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ET 2020 NATIONAL REPORT QUESTIONNAIRE

A. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ET 2020 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

1. Assessment and key suggestions for improvement of the ET 2020 strategic objectives (max. 2 pages)

1a. On the basis of your country's assessment of the overall relevance and added value of the four ET 2020 strategic objectives, please describe which changes you would like to introduce in these strategic objectives, or in their implementation, notably in light of the economic and jobs crisis and the evolution of the EU's overall growth and jobs strategy. (max. 1 page)

In the reporting period, Slovenia adopted certain strategic documents and systemic measures to improve the implementation of the educational system, also in connection with the measures during the crisis period. Due to the critical financial situation, the Public Finance Balance Act (PFBA) was adopted in May 2012 by the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia. The Act included a set of measures to establish the conditions for Slovenia's further growth and long-term development, thereby amending a number of acts regulating the educational system in Slovenia: Organization and Financing of Education Act (OFEA), Higher Education Act, Elementary School Act, Pre-school Institutions Act, Placement of Children with Special Needs Act, School Meals Act, Subsidized Student Meals Act, Scholarship Act, Public Sector Salary System Act. For the purposes of decision-making on the rights to public funds, scientific research, statistics and system transparency, the Exercise of Rights to Public Funds Act was adopted and the system of centralized inventory data on the education participants was set up (central computerized database on the education participants).

At the strategic level, education development in the Republic of Slovenia is based on the following strategic documents: Resolution on the National Research and Development Programme 2011–2020, Resolution on the National Programme for Language Policy 2014–2018, National Programme for Youth 2013–2022, National Programme of Sport in the Republic of Slovenia 2014–2023, National Programme for Higher Education 2011–2020, Resolution on the National Programme of Higher Education 2011–2020, Resolution on the Master Plan for Adult Education in the Republic of Slovenia From 2013 Until 2020 (ReMPAE). Resolution on the National Research and Innovation strategy of Slovenia 2011–2020, and the White Paper on Education in the Republic of Slovenia (2011) which contains proposals for further development in the areas of preschool education, elementary and secondary education, adult education and music education.

In this period, priorities in the areas of education and training were oriented towards: ensuring the quality of education and training through a more effective management,

operation and financing of the system, making education and training more responsive to the needs of the economy, and creating conditions for open learning environments.

At the beginning of 2014, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport (MESS) proposed amendments to the Organization of Education Act, whereby the following changes to the educational system have been proposed:

- adding of development of entrepreneurship, innovation and creativity, and promotion of and access to lifelong learning under equal conditions to the objectives;
- legal bases for the establishment of a network of schools and centres which carry out additional professional tasks under the Placement of Children with Special Needs Act;
- amendments to the provisions governing employment and inventory data on the education participants;
- legal basis for the establishment of the central inventory data on the education staff;
- legal bases for performing public services in adult education.

As regards **management and financing**, communication of decisions on the yearly funding thus enables the public schools to plan the implementation of activities and orients them towards a more rational use of public money, whereby not only their autonomy, but also responsibility is increased.

1b. Building on the existing European agendas and mandates of the ET 2020 Working Groups, as well as on your analysis and proposals developed in response to the questions below, please specify the **two key priority areas** you would propose to focus European cooperation on during the next ET 2020 work cycle (until 2017) in light of their expected added value for the Member States. Please provide a brief policy rationale for your suggestions. (*max. 1 page*)

Two key priority areas, where European cooperation has to be enhanced in the forthcoming period and which are included in the national education policy, are:

1. **open learning environments, development of basic skills and key competences** – for a more effective transfer of not only knowledge, but also competency for creative and inventive problem/challenge solving. Here, particular attention will be given to providing accessibility and equal opportunities, in particular to those that are marginalized because of socio-economic circumstances;
2. **responsiveness of education and training to the needs of the economy** and, in particular, the development of **innovation activities**, in which participants are given the opportunity to cooperate in solving specific questions in local environments or in specific development projects, using **creative and inventive approaches**.

Pursuing the above-mentioned objectives is directly linked with the absorption of cohesion funds. That is why concrete activities are defined in the following documents that are the basis for the absorption of cohesion funds: Partnership Agreement, Smart Specialization Strategy, Operational Programme for the next cycle (OP 2013–2020) etc. Within the national OP, the development concerns the inclusion of extra-curricular activities in the national curriculum; the planning process includes measures for the development and promotion of values and transversal competences (problem solving, innovation, creativity, flexibility, openness to innovations, entrepreneurship ...).

Policy-making regarding education and lifelong learning will continue to be strongly influenced by demographic changes connected to the ageing of the population and prolonging the employment period, which require a more pro-active creation of conditions for the development and promotion of intergenerational and collective

learning models having for effect the improvement of general and vocational abilities, innovation among the generations included and greater employability.

2. Lifelong learning and mobility [ET 2020 strategic objective 1]¹ (max. 2 pages)

2a. Please provide an assessment, whenever possible supported by evidence-based indications of effectiveness and impact, of measures your country has developed in the design and implementation of lifelong learning strategies, to support validation of non-formal and informal learning in line with Council Recommendation 2012/C 398/01, and to improve transitions between the various education and training sectors and increase transparency and recognition of learning outcomes. Please provide an indication of the most significant remaining challenges to overcome in this area.

In 2014, MESS published the proposal for the Act on Slovenian Qualifications Framework, which sets up Slovenian Qualification Framework (SQF) in the form of a single qualification system with ten levels which are identified by learning outcomes (knowledge, skills and competences). The Act regulates placement of qualifications gained within and outside the system of formal education into SQF, placement of qualifications from SQF into the European Qualification Framework (EQF) as well as procedures and responsibilities of institutions, financing of the National Coordination Point and record-keeping.

In the area of elementary education, the policies (strategic framework) adopted for the European-level cooperation in education and training are logically summarized and concretized in the form of objectives under the Elementary School Act, which was amended between 2010 in 2013. To make **learning more attractive**, we ensure **mobility incentives** for students and teachers by offering different possibilities of participation in international projects, through which schools try to expand their activities, complement their regular curriculum and promote lifelong learning. We are using newly developed forms of classroom work, including ICT and content optionality.

