided by trainees	

/e.g. an educational 'Booking'/ etc. These are administratively straightforward tasks, the management of which should be the responsibility of a directly managed organisation of the MESRS, which will administer the ILAs scheme.

Measure 6: Implementation of training within the ILAs pilot scheme

Monitored output indicator	Number of people registered in the system, number of participants enrolled in courses, number of recorded payments (completed training)
Is a legislative change required? No	
Is an inter-ministerial coordination required? No	
Risk factor (critical success factor): another barriers for participation in training (time restrictions, family duties, etc.)	
Description of the measure:	
<p>Launching the ILAs application means registering those interested in attending the training/courses. Registration is followed by enrolment in courses according to the providers' offer (the mobile application can have a function of indicating interest even in the absence of an offer, which can then serve as a system for transferring information about demand to the supply side). Only the successful completion of a course justifies the payment for a provider place. For further details of the pilot scheme implementation, it is necessary to analyse foreign experiences.</p>	

Measure 7: Data collection and subsequent evaluation

Monitored output indicator:	Pilot scheme evaluation report
Is a legislative change required? No	
Is an inter-ministerial coordination required? No	
Risk factor (critical success factor):	
Description of the measure:	
<p>The aim of the evaluation of the pilot scheme is to verify the technical readiness and elasticity of demand across demographic groups (age, education, labour market status, etc.). At the same time, a qualitative survey of a sample of providers and participants will be conducted to identify barriers to participation in the scheme. For the subsequent implementation of the scheme after the pilot, it will be necessary to identify the degree of substitution of private resources and limit it.</p>	

1.15. Individual learning accounts under the competence of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Slovak Republic as a tool for individualized support in further education / retraining

Structural indicator monitored:		Participation of adults in training/education
	Measures	Who
1	IT Platform for Individual Learning Accounts	MLSAF SR
2	Quality assurance of the training programmes for the needs of the ILAs	MLSAF SR
<p>Context:</p> <p>According to the indicator with a longer reference period, recorded participation in adult education (25-64) is slightly above the average of European countries (Slovakia 46.1%, EU 44.6; AES 2016). In terms of structure, non-formal adult learning takes place mainly in companies and thus captures mainly the employed (a large share of this is probably "compulsory" learning resulting from legislative regulations - OSH, various certifications, etc.). Schemes for the unemployed (REPAS, KOMPAS) have a relatively strong level of control at entry, which also reduces opportunities and incentives for participation. Overall, interest in structured forms of training is low. However, the labour market situation, structural changes in some sectors in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and emerging trends call for a greater emphasis on the role of education and a new approach to promoting individuals' participation in education. The introduction of individual learning accounts will reduce the financial barrier as one of the most significant barriers to adult participation in learning. Motivating providers to use online forms of learning can also be part of the measure, as the organisation of learning in a predominantly face-to-face format is also one of the significant barriers to participation in learning.</p> <p>In view of the limited resources and efficient use of funds, the state policy in the field of skills will be implemented through the ILAs platform in the form of calls for tenders, which will be launched for different types and types of training in response to current societal needs and periodically, at least once a year, taking into account the labour market needs. The announcement and the detailed conditions of individual calls will be decided by the person in charge of the type of training concerned, who will also allocate available funds for the call within his/her chapter/allocation. Only in the call itself, the eligible target group, training together with the training content will be defined in the form of learning outcomes, the duration of the call and its allocation. In the case of persistent societal needs to be addressed in the field of adult education (key (transferable) competences, basic skills, civic education, etc.), calls may also be open calls, with no predefined end date and open allocation.</p> <p>Education challenges for the labour market will be strongly linked to current labour market projections. Individualised support will be provided primarily to jobseekers working in sectors that are already facing or are likely to face economic downturn in the near future, while only training that leads to new qualifications or up-skilling in a sector that has future development potential will be eligible. Provided this condition is met, training will also be available to registered jobseekers. The decision to enter this training may be an independent decision by the individual or the choice of an appropriate training pathway supported by individualised guidance, which will be increasingly provided to jobseekers through the employment offices. The development of public employment services towards facilitating career transitions in the labour market is the subject of a separate chapter and measure.</p> <p>In the case of up-skilling and retraining, in order to ensure relevance for the labour market and to avoid possible abuse in the provision of support through the ILAs platform, the opinion of the relevant sectoral council will also be required as an additional quality assurance tool in the framework of the accreditation of the training programme. This procedure is described in measure 1.10.</p>		
<p>Impact on the structural indicator:</p> <p>The introduction of ILAs, accompanied by an adequate information campaign, will reduce financial barriers; through an online and/or mobile application, it will strengthen awareness of course offer in the candidate's place of residence; and through an information campaign, it will signal the state's interest in strengthening individual responsibility for an individual's skill level. It is expected that there will be an increase in interest in further education programmes and, consequently, an increase in the supply and diversification of its forms by providers. Changes will be reflected in higher participation of adults in learning and consequently an increase in the value of the structural indicator target</p>		

