



European
Commission



Education and Training Monitor 2017

Slovenia

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EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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Volume 2 of the Education and Training Monitor 2017 includes twenty-eight individual country reports. It builds on the most up-to-date quantitative and qualitative evidence to present and assess the main recent and ongoing policy measures in each EU Member State, with a focus on developments since mid-2016. It therefore complements other sources of information which offer descriptions of national education and training systems.

Section 1 presents a statistical overview of the main education and training indicators. Section 2 briefly identifies the main strengths and challenges of the country's education and training system. Section 3 focuses on drivers of inequalities in education and measures to promote inclusion, building in particular on evidence from the OECD's 2015 Programme for International Skills Assessment (PISA), as well as recent developments in early school leaving and early childhood education and care. Section 4 looks at investment in education and training. Section 5 deals with policies to modernise school education, covering, inter alia, the teaching profession, digital and language skills. Section 6 discusses measures to modernise higher education. Finally, section 7 covers vocational education and adult learning.

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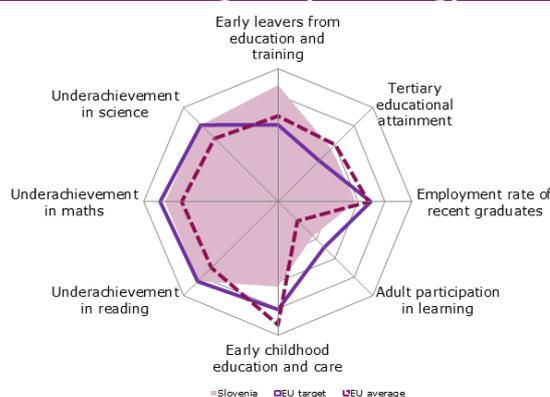
Additional contextual data can be found online (ec.europa.eu/education/monitor)

1. Key indicators

		Slovenia		EU average		
		2013	2016	2013	2016	
ET 2020 benchmarks						
Early leavers from education and training (age 18-24)	Total	3.9%	4.9%	11.9%	10.7%	
Tertiary educational attainment (age 30-34)	Total	40.1%	44.2%	37.1%	39.1%	
Early childhood education and care (ECEC) (from age 4 to starting age of compulsory education)		90.9% ¹²	90.5% ¹⁵	93.9% ¹²	94.8% ¹⁵	
Proportion of 15 year-olds with underachievement in:	Reading	21.1% ¹²	15.1% ¹⁵	17.8% ¹²	19.7% ¹⁵	
	Maths	20.1% ¹²	16.1% ¹⁵	22.1% ¹²	22.2% ¹⁵	
	Science	12.9% ¹²	15.0% ¹⁵	16.6% ¹²	20.6% ¹⁵	
Employment rate of recent graduates by educational attainment (age 20-34 having left education 1-3 years before reference year)	ISCED 3-8 (total)	73.8%	76.7%	75.4%	78.2%	
Adult participation in learning (age 25-64)	ISCED 0-8 (total)	12.5%	11.6%	10.7%	10.8%	
Other contextual indicators						
Education investment	Public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP	6.5%	5.6% ¹⁵	5.0%	4.9% ¹⁵	
	Expenditure on public and private institutions per student in € PPS	ISCED 1-2	€7 028	€7 078 ¹⁴	:	: ¹⁴
		ISCED 3-4	€5 724	€5 636 ¹⁴	:	: ¹⁴
ISCED 5-8		€8 602	€8 815 ¹⁴	:	: ¹⁴	
Early leavers from education and training (age 18-24)	Native-born	3.5%	4.4%	11.0%	9.8%	
	Foreign-born	16.4% ^u	15.6% ^u	21.9%	19.7%	
Tertiary educational attainment (age 30-34)	Native-born	42.4%	46.8%	37.8%	39.9%	
	Foreign-born	13.1% ^u	19.2% ^u	33.4%	35.3%	
Employment rate of recent graduates by educational attainment (age 20-34 having left education 1-3 years before reference year)	ISCED 3-4	61.8%	70.3%	69.4%	72.6%	
	ISCED 5-8	79.3%	80.2%	80.7%	82.8%	
Learning mobility	Inbound graduates mobility (bachelor)	1.5%	2.0% ¹⁵	5.5%	6.0% ¹⁵	
	Inbound graduates mobility (master)	2.6%	4.1% ¹⁵	13.6%	15.1% ¹⁵	