Regarding the assessment and recognition of non-formal and informal learning, Slovenia has established a system of national vocational qualifications (the NVQ system) which is based on the concept of accreditation. The NVQ system is primarily intended for adults with no formal education and everybody who wishes to improve their professional qualifications or to advance in their careers. The result of the NVQ system is a certificate, i.e. a state-approved document, which is recognized at the national level (the legislator is the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities). The NVQ system is supported by the following institutions: Institute for Vocational Education and Training, National Examinations Centre (NEC), accreditation process providers and chambers. Furthermore, informally obtained knowledge of all adults who enrol in formal educational programmes can be recognized (national legislation) within the formal educational system as well (elementary school for adults, and secondary and higher education).

Beside the above-mentioned models, the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education (SIAE) carried out two development tasks regarding the recognition of non-formal learning in 2009–2013, consisting of:

(1) Developing a model and different tools for the evaluation of informally obtained knowledge of adults. The model was pilot tested. (2) Developing the basis for systemic

¹ Sector-specific assessments should be reported only in part B of this questionnaire.

inclusion of the model in adult education organizations. (3) Carrying out training for professionals involved in implementation of the identification and evaluation procedures. (4) Preparing technical documentation to support the work of those professionals. (5) Preparing information-promotion material for the adults regarding the possibilities on the identification and evaluation of informally obtained knowledge in adult education, including a description of the model, tools and procedures. (6) Developing new e-tools for the evaluation and recognition procedures. (7) Establishing the information-counselling point, i.e. e-portal for the area of evaluation and recognition. (8) Offering professional support to educational organizations which implemented the model.

The model for the evaluation of informally obtained knowledge of adults was introduced into 15 educational organizations selected by public tender. The ultimate objective of the identification and evaluation of informally obtained knowledge was for the candidates involved to receive a certificate with the description of the evaluated informal knowledge, experience and competences, including the possibilities to use it in subsequent certification of knowledge, integration into further education and employment.

By using different measures and instruments at the vocational and secondary technical education levels in the framework of the ESF co-financing and under the authority of public development institutes, tools and procedures for the identification of priorly obtained knowledge and its recognition in the formal system were established, both for young people and, in particular, for adults.

In the framework of ReMPAE, the following measures for the period 2013–2020 are planned, the results of which will be monitored by different methods: – the establishment of national coordination for the coordination and guidance of development, research, evaluation, national promotion etc. in the area of identification and recognition of informally obtained knowledge; – the establishment of the network of educational organizations with a view to ensure the conditions for the implementation of recognition processes; – the implementation of the Act on Slovenian Qualifications Framework, as well as adoption and implementation of associated legislation and regulations.

Specific challenges in the next period will also be the development of tools and instruments not yet in place, connection of procedures and procedure comparability at all levels by establishing a coherent and transparent national system of identification and recognition – a comprehensive system.

2b. Building on the experience with the European actions and tools in the area of validation and recognition of skills and qualifications, you are invited to specify maximum **one concrete European-level issue** to be taken forward within the area of the validation and recognition of skills and qualifications during the next ET 2020 work cycle (until 2017) in light of the expected added value for the Member States. In case you decide to propose an issue to be taken forward, please provide a brief policy rationale for your suggestion, preferably with an indication of a specific output that you have in mind.

With regard to the complexity of the implementation of tools and instruments in the area of evaluation and recognition of priorly obtained knowledge and skills, we suggest that, at the EU level, great attention is paid to the models and procedures for the implementation of this process and to the system and policy regulation.

3. Quality and efficiency in education and training [ET 2020 strategic objective 2]² (max. 2 pages)

3a. Please provide an assessment, whenever possible supported by evidence-based indications of effectiveness and impact, of measures your country has developed to promote equitable and efficient investment in education and training (with a possible reference to the methodology used). Please provide an indication of the most significant remaining challenges to overcome in this area.

In Slovenia, quality and efficiency in education and training are assessed at various levels. At a system level this is carried out by:

- Common External Assessment of Knowledge (CEAK, Matura);
- **carrying out international comparative studies** of OECD (PISA, PIACC, TALIS ... and IEA studies such as TIMSS, PIRLS ...);
- **implementation of the *added value model*** (NEC), where the pupils' and students' results are being compared at the end of the elementary and secondary schools (a new provision of law which prescribes the assessment of the quality at the level of educational organizations using self-evaluation reports).

At the level of process implementation, the quality of the system is being examined by schools inspectorate. In the framework of research and development studies (e.g. CRP), the quality of the system is also being measured and analysed by universities and research institutes which implement those studies.

Regarding self-evaluation at the level of kindergartens, schools and other educational organizations, every educational organization is obliged (OFEA) to compile a self-evaluation report. Educational organizations can use different models of self-evaluation, whereby all the models include instruments for assessing the quality and steps for planning improvements. Furthermore, models include the so-called critical friend, i.e. a viewpoint of a professional from "outside", to ensure a greater objectivity in terms of conclusions. Regarding adult education, a comprehensive model (Offering quality education to adults – OQEA) of self-evaluation and external assessment of the quality of processes has already been developed (integration of different levels and providers: organizations, professionals, participants).

In order to facilitate mobility, the 2013 Elementary School Act contains a provision concerning the possibility and promotion of learning two foreign languages, which enables the introduction of the first foreign language into the 2nd grade and the optionality regarding the second foreign language from the 4th grade on.

In connection to quality assurance in higher education, various important legislative amendments and systemic incentives have been adopted in the last years, enabling greater flexibility of the quality assurance system and implementation of measures for quality improvement (a more detailed description in Chapter 8!).

The challenge identified is:

Regarding the transparency of quality assessment and improvement at all levels and within all the areas of education and training in Slovenia, the objective is to ***establish a nationally consistent and coherent quality system***. It is important to use the existing

² Sector-specific assessments of quality and efficiency are asked in part B of this questionnaire.

data, experience and models for individual levels of education and outcomes, to carry out a thorough analysis and to prepare a proposal for testing a comprehensive model of quality assessment and quality assurance at national level.

The challenge in the area of education and training also concerns *the training of teachers*, undergraduate as well as graduate. Traineeships require priority consideration in the framework of an effective and efficient financing of education and training in the next work cycle ET 2020 (to 2017). Furthermore, a reflection is needed on increasing the professional capital of teachers with various methods and in different ways, in particular by enhancing the professional community, within the country as well as EU.