Measure 1: IT Platform for Individual Learning Accounts	
Monitored output indicator:	Creation of a web/mobile application and the necessary software and hardware infrastructure to manage the Individual Learning Accounts system
Is legislation change required? No	
Is inter-ministerial coordination required? Yes, MESRS SR	
Risk factor (critical success factor): pre-regulation for scheme entry by providers; setting up funding schemes	
Description of the measure:	
<p>The ILAs IT platform effectively connects three categories of users:</p> <p>Employer representatives contribute to the ILAs system with regularly reviewed labour market forecasts, including forecasts of skills needs. They clearly name the jobs that will gradually leave the labour market and at the same time identify those sectors of the economy and, respectively, the jobs that are expected to develop in the near future and will need additional labour force.</p> <p>Educational institutions have the possibility to register on the ILAs platform and publish their current offer of training programmes, highlighting those programmes that are active in the current round of calls and are therefore eligible for funding. A special flag is given for programmes subject to higher quality control criteria. This will give the training applicant greater confidence that the training in the sector they have chosen has actually been assessed for its relevance to the labour market. Together, these training programmes make up the current ILAs catalogue.</p> <p>Through the ILAs, individuals interested in training receive basic information on career guidance, a clear overview of the currently supported training programmes in the ILAs catalogue and the possibility of finding a supported training provider in their area.</p>	

Measure 2: Quality assurance of the training programmes for the needs of the ILAs	
Output indicator monitored	Quality standards Quality of service of educational institutions Setting up an evaluation system for LLL clients
Is legislation change required? No	
Is inter-ministerial coordination required? Yes, MESRS SR	
Risk factor (critical success factor): agreement on standards introduction in the sectors of MESRS and MLSAF	
Description of the measure:	
<p>The measure represents an additional tool for quality assurance of education, which assesses the relevance of the education provided by the educational institution for the labour market and, in case of a successful outcome of this process, will allow it to access the calls in the field of qualification upgrading and retraining provided through the ILAs platform.</p> <p>The training institution may request the opinion of the relevant sectoral council at any time. The prerequisite is that the educational institution has an employment-legal relationship with the guarantor of education, it can prove that it has sufficient premises (own or rented) and adequate material and technical equipment.</p> <p>In the ILAs system, training programmes leading to specific professional qualifications are highlighted with a special flag. The training institution can only implement the training supported in the calls that include this flag after obtaining a supportive opinion from the relevant sectoral council.</p>	

Annex 2 – STRUCTURAL INDICATORS FOR LLLP STRATEGY

Indicators	Source
<i>Share of 15-year olds in PISA testing not achieving the basic level in reading literacy</i>	OECD
<i>Share of 15-year olds in PISA testing not achieving the basic level in mathematical literacy</i>	OECD
<i>Share of 15-year olds in PISA testing not achieving the basic level in science literacy</i>	OECD
<i>Proportion of children aged 3 years up to the start of pre-primary education</i>	Eurostat
Early school leaving Share of young people 18-24 with at most primary education without further participation in education and training)	Eurostat
Percentage of 20-24 with at least secondary education	Eurostat
Share of 25-34 with tertiary level of education	Eurostat
Share of 16-74 with at least basic digital skills	Eurostat
PIAAC – mathematical literacy of adults	OECD
PIAAC – reading literacy of adults	OECD
PIAAC – problem solving in ICT environment	OECD
Share of adults participating in education	Eurostat, LFS
Share of adults (25-64) with low skills participating in education	Eurostat, LFS
Share of adults (25-64) unemployed with recent training activity	Eurostat, LFS
Employment 20-64	Eurostat
Graduates employment 20-34 (from 3 years after finishing education level)	Eurostat
Unemployment of low skilled (with the most primary education)	Eurostat
NEET (economically inactive young people between 20-34 without participation in education, employment or training)	Eurostat
ISCED 5-8, study branches miss-match 15-34	Eurostat
Participation in elections	OECD BLI

Annex 3 – TRANSPARENCY AND PARTICIPATIVITY AS A PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPING A LLP STRATEGY

The LLL Strategy has been developed in accordance with the principles of public strategy development in a transparent and participatory manner, involving a wide range of relevant stakeholders, as set out in the document "Methodology and Institutional Framework for Public Strategy Development". The line ministries, other state and public administration bodies, local governments, employers' organisations, civil society organisations, churches and other entities were involved in the preparation of the draft strategy on the basis of an invitation by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic to the working group or in the framework of meetings on individual thematic areas and its commenting in the form of:

- written comments on the draft document (March - June 2021)
- roundtables (online, March, May 2021)
- working discussions and meetings (March-August 2021)

In parallel with the national discussions, the preparation of the document was monitored and commented on by the European Commission, with whose representatives several meetings were held during the months April-July 2021. Before the document was submitted to the Slovak Government for approval, a public consultation on the document was held.