Sources: Eurostat (see section 9 for more details); OECD (PISA). Notes: data refer to weighted EU average, covering a different numbers of Member States depending on the source; b = break in time series, d = definition differs, e = estimated, p = provisional, u = low reliability, 12 = 2012, 14 = 2014, 15 = 2015. On learning mobility, the EU average is calculated by DG EAC based on available country data in all years. Further information is found in the respective section of Volume 1 (ec.europa.eu/education/monitor).

Figure 1. Position in relation to highest (outer ring) and lowest performers (centre)



Source: DG Education and Culture calculations, based on data from Eurostat (LFS 2016) and OECD (PISA 2015). Note: all scores are set between a maximum (the strongest performers visualised by the outer ring) and a minimum (the weakest performers visualised by the centre of the figure).

2. Highlights

- With a low rate of early school leaving and a high share of tertiary attainment, Slovenia has a highly educated population and has already met its national targets under the Europe 2020 strategy. There are marked differences, however, between pupils with a migrant and a non-migrant background.
- High attendance in early childhood education and care provides a strong basis for later success in basic skills.
- The higher education sector is undergoing reforms which aim to link funding with performance, increase completion rates, encourage internationalisation and strengthen quality assurance.
- Vocational education is attended by a large number of young people. However, apprenticeships are being reintroduced to engage employers further and help young people make the transition to working life.

3. Tackling inequalities and promoting inclusion

The basic skills of Slovenian 15-year-olds are, overall, high and improving. Slovenian 15-year-olds are performing well in all three fields tested in the OECD's 2015 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) survey — science, mathematics and reading. In particular, Slovenia has achieved one of the EU's steepest reductions in the proportion of low achievers in reading since 2009 (second only to Ireland).¹ At the moment, there is insufficient data to explain this trend. The proportion of low achievers is below the EU average in the areas covered (15 % in science, 16.1 % in maths and 15.1 % in reading); each field is now close to the EU benchmark for 2020 of 15 % of low achievers. Other international comparative assessments have found a similar steep improvement in the maths and science skills of 4th grade and 8th grade pupils over the past decade. The 2015 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), for example, found striking increases of 58 and 79 points, respectively, in the maths and science performance of 4th grade pupils between 1995 and 2015.² Slovenia's older pupils — 8th graders — achieved some of the highest results among participating EU countries in both maths (third-best result in the EU) and science (best EU result).

Equity in education is improving but certain inequalities persist. The rate of underachievement among students from the bottom socioeconomic quartile is 25.1 %, against only 6.3 % for students from the top quartile. However, the gap is smaller than in the EU as a whole (18.8 percentage points (pp.) vs 26.6 pp.). Moreover, the difference in performance associated with students' socioeconomic status narrowed to 13.5 % in 2015 from 17.5 % in 2006, signalling an improvement in equity. The variation in performance between schools is strongly associated with the socioeconomic status of the schools and their pupils. In addition, the difference in the proportion of low performers among students with a migrant background (7.8 % of students in PISA 2015) and non-migrant students is rather high. The difference in performance in science between students who speak Slovenian at home and those who do not is quite high but below that in most EU Member States (88 score-points, corresponding to almost 3 years of schooling).³

Girls significantly outperform boys in PISA, despite a narrowing of the gender gap. In science, Slovenia had the ninth-highest proportion of girls — 10.4 % — demonstrating high complexity skills of the 72 countries and economies participating in PISA 2015. In reading, girls' performance is the eighth highest in PISA. Despite a significant improvement between PISA 2012 and PISA 2015 — leading among the EU Member States — the performance of boys in reading