The next key starting point and a challenge is education management, since performance of a school and its quality or orientation towards continuing improvements depends significantly on the leader. A principal is a knowledge and skill provider, organisational leader, provider of statutory-administrative and educational tasks and a continuing pupil and student who strives for the development of learning communities. For the next period, also in the framework of OP HRD, we are planning measures for *further development and improvement of management in education, lifelong learning, promotion of networking and exchange of good practice*.

3b. You are invited to specify maximum **one concrete European-level issue** to be taken forward within the area of effective and efficient funding of education and training during the next ET 2020 work cycle (until 2017) in light of the expected added value for the Member States. In case you decide to propose an issue to be taken forward, please provide a brief policy rationale for your suggestion, preferably with an indication of a specific output that you have in mind.

One of the important questions on quality assurance is increasing the professional capital of teachers. It has to be noted that the increase in professional capital of teachers depends significantly on the integration and intensity of network operation in the professional community – not only in a member state – but also in the EU. In the next period, the challenge for all member states will certainly be defining the ways and models to be provided for teachers to be able to connect fast and efficiently, to exchange good practice and in particular to develop models, which will enable them to cooperate closely with knowledge providers (not only in an individual state) and with the business sector – *establishing systems which will enable teachers to develop professionally at EU level*.

3c. Please indicate how your country is planning to give a follow-up to the new evidence in particular from OECD's 2013 PIAAC and PISA surveys. Please indicate the aims and expected outcomes of the follow-up measures.

On the basis of the PISA results, Slovenia became part of PIAAC in the countries second round (the results of May 2015); we will establish proper system bases or strategic documents, and we will develop tools for experimental verification of improvements. The OP for the next period (cohesion policy 2014–2020) includes objectives and measures for the follow-up on the development of:

- new pedagogical strategies, with emphasis on development and the enhancement of competences for pupils and teachers (problem solving, creativity, innovation ...);
- opening up of educational institutions for the environment, and establishment as well as the enhancement of synergies between educational institutions and wider environment; this promotes the development and growth of social and cultural capital

in the local community and has an important influence on general and professional achievements.

4. Equity, social cohesion and active citizenship [ET 2020 strategic objective 3] (*max. 2 pages*)

4a. Please provide an assessment, whenever possible supported by evidence-based indications of effectiveness and impact, of measures your country has developed to provide access to good quality mainstream education for all (including measures to prevent and combat segregation), to provide widespread and equitable access to quality early childhood education and care, particularly for children from a disadvantaged background (incl. from low income households, migrants, marginalised groups), and to implement inclusive educational approaches for an increasingly diverse society adapted to the needs of learners from various backgrounds. Please provide an indication of the most significant remaining challenges to overcome in this area.

Even during the crisis, the Republic of Slovenia maintained the achieved share of ***children included in preschool education***, which further increased in school year 2013/2014. Specifically, 76.6 % of children were included in preschool education in school year 2013/2014 in the Republic of Slovenia (MESS – CEUVIZ records). The State has retained the scope of measures: where families have two or more children included in preschool education, the parental contribution for the second child is co-financed (70 %), whereas the contribution for the third child is financed in entirety; a priority kindergarten entry of children with special needs and children from socially disadvantaged families is provided. In accordance with the Pre-School Institutions Act, children from families with the lowest income per family member are entitled to an exemption from payment for kindergarten.

Various development projects are carried out under the ESF co-financing schemes regarding development and promotion of active citizenship for different target groups of citizens; for children and youth these are carried out in the framework of additional or expanded content of the educational system curricula as extracurricular and other complementary activities; at the level of adult education, various instruments, which include implementation of programmes and activities to develop and strengthen key competences, including active citizenship (non-formal educational programmes for adults in the local environment, i.e. response to needs, national coordination of events to raise awareness of the importance of learning, education and lifelong learning with indirect effects on development of active citizenship skills), are carried out with the use of national funds and the ESF co-financing scheme.

As regard the ***inclusion of Roma*** into social activities and processes, in 2011 MESS supplemented the *Strategy for the Education of the Roma* to improve access to education for the Roma. Also, public funds are provided for *Roma assistants* and their education. MESS is co-financing the so-called social incubators, which act as the link between the extracurricular activities and learning assistance for education of both younger and older Roma in Roma communities. Roma children are included in preschool education (e.g. co-financing of the kindergarten in Kerinov grm). Under the ESF co-financing scheme various development projects are carried out with a view to connect different actors at the local level with the focus on: raising the social and cultural capital in areas where members of the Roma community live (2011–2013).

Following the amendments to the Elementary School Act, a course on Slovenian language and culture is organized upon entry into elementary school for **children of immigrants** who are residing in the Republic of Slovenia and whose mother tongue is not Slovenian. In cooperation with their countries of origin courses on their mother tongue and their country's culture are organised as well. The measure has been maintained throughout the crisis.

Through the teaching content and cross-curricular integration and cooperation **equity, social cohesion and active citizenship are promoted.**

Each year, there is a growing number of groups, which involve pupils whose mother tongue is not Slovenian. For these children a course on their mother tongue is organized through **educational programs for immigrants. Intercultural competences and democratic values** are taught through various school subjects, especially the Slovenian language, and patriotic and civic culture and ethics. In practice, these objectives are being strengthened and tested on a daily basis through the coexistence of pupils in the school and through their activities under the programmes.

In January 2014, the Government of the Republic of Slovenia adopted the **Youth Guarantee** – Implementation programme 2014–2015, which defines the method of implementation, the role of public authorities and other organizations, the method of financing, method of monitoring the progress and time frame; combines measures of all sectors that have impact on increasing the employability of young people and activate young people on the labour market. The key objectives of the Guarantee are: – improvement of transition from education to employment; – faster activation of unemployed young people; reducing unemployment in general.

Measures are aimed at young people up to 29 years of age and are focused on: – career guidance (career centres, promotion of professions and vocational orientation); – system for recording and recognition of informally obtained knowledge (establishing a system for recording and recognition of experience and knowledge gained outside employment relationship that will help young people find their first job); – practical training at employers during education and apprenticeship (encouraging employers to provide practical training through work under educational programmes leading to qualifications. The target groups are employers and students); – incentives for the employment of young people in NGOs (promoting employment of young people in the non-governmental sector); – traineeships to encourage first employments of young people in the framework of paid traineeships.