Table 1: Organisations involved in the working group of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Slovak Republic on the preparation of the Lifelong Learning and Counselling Strategy 2021-2030	
1.	Ministry of Transport and Construction of the Slovak Republic
2.	Ministry of Finance of SR
3.	Ministry of Economy of SR
4.	Ministry of Culture of SR
5.	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of SR
6.	Ministry of Environment of SR
7.	Ministry of Justice of SR
8.	Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic
9.	Ministry of Interior of SR
10.	Ministry of Health-care of SR
11.	Ministry of Investment, Regional Development and Informatisation of SR
12.	Association of Industrial Associations and Transport
13.	National Union of Employers
14.	Association of Employers' Unions and Associations of the Slovak Republic
15.	Association of self-governing regions SK8
16.	Confederation of Trade Unions of SR
17.	Association of Third Age Universities in Slovakia
18.	Association of Adult Education Institutions

19. Slovak Academic Association for International Cooperation
20. Association for Career Guidance and Career Development
21. National bank of Slovakia
22. National Labour Inspectorate
23. Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family
24. Slovak Rectors' Conference
25. Conference of Bishops of Slovakia
26. Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession in Slovakia
27. National Cultural Centre
28. Prison and Justice Guard Corps
29. Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities

Note: The invitation to the working group was not accepted by the Ministry of Defence of the Slovak Republic, Association of Towns and Municipalities of Slovakia and the Union of Towns of Slovakia for capacity reasons.

The was entrusted with the preparation of the Lifelong Learning and Counselling Strategy for 2021-2030 by the letter of the Director General of the Secondary Schools and Lifelong Learning Section dated 9.11.2020.

A working group composed of:

Table 2: Composition of the working group for the preparation of the LLL Strategy
1. Ľuba Habodászová - Institute of Educational Policy MESRS SR / Institute of Financial Policy MF SR
2. Ildikó Pathóová - Section of national and lifelong education MESRS SR
3. Bibiána Lazarová - Section of national and lifelong education MESRS SR
4. Karol Jakubík – Section of secondary schools MESRS SR
5. Branislav Hadár – State Vocational Education Institute
6. Ľubica Gáľlová - State Vocational Education Institute
7. Ivana Studená – Centre of Social and Psychological Sciences, Slovak Academy of Sciences, external adviser
8. Juraj Vantuch - ReferNet Slovakia, external adviser

Annex 4 – A PRELIMINARY ESTIMATE OF THE FINANCIAL RESOURCES NEEDED FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF LLP STRATEGY

Title of the measure	Cost estimate till 2027 (in mil EUR)
Second-chance education	
1.2 Increasing the attractiveness and quality of VET - Centres of VET Excellence	
1.3 National Basic Skills Initiative and pilot intervention programmes	20
1.4 The Slovak Qualifications Framework and the National Qualifications Framework	10
1.5 System of validation of non-formal education and informal learning	10
1.6 Increasing flexibility of the qualifications system with smaller qualifications and micro-qualifications (micro-certificates)	10
1.7 Establishment of a comprehensive graduate tracking system	10
1.8 Changing the design and way of work of sectoral councils to support the streamlining of vocational education and training (VET) provision	20
1.9. Promoting adult civic education	20
1.10. Establishing a coherent system of lifelong guidance	20
1.11. Strengthening motivations for adult participation in learning - Individual Learning Accounts (pilot scheme)	20
Total	140

Annex 5 – List of abbreviations

AES – Adult Education Survey
CoVET – Centre of vocational education and training
CSTI – Centre of Scientific and Technical Information
LLL– lifelong learning
ScE – second-chance education
EC – European Commission
EQF – European Qualification Framework
ESF – European Social Fund
ELET – early leavers from education and training
EGTI – European Graduate Tracking Instrument
CeVET – Centre of Excellence
ISFT – Information system of further training
LFS – Labour Force Survey
MLSAF SR – Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic
MESRS SR – Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic
NEET - young unemployed people or those not participating in education and training
NQS – National Qualifications System
NOF – National Occupational Framework
LSOT – lower secondary education and training
NICME – National Institute of Certified Measurements
OECD
OHSR –organisation hosting a sectoral council
VET – vocational education and training
PIAAC - Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies
PISA - Programme for International Student Assessment
CSA – compulsory school attendance
SVS– secondary vocational school
SS – secondary school
SKKR – Slovak Qualification Framework
SVEI – State Vocation Institute
SPI – State Pedagogical Institute
UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
CoLSAF – Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family
AE – adult education
HEI – higher education institution
RIPaP - Research Institute of Child Psychology and Pathopsychology

PS – primary school
BS – basic skills