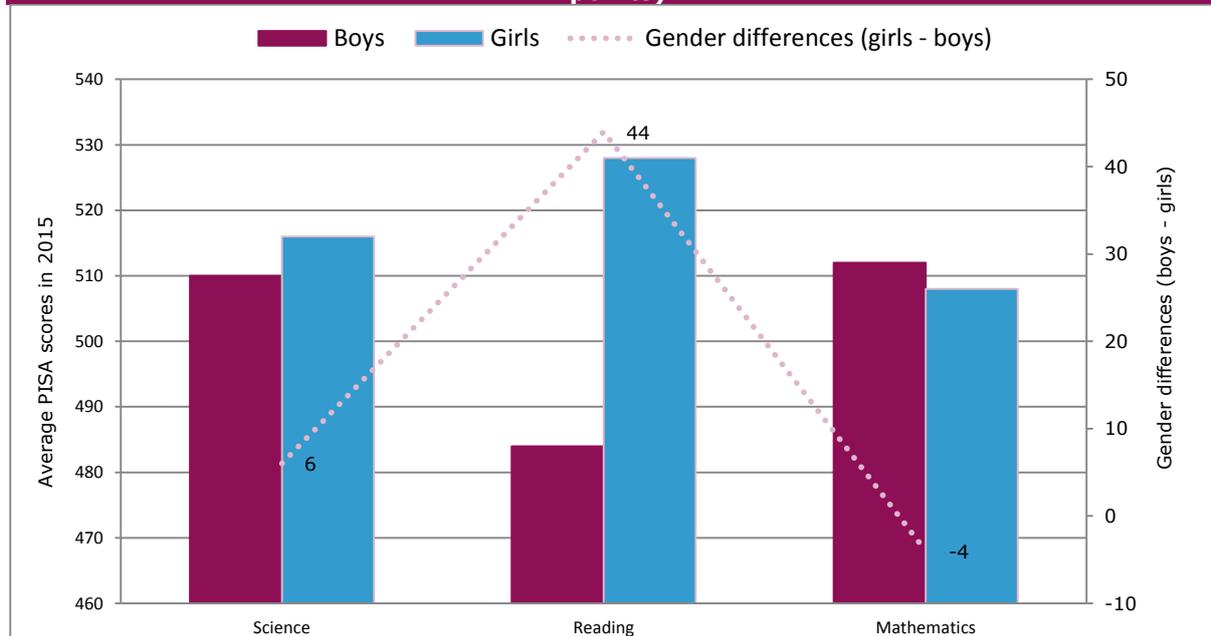
¹ From 21.2 % in 2009 to 15.1 % in 2015.

² From 462 points in 1995 to 520 points in 2015 for maths and from 464 points in 1995 to 543 points in 2015 for science for 4th grade pupils.

³ OECD average: 52 points.

literacy is still concerning. There are 12.1 % more boys than girls who underachieve in reading (EU average 9.6 % - Figure 2).

Figure 2. Average PISA scores in 2015 by gender and gender difference in Slovenia (in points)



Source: OECD (PISA Volume I, 2015). Online data codes: [Table 1.2.8a](#), [Table1.4.8a](#), [Table1.5.8a](#)

Early school leaving is rare and mostly affects men. Only 4.9 % of 18- to 24-year-olds in 2016 left school before acquiring an upper secondary qualification. This is the third-lowest rate in the EU and less than half the EU average of 10.7 % in 2016. Data for foreign-born children are less reliable due to a small sample size, but they suggest that early school leaving is much more widespread among them (15.6 %) than among native children (4.4 %). In line with the situation across the EU, in Slovenia early school leaving is more prevalent among men (6.7 %) than women (3.1 %).