The National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia adopted the Resolution on the National Programme for Youth 2013–2022; the Government of the Republic of Slovenia adopted the 2014 Implementation Plan. The National Programme defines the objectives, priority areas, and providers and indicators for the evaluation of impacts, effects and results. The measures are divided into systemic measures (e.g. changes in regulations, adoption of a plan, strategy etc.) and concrete measures such as the implementation of a public call for proposals etc. Key focuses of the Resolution are: 1. providing better opportunities for young people through formal and non-formal education and training; 2. enabling young people to ensure their own economic and social security, and thus creating conditions to facilitate their independence on the basis of employment policy; 3. ensuring participation of young people in relevant sectors and actual influence on decision-making in the areas that affect them; 4. paying particular attention to ensuring equal gender opportunities and the prevention of discrimination; 5. paying particular attention to risk factors that cause poverty and social exclusion among

young people; 6. following the principles of sustainable development; 7. following the principle of intergenerational cooperation and ensuring greater intergenerational solidarity; 8. paying particular attention to the health and well-being of young people, and to health inequalities; 9. providing young people a safe start in their careers.

In the field of adult education specific target groups and their access to quality education have been defined under ReMPAE 2013–2020: unemployed (priority group: older than 50 years without professional or vocational education or with less or no key professional competences); employed (priority group: older than 45 years that completed secondary school of less than four years, or that lack key or career opportunities); employed who, due to specific physical and mental requirements of a profession, can no longer perform that profession after they reach a certain age; young people that leave school at different stages; less educated people and other vulnerable groups such as young people who, for various reasons, leave school early, socially disadvantaged, immigrants, Roma, older adults, migrants, people with disabilities and prisoners; other groups of adults with limited access to social, cultural and economic goods, such as farmers and the population of the less developed regions. Concrete measures and instruments are identified in each year's annual adult education programme.

4b. You are invited to specify maximum **one concrete European-level issue** to be taken forward within the area of equity and social cohesion in education and training during the next ET 2020 work cycle (until 2017) in light of the expected added value for the Member States. In case you decide to propose an issue to be taken forward, please provide a brief policy rationale for your suggestion, preferably with an indication of a specific output that you have in mind.

In a knowledge-based society, schools have significant influence on social inequality. Modern

technology can further strengthen this influence (e.g. ICT technology). Thus, one of the key issues is the provision of access to education through open learning environments (role of ICT technologies) and of opportunities for individuals, social groups or even countries to be included in processes that are essential for further development. It is therefore important to address the questions of *how to create a network for cooperation among stakeholders at various levels and how to strengthen the mission of schools not only as providers of knowledge, but also as centres of local communities* (in the period 2013–2015, project "Raising social and cultural capital in local communities for the development of equal opportunities and promotion of social inclusion", which is co-financed from the ESF scheme, is being carried out in Slovenia).

5. Creativity and innovation [ET 2020 strategic objective 4] (max. 2 pages)

5a. Please provide an assessment, whenever possible supported by evidence-based indications of effectiveness and impact, how your country contributes to

- embed entrepreneurship education at all levels of education and training and to implement the knowledge triangle;
- advance digital skills of teachers and learners;
- improve the openness of education, by fostering the use and development of Open Educational Resources including MOOCs and other new modes of delivery of education, as well as enhancing ICT infrastructure and connectivity in educational institutions; and
- enhance language teaching and learning across all levels of education and training.

Please provide an indication of the most significant remaining challenges to overcome in these areas.

The renewed curricula with methodological starting points for the implementation of subject contents at the level of formal elementary education *enhance creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship*, since the field of creativity and innovation of both pupils and teachers is particularly emphasized. As regards *partnerships between educational and business and research institutions*, a number of Slovenian elementary schools (approximately 30 % and more) have connected with other institutions and the business sector to carry out their internal projects.

Programmes, counselling and didactic support (live and remote) as well as some freely accessible multimedia and interactive e-learning materials, including for the use over the Internet, have been developed for professionals in the educational system to ensure a meaningful and effective use of ICT. 10 e-textbooks for science subjects have already been developed and approved, and e-textbooks are also being developed for social science subjects. New pedagogical strategies are being developed under the ESF co-financing for development projects in the framework of OP HRD (2007–2013) regarding the use of mobile devices for learning ("Pedagogy 1: 1"), as well as international projects (e.g. development portfolio) to establish approaches to personalization, self-regulation and self-evaluation of students to develop competences for the 21st century.

In higher education measures are being carried out at the system level using targeted financing instruments and co-financing under the cohesion policy; several development projects are being carried out at the activity level in the framework of higher education institutions (e.g. in the context of initiative *Opening up Slovenia*). In 2012, support for improvement of the quality of higher education was allocated to the development of optional subjects or programmes for further training and to the introduction of the basics of economics and entrepreneurial skills into the science and engineering programmes. Under the development priority "Promoting entrepreneurship and adaptability" of OP HRD for the period 2007–2013 the following instrument was published in 2013: "A creative path to practical knowledge," which promotes project activities of higher education students, organized under partnership between higher education institutions and companies.

Slovenia adopted a strategic document ReMPAE 2013–2020, which also defines the development of professionals in adult education, including emphasis on and orientation towards: – training of a sufficient number of professionals to work with different target groups and their needs, including identification and promotion of creativity and innovation; – maintenance of a base of professionals and implementing organizations for adult education for the purpose of performing public services in adult education; – adapting training in pedagogy and andragogy to various target groups and, if necessary, to different levels of education (competence-based and modular training system); – ensuring andragogical training of professionals for the implementation of nationally important programmes and activities within the public service (implementation of national development projects, new developments); – providing quality learning material and learning resources as well as ICT support for andragogical education and training.

The challenges identified are:

In the area of preschool education, the objective concerns the establishment of system-level conditions for the introduction of foreign language courses in kindergarten.

To achieve the objectives of the initiative Opening up Education, Slovenia has stimulated both "top down" and "bottom-up activities" for the development and provision of open innovative education. The initiative **Opening up Slovenia** ensures a productive environment for teachers, pupils, students, researchers and other interested public, as well as for the creation of learning content. The areas are the following: transformation of the existing educational approaches into innovative, dynamic environment of open education and knowledge exchange, creation of environment for partnership cooperation of public, private and voluntary sectors, creation of appropriate regulatory mechanisms to support implementation and innovation in the area of open education, building an open platform of information technology, content, services, pedagogical concepts and approaches, establishment of quality assurance mechanisms and mechanisms for validation of open education services, development of digital competence throughout the educational system and implementation of concrete cross-dimensional open education projects.