Participation in early childhood education and care is increasing. The number of children attending Slovenian kindergartens is growing. As a proportion of the whole age cohort in 2015, 90.5 % of all children between the age of 4 and the school-starting age (6) were enrolled in pre-school education. This is moving closer to the EU average of 94.8 % and the benchmark of 95 %. 82.8 % of children aged 3 attended kindergarten in 2015. The participation rate in childcare was 69 % for 2-year-olds and 21.4 % for children below 2 — respectively, the fifth- and sixth-highest in the EU (Eurostat, 2015).⁴

4. Investing in education and training

Slovenia has reduced its investment in education. Education expenditure as a proportion of GDP was 5.6 % in 2015, down a further 0.4 pp. after the 0.5 pp. drop in 2014⁵. Nevertheless, although approaching the EU average of 4.9 %, Slovenia is still among the 10 EU countries that spend the most on education. The proportion of education expenditure in the 2015 total general government expenditure (11.6 %) is also above the EU average (10.3 %), but it has fallen compared to 2014 (12.1 %). Since 2009, public expenditure on education has decreased by 13 % in real terms, whereas the number of pupils and students has remained broadly stable.

Slovenia's expenditure allocation between different education sectors in 2015 was broadly in line with the EU average. Secondary education received 35.7 %, compared with an

⁴ Source: Eurostat (UOE 2015). Online data code: [uoe_enrp07](#).

⁵ Source: Eurostat, general government finance statistics (2015) online data code [gov_10_a_exp](#).

EU average of 38.7 %; tertiary education was allocated 18.8 % (EU average 15.2 %); and 37.3 % went to pre-primary and primary education (EU average 31.4 %).⁶ The budget cuts in secondary, pre-primary and primary levels, as a percentage of funding year on year, were lower than the total budget cuts. They were higher at the tertiary education level.

5. Modernising school education

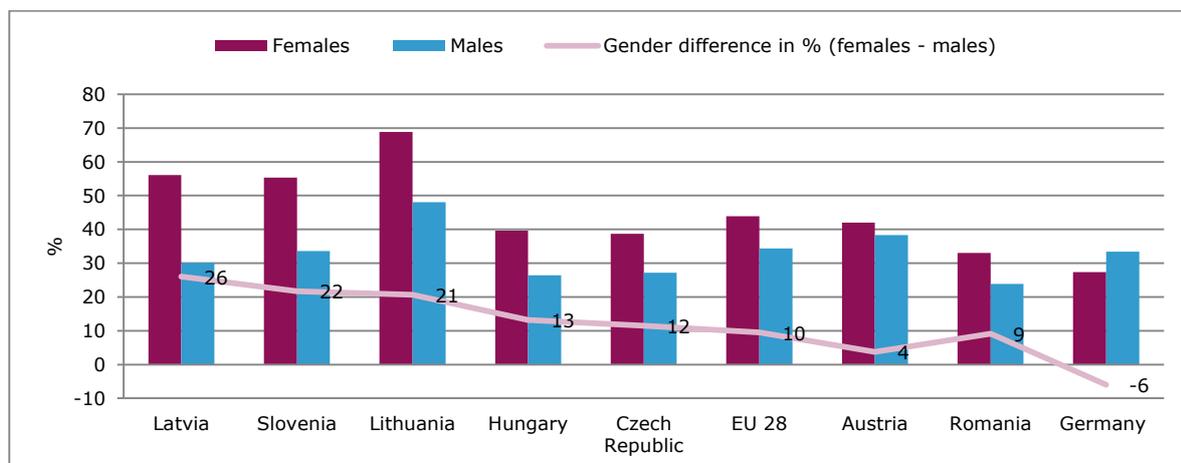
An important development is the full introduction of foreign language learning earlier in primary education. One of the most important new measures in school education is the introduction of the first foreign language as a mandatory subject from the 2nd grade of primary education (age 7). In April 2015 a total of 90 basic schools were selected to test the measure, which was then fully implemented in the 2016/17 school year.⁷ This change, plus the possibility for children to choose a second foreign language in the 4th grade (age 10) as an optional subject, should foster the development of their key competences and improve their future mobility options.