5b. Building on the experience with the European actions and tools in the area of transversal skills and taking into account the projected outputs of the relevant ET 2020 Working Group, you are invited to specify maximum **one concrete European-level issue** to be taken forward within the area of transversal skills during the next ET 2020 work cycle (until 2017) in light of the expected added value for the Member States. In case you decide to propose an issue to be taken forward, please provide a brief policy rationale for your suggestion, preferably with an indication of a specific output that you have in mind.

In the context of the implementation of activities to promote the use of ICT and open learning environments in the educational environment at all levels and forms of education, *we are encouraging discussion and concrete proposals, as well as implementation of measures to consolidate, develop and implement appropriate pedagogical and andragogical principles, approaches, methodological solutions and didactic principles*, which respond to the increasing use of open learning environments as well as the introduction and use thereof in the respective learning and education processes. This also includes *suitable forms of training for professionals* of all levels with a view to adapt pedagogical, methodological and didactic principles to open learning environments and the use of ICT.

B. SECTORIAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE ET 2020 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

6. School Policy (max. 2 pages)

6a. Please provide an assessment, whenever possible supported by evidence-based indications of effectiveness and impact, of measures your country has developed to reduce early school leaving including a follow up on the 2011 Council Recommendation on reducing early school leaving (ESL), in particular to create and implement comprehensive strategies on ESL that balance prevention, intervention and compensation,³ to enhance teacher competences and professional development, and to strengthen the quality of school education.⁴ Please provide an indication of the most significant remaining challenges to overcome in this area.

³ In this context, countries could assess measures for the analysis and monitoring of early school leaving processes, supporting groups especially affected by it (e.g. children with migrant or minority background), ensuring that strategies cover both general education and VET, and ensuring involvement of all relevant policy sectors and stakeholders.

⁴ In this context, countries could assess measures improving governance and leadership in the schools, monitoring of school's performance, the co-operation with parents and the local community as well as

According to Eurostat data from 2013, in Slovenia 3.9 % of the population aged 18 to 24 years gave up education and training. According to the same source, in 2013, 91.5 % of the population aged 20 to 24 years completed secondary school. This shows that the majority of young people involved in the educational process successfully completes the educational programme.

Despite this data, which are quite encouraging, measures for "drop-outs" and those who leave the educational system early are still being carried out. These phenomena are tackled already during education and training, using a variety of (preventive) measures.

In secondary education, as well, a number of so-called preventive measures, such as early detection of vulnerabilities in students and immediate assistance or advice and, where appropriate, learning assistance under the existing laws, are being carried out. The existing system provides for flexible ways for the target group of young aged 15–25 years to access and transition between regular education and adult education systems at the level of vocational, secondary technical and general education.

Young people who drop out of school can participate in a one-year public programme Project learning for young adults (PLYA), which helps young people aged between 15–25 years with no education, profession and employment to overcome social seclusion by encouraging them to continue schooling. If this is not possible, they are helped in gaining the knowledge and skills that facilitate their path to employment. With the help of mentors young people solve the problems that have contributed to their decision to leave school (family relationships, poor self-esteem, addictions, social hardship, etc.). After completing the programme, mentors verify whether they have been included in an educational system or found a job for six months. In average, these programmes are attended by 180 young people each year. They have been implemented since 1999 and have been quite successful. In 2007 the PLYA programme received the award in the category European Regional Social Policy Champion.

Training programmes for success in life, which fall within the scope of adult literacy programmes and the development of basic skills, are also important: The programme Reading and Writing Together encourages parents with lower levels of education to help their children in lower grades of elementary school achieve the same position as children with a better starting point (parents with higher education) by encouraging joint reading. Programmes are co-financed by the ESF scheme and are carried out in public organizations for adult education, libraries ...

In addition to these programmes, adults (younger as well) can participate in a network of consultancy centres (co-financed by national funds and by the ESF funds in the part regarding development) that ensures relevant guidance, information and counselling on all educational options, so that they can draw up personal educational plans with professional support and that they are guided towards relevant educational programmes.

The existing educational system thus provides for flexible ways for the target group of young aged 16–24 years to access and transition between regular education and adult education systems at the level of vocational, secondary technical and general education.

Among groups with many early school leavers or unsuccessful students, the Roma are particularly vulnerable. A strategy has been adopted and several projects (co-funded by the ESF) have been carried out at national level to reduce early school leaving.

Slovenia is ranked among the countries with the lowest share of early school leavers, as it accomplished the desired results and the set objectives through the *policy of prevention and early detection of risks for early school-leaving* and *pre-prepared measures* to avoid those risks at all pre-university levels of education. Although monitoring of early school leaving is only foreseen for the population aged between 18 and 24 years, in Slovenia prevention of early school leaving is integrated in the entire educational system, including, or especially, in elementary education, as in this developmental period taking prompt appropriate actions and eliminating elements which could cause school leaving is important. Such a policy has proven to be successful.

Reducing early school-leaving is an important objective that Slovenian elementary schools have been pursuing for a number of years. In 2013, the school-dropout rate was only 1.4 % (*Source: SURS 2013 and MESS*) as a result of professional work with students who need learning support and encouragement for learning.

6b. Building on the experience with the European actions and tools in the area of school policy and taking into account the projected outputs of the relevant ET 2020 Working Group, you are invited to specify maximum **one concrete European-level issue** to be taken forward within the school policy area during the next ET 2020 work cycle (until 2017) in light of the expected added value for the Member States. In case you decide to propose an issue to be taken forward, please provide a brief policy rationale for your suggestion, preferably with an indication of a specific output that you have in mind.

Given the success of preventive measures and early detection of the vulnerability of children and students, including adults and individuals in the educational system, who leave school at different levels, we suggest to pay more attention to this type of policy management at EU level as well and to propose it as one of the most successful measures in this area.

At the EU level we also suggest that in the context of early school leaving special attention is paid to specific groups such as Roma. Based on the experience from Slovenia we suggest that the measures are wider, i.e. not focused on school, but on the rise of social and cultural capital in environments where Roma live. Experience in Slovenia shows that the measures are only effective if they are supported in the wider community, not just in school.

7. Vocational Education and Training (*max. 2 pages*)

7a. Please provide an assessment, whenever possible supported by evidence-based indications of effectiveness and impact, of measures your country has developed to support the objectives of the European Alliance for Apprenticeships, to implement the educational dimension of the Youth Guarantee, and to ensure that VET provision is in tune with labour market/skills needs and in support of innovation policies. Please provide an indication of the most significant remaining challenges to overcome in this area.

In the Republic of Slovenia vocational and technical education is based on the principle of social partnership. Since 2008, competence paradigm, modular training courses and optionality have been used more and more in vocational and technical education.

Vocational education is planned, programmed and implemented in cooperation with employers and employees: – the fundamental document, which is the basis for the development of educational programmes, is the occupational standard by which the social partners define the professional profile, required fundamental and specific professional competences, and complexity of the work; the occupational standard is adopted by the labour minister; – educational programmes in the three-year vocational education consist of at least 24 weeks of training at employers, in the four-year programme of at least 5 weeks, and in higher vocational education 20 weeks in two academic years; – students or schools and employers sign contracts on training; employers receive certain incentives from public funds (ESF) for cooperation with schools (an incentive for the training of a student is foreseen in the amount of EUR 600 to 1,200).

On the basis of the amendment to the Vocational Education Act and the adoption of the Act on Slovenian Qualifications Framework, more suitable legal conditions for the effective coordination of labour market needs and additional qualifications of the employed and the unemployed will be established in 2015. In parallel with amendments to the existing legislation and the creation of a new one, an experimental approach to improvements of the vocational education model will be prepared by ensuring improvements at the level of obtaining skills in the workplace, by ensuring concrete links with employers and by providing the system-secure traineeships.

7b. Building on the experience with the Copenhagen process and the Bruges Communiqué and taking into account the projected outputs of the relevant ET 2020 Working Group, you are invited to specify maximum **one concrete European-level issue** to be taken forward within the area of vocational education and training during the next ET 2020 work cycle (until 2017) under the Bruges communiqué in light of the expected added value for the Member States. In case you decide to propose an issue to be taken forward, please provide a brief policy rationale for your suggestion, preferably with an indication of a specific output that you have in mind.

Because less and less students have been choosing vocational and technical educational programmes over the past few years, Slovenia strives to ***increase the attractiveness of and inclusion in these programmes***. The activities carried out up to now have already stopped this decline in number, so now promotion of vocational and technical educational programmes must continue at all levels, including at EU level. In the next period, emphasis will be on developing a higher quality of initial vocational and technical education as well as on developing professional qualifications, including forms and processes of counselling, assessment and recognition of informally obtained knowledge, both in youth and adults involved in the processes of vocational education and training. By linking with other sectors and stakeholders in the country, we are planning, in the next period, to follow trends in the labour market and structural employment at the strategic and operational levels, which means different development models and measures to increase the attractiveness of vocational and professional development at this level of education and training, and links with the labour market and employers. It is important to note that it is necessary, due to long-term planning and flexibility, to maintain an adequate level of general knowledge, because this is the only thing that enables the increase in the flow of labour force, not only within individual countries but also between Member States, which also increases mutual trust.

8. Higher Education (*max. 2 pages*)

8a. Please provide an assessment, whenever possible supported by evidence-based indications of effectiveness and impact, of measures your country has developed to increase tertiary education attainment and quality,⁵ and to support higher education institutions pursuing comprehensive strategic approaches towards internationalisation that include internationalisation of curricula and strengthened strategic partnerships within and outside Europe. Please provide an indication of the most significant remaining challenges to overcome in this area.

Since 2012, several systemic measures for improving the quality of higher education offer have been taken in order to simplify the quality assessment system and increase its flexibility, and to promote improvements in higher education institutions.

In 2012, the amendment to the Higher Education Act in the framework of the PFBA enabled universities to change their study programmes faster, to respond to the needs of the environment more efficiently and to improve the quality of implementation of study programmes. The accreditation processes for changes to the obligatory components of university study programmes have changed in such a way that universities no longer need the approval of the Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (SQAA), but they only need to inform it of the adopted changes. The 2014 proposal of the new Higher Education Act provides for a further simplification of accreditation processes, the most important being the abandoning of the regular re-accreditation of study programmes.

SQAA, which has been responsible for the quality assurance in the Slovene higher education since 2010, has successfully passed the external evaluation and verification of its compliance with the European standards. As a result, it was admitted to the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) on 19 October 2013.

In 2012, the Ministry published a Public call for proposals for the establishment of a system of quality assurance in higher education institutions in the Republic of Slovenia in the period 2012–2015. The subject of the call for proposals is co-financing of activities which develop the system of quality in higher education institutions and promote international evaluations and international accreditations, and quality restructuring of the programme offer of higher education institutions, which responds to the current needs of broader social environment.

Since 2010, higher education institutions include [career centres](#), which provide counselling to students on career planning, implement activities for the development of competences for greater employability and try to facilitate transition of graduates to first employment. The aim of the latest public call for proposals for co-financing the further development and implementation of career centre activities in higher education for the 2013–2015 period, which was co-financed by ESF, was to support further development of career counselling in higher education institutions and at the same time to strengthen cooperation between career centres and employers with a view to ensure direct entry of graduates into the future working environment.

⁵ In this context, countries could assess measures to increase entry rates to higher education, to improve completion rates of students in higher education, and to address quality.

In 2012, the Ministry set up a record-based, analytical information system for higher education in the Republic of Slovenia (eVŠ), which helps to improve the accessibility, transparency and quality of information on the Slovenian higher education system and provides analytical support for making system-based decisions. The system includes records on accredited higher education institutions, publicly recognised study programmes, the electronic enrolment application, the accommodation application and a record of students and graduates. The eVŠ has become a reference data source for the data on student status, which is used by public institutions to allocate the rights to public funds. All data has been regularly gathered and updated since 2013. In February 2014, application for enrolment in undergraduate studies in Slovene and English in public and private higher education institutions was activated the eVŠ. In this way a single application point for the Slovenian and foreign students was set up.

In addition to quality improvement, one of the priorities of higher education strategy in the period up to 2020 is also greater openness of the Slovenian higher education in relation to the international sphere. Since 2012, the Ministry has been supporting activities for promoting greater internationalisation of the Slovenian higher education through targeted calls for proposals and using the ESF funds.

The aim of the Public call for proposals for co-financing the inclusion of higher education guest lecturers into pedagogical processes in the period 2011–2013 was to promote visits of foreign higher education lecturers and other foreign experts for the purposes of the transfer of knowledge, experience and new forms of teaching. In the framework of this call for proposals 218 guest lecturers from other countries lectured at Slovenian higher education institutions.

The purpose of the Public call for proposals for the implementation of the Bologna process – co-financing of the foreign experts' inclusion into the pedagogical process in the years 2011, 2012 and 2013 was to promote the mobility of experts between higher education institutions, research organisations, companies and other institutions, between the areas of study, sectors and countries, and to include them into the development of study and related research activities. In three years, 34 projects were selected under the call for proposals, in the framework of which foreign and national higher education teachers and other experts exchanged knowledge and experience at summer student workshops in the areas of new forms of teaching and training of mentors for gaining professional experience during studies.

With the Public call for proposals for co-financing activities which promote internationalisation of the Slovenian higher education in the period 2013–2015 the Ministry provided support to those aspects of internationalisation which promote inclusion of foreign experts into the pedagogical and research process (longer-term regular employment and short-term hostings of foreign experts, organisation of international workshops) and activities which strengthen the visibility of the Slovenian higher education institutions in international environment.

8b. Building on the experience with the agenda for the modernisation of Europe's higher education systems and taking into account the projected outputs of the relevant ET 2020 Working Group, you are invited to specify maximum **one concrete European-level issue** to be taken forward within the higher education area during the next ET 2020 work cycle (until 2017) in light of the expected added value for the Member States. In case you decide to propose an issue to be taken forward, please provide a brief policy rationale for your suggestion, preferably with an indication of a specific output that you have in mind.

The priorities of the ET 2020 strategy in the area of higher education are reflected in the Agenda for the modernisation of European higher education systems (the so called Modernisation agenda). Our opinion is that the entire agenda has to be regarded as one priority, which needs to be addressed at the European level in an integrated manner in the upcoming period as well. The agenda can be effectively implemented only if all issues in the agenda are addressed at the same time, instead of addressing only one issue as a priority.

9. Adult Learning (*max. 2 pages*)

9a. Please provide an assessment, whenever possible supported by evidence-based indications of effectiveness and impact, of measures your country has developed to improve the quality, participation and efficiency of adult learning and to provide basic skills (literacy, numeracy and digital skills) and outreach to low-skilled adults (e.g. national targets, specific funding programmes etc.). Please provide an indication of the most significant remaining challenges to overcome in this area.

With development projects (the ESF co-financing scheme) Slovenia: – prepared expert groundwork and trained adult education providers (professionals and organisations) for assessing and ensuring the quality of adult education; – prepared a co-financing scheme to increase the formal level of education of adults, literacy and key competences; the adoption of ReMPAE 2013–2020 in the Parliament sets key tasks, target groups, priorities and financial resources provided for adult education in this period. The assessment of the measures shows: instruments under public calls for proposals for improving basic skills generate a 100 % response from all participants, when they are 100 % co-financed with public funds; in the case where employers need to provide co-financing, the participation in programmes is below expectations, because employers do not invest in improving basic skills of their employees; employers are primarily interested in improving vocational skills, meaning that measures should be adequately adjusted to the employers' needs. They need to be included in the programme planning and adjustment of programmes towards bringing together basic and professional skills.

In the period 2008–2014, Slovenia organised events for gaining and improving basic skills and increasing literacy rate with emphasis on less educated and other vulnerable groups, using national budgetary appropriations and ESF funds.

The challenges identified are:

- improving cooperation with chambers and employers, since the response of small and SME is too low in terms of employee participation in programmes for gaining or improving basic skills and their co-financing;
- establishing an ICT monitoring and evaluation model, including measures of government sectors which prepare the annual adult education programme.

9b. Building on the experience with the European Agenda for Adult Learning and taking into account the projected outputs of the relevant ET 2020 Working Group, you are invited to specify maximum **one concrete European-level issue** to be taken forward within the adult learning area during the next ET 2020 work cycle (until 2017) in light of the expected added value for the Member States. In case you decide to propose an issue to be taken forward, please provide a brief policy rationale for your suggestion, preferably with an indication of a specific output that you have in mind.

Demographic changes, connected to population ageing and the prolonging of the period of employment, require more intensive measures in creating conditions for the development and promotion of models of intergenerational and collective learning and intergenerational knowledge transfer. The development and realization should not take place only at the academic and educational levels but also in cooperation with employers. In this way, general and vocational skills, the innovation of the generations involved and employability should be improved.

We propose a discussion, the exchange of practice and the preparation of measures and mechanisms which would ensure the integration of elderly and socially excluded persons into lifelong learning and also ***the establishment of efficient forms of intergenerational and collective learning***. Emphasis should be placed on designing systems for the development of basic skills and key competences for increasing professional potential, innovation and employability.

C. ET 2020 GOVERNANCE AND EUROPE 2020 (max. 2 pages)

10a. Please describe and provide an assessment, whenever possible supported by evidence-based indications of effectiveness and impact, of how your country has integrated education-related elements in other national policy areas and actions aiming to stimulate growth and jobs.

Measures in the higher education area are included in strategic documents, on which the absorption of national cohesion policy funds in the new programming period will be based (Youth Guarantee, Operational programme for the implementation of European cohesion policy in the period 2014–2020, smart specialization strategy – under preparation).

Reform of student work is under way. The decrease of segmentation is solved by higher general taxation of student work (around 43 %) and integration in pension and disability insurance. Costs, obligations and rights related to student work will approach those from the employment contract; however, student work will remain flexible. Unfair competition will be prevented by restricting employers, which will be bound by the average number of employees in the previous year, and by tightening control over student status. A central record of temporary and occasional student work will be established, which will serve as an informational basis for tighter control and regulation in the entire area. (Source: National reform programme 2014, p. 14).

10b. Please provide your country's assessment of the effectiveness and efficiency of the ET 2020 governance, working methods and tools. Would you have suggestions for the introduction of alternative governance, working methods and tools to increase ET 2020's effectiveness and efficiency? (This question must be seen in a broad perspective, going beyond the functioning of the new generation of ET 2020 Working Groups, and including any aspect to which your country would like to raise attention related to ET 2020 governance, working methods and tools).

In our opinion, the framework as foreseen in the ET 2020 can be achieved as regards secondary education; only in the area of vocational and technical education the worked-based learning is the basis for the implementation, not only the dual system, which cannot be fully introduced, since it was already unsuccessfully introduced into education and training system once. Consequently, it will not be possible to fully achieve student mobility in terms of vocational and technical education.

The ET 2020 framework is mainly seen as an opportunity for mutual exchange of experience and practice between EU Member States in the jointly agreed priority areas. Especially important at this level are working methods and tools to support mutual learning (e.g. Peer Learning Activities); less important are various forms of reviews regarding the fulfilment of commitments. We propose that the formalised methods of work (for instance filling in questionnaires as the basis for mutual discussions) and various forms of reporting on the achievement of objectives be limited to the reasonable minimum. In our opinion, the ET 2020 framework cannot become a form of verification of Member States' achievements in the area of education, and it can only be effective and efficient if in the process of cooperation Member States contribute to finding solutions to challenges at a national or/and European level.

At the EU level, transparency in operation of thematic working groups should be maintained, as in the period of ET 2010. We propose to re-activate the currently unavailable European Commission website Knowledge System for Lifelong Learning (<http://www.kslll.net>), where, in the framework of ET 2010, a clear overview of the results of the work of these groups was published and available to a broad circle of interested national players.

10c. Please describe and provide an assessment, whenever possible supported by evidence-based indications of effectiveness and impact, of measures your country has taken to promote partnerships with stakeholders, civil society, social partners and business to stimulate the modernisation of national education and training systems?

Partnership with stakeholders and social partners is formalised and implemented through their participation in all important decision-making bodies, cooperation in various working groups (e.g. for the preparation of new legislative proposals), public discussions, special ad hoc working meetings etc.

10d. Please describe and provide an assessment, whenever possible supported by evidence-based indications of effectiveness and impact, of the contribution of the 2007-2013 Lifelong Learning Programme and ESF to the ET 2020 objectives in your country, and of your country's approach to link funding from Erasmus+ and the European Structural and Investment Funds in the 2014-20 period with policy priorities (ET2020 objectives).

At the level of the implementation and achievement of ET 2020 objectives, special challenges for the current and the future period are the achievement of the set objectives, the provision of ESF funds, investments in and support for the development of basic skills and key competences, whereby emphasis is placed on the development of less educated and for various reasons socially excluded population groups mainly with the help of the ESF funds. At the same time, the objective of the previous period was to develop models and project approaches for the identification and recognition of non-formal and informal learning and to develop quality models, whereas in the next period, it will be important to provide appropriate forms of support and co-financing (especially ESF) for the purposes of establishing systemic approaches and designing coherent systems at the national level in those areas.

In the previous as well as in the current programming period the possibilities of ESF and Community programme financial support have been important for the realization of national strategic objectives in the area of higher education. The activities, which are co-

financed by ESF, complement and further strengthen or upgrade possibilities in the framework of Community programmes. In both previous programming periods Slovenia has provided support, in particular, to objectives in the areas of international mobility, connection of higher education and economic sectors, and quality development.

The national agency for the implementation of the Lifelong Learning Programme in the period 2007–2013 and for the implementation of the Erasmus+ programme in the period 2014–2020 conducted two studies in the autumn of 2013: "The impact evaluation of the Lifelong Learning Programme on elementary and secondary education in terms of national priorities" (November 2013) and "Programme impact evaluation on higher education" (December 2013). The conclusions of the first study, in which the combined quantitative and qualitative approach was used, confirm positive impacts on most of the variables at the school, teacher and student level, which were defined by confronting national strategic objectives for education development and the key objectives of the Lifelong Learning Programme, the predecessor of the Erasmus+ programme. The Erasmus+ programme impact evaluation on higher education in Slovenia showed that the programme substantially improved student mobility, since this is the only programme in which students can participate in masses. The programme also undoubtedly improved the expansion of the networks of partner institutions and strengthened administrative services that support international cooperation activities.

The contribution of the European Social Fund to ET 2020 objectives in the area of adult education is as follows:

- (1) less educated, adults with limited access to education and training, and members of various vulnerable groups participated in:
 - programmes for increasing literacy rate (programmes for success in life);
 - educational programmes for improving or gaining basic skills (key competences);
 - various programmes of general non-formal learning, also in the self-directed learning centres and Learning exchange.

Special emphasis was placed on increasing ICT literacy and uniform distribution of programme implementation in the country.

In cooperation with employment services younger adults were included in the programme PLYA, so they could finish their schooling, contribute to their personal growth, and increase their employment and social inclusion opportunities.

For the purposes of programme update, evaluations were carried out and proposals for updating the publicly recognised programmes for increasing the literacy rate were prepared.

- (2) We co-financed schooling of adults that obtained vocational or secondary technical education and therefore increased their motivation to continue schooling or to finish it.
- (3) Educational organisations developed various models of consulting activities for adults, whereby the model of ISIO information and guidance activities was developed by the SIAE. Models for cooperation of various education providers at the local level were designed to increase participation in the Lifelong Learning Programme, local development and connection with the economy.
- (4) A quality model was developed and introduced into educational organisations for adults. A special quality model was introduced into information and counselling centres.
- (5) A model for the identification and evaluation of informal knowledge was developed and implemented.
- (6) Teacher training in adult education has been carried out.

In the area of vocational and technical education new educational programmes were introduced into study programmes with the ESF support at the level of vocational education (three-year schooling), secondary technical education and higher vocational education.

1. An open curriculum planning was introduced into schools in cooperation with social partners in the local area or at the branch level.
2. A system for quality assessment and assurance was introduced, based on the self-evaluation principle.
3. Learning material for new subjects and modules was prepared.
4. The planning of personal educational plans, which take into account the individual's choices and specialities, was introduced.
5. The number of employers offering training for participants in vocational and technical education increased (incentives for training at the employer).
6. Training of mentors in companies that provide training to students has been carried out.
7. A working and well-equipped network of training centres was established in the framework of school centres.

An important side effect of the implementation of projects, which were financed with the ESF funds, is an increased number of teachers and professionals who gained their knowledge and competences in the area of curriculum development and introduction into study programmes.

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