High spending on education is not reflected in high teacher salaries. Slovenian teachers' statutory salaries are below the EU-22 average in all education sectors and at all points in their career (starting salary, salary after 10 years, after 15 years, and salary at top scale) (OECD, 2016a). Lower secondary teachers' actual salaries were 88 % of the earnings of tertiary-educated workers in 2014, which is higher than the OECD average (OECD, 2016b). After a period in which teachers' salaries were frozen, in 2016 Slovenia restored promotion to higher wage grades and titles as well as an increased holiday payment for all public employees including teachers (Eurydice, 2016).

6. Modernising higher education

High tertiary attainment masks wide gender differences. Slovenia's tertiary educational attainment rate has continued to grow: in 2016, 44.2 % of 30- to 34-year-olds held a tertiary qualification, up from 43.4 % in 2015. This is above the EU average of 39.1 % and the national Europe 2020 target of 40 %. Access to higher education is helped by the absence of tuition fees, but nevertheless there are differences in participation between men and women. Women are much more likely to graduate from higher education than men. The gender gap is the second-widest in the EU, with 55.3 % of women but only 33.6 % of men attaining higher education. Slovenia's employment rates are slowly recovering to their pre-crisis levels and are broadly equal for men and women. The employment rate of tertiary-educated 20-34 year-olds who graduated 1-3 years before employment was 80.2 % in 2016, just below the EU average of 82.8 %. The rate has been growing since 2012, when it was 78.6 %. For men the rate is 82.5 % and for women 78.5 %.⁸

Figure 3. Tertiary educational attainment (age 30-34) by sex in 2016 (%)



Source: Eurostat (LFS, 2016). Online data code: [edat_lfse_03](#)

⁶ Source: Eurostat, general government finance statistics (2015) online data code [gov_10_a_exp](#).

⁷ MESS (2016).

⁸ Source: Eurostat (LFS 2016). Online data code: [edat_lfse_24](#)

A reform of higher education was initiated in 2016 and implementation is starting in 2017. The idea behind the two-stage higher education reform was to speed up the adoption of less controversial measures on which there was consensus among key stakeholders, while postponing the more demanding issues until a more fundamental legislative change. As a first step, revisions to the Higher Education Act were adopted in November 2016. These brought institutional accreditation as opposed to programme-based accreditation, abolished the procedure of the programmes' reaccreditation and increased student involvement in internal governance. They also initiated some important changes in the funding of higher education (Box 1).

An ambitious recalibration of higher education funding towards a more performance-oriented system is planned. As a second step in the higher education reform, the government coalition agreement for 2014-2018 committed to delivering a new Higher Education Act by the end of 2017. The new law will define what constitutes public service in higher education and from which sources this service should be financed. It will also define more clearly the rights and responsibilities of employees⁹ in higher education and science; define the rights of students and users of higher education; and provide for more stable and systemic financing of research activities. However, there are several points of contention between the different stakeholders. These include whether work on income-generating activities constitutes a public service of the university and whether they should be covered from public sources. Such activities include teaching fee-paying PhD students or part-time students, and engaging in privately financed projects. The definition of the public service role depends on defining the broader strategy for higher education¹⁰.

Box 1: Reform of higher education funding

The revision of the Higher Education Act in November 2016 introduced performance-based funding of higher education institutions.

The law brought new elements into the higher education funding formula:

- a basic pillar, sub-divided into fixed (although increased by the growth index every year) and variable funds (maximum 25% of the basic pillar); and
- a developmental pillar (maximum 3 % of overall funding)

The changes include a revision of the funding formula, with details to be worked out in a decree on budgetary financing of higher education in autumn 2017. It is clear that the funding formula will move from being input-oriented to being output-oriented, with a variable part that can be tapped into by institutions that are deemed to be performing well. The formula will reward, amongst other things, scientific excellence, completion rates, employability of graduates and ability to attract research and development funds from other sources, including the business sector. The idea is that such a funding system would push higher education institutions to optimise their operations and increase the quality of teaching and research.

The revised law obliged the Government to extend the financing of PhD studies as part of a public service in higher education. Its most progressive element is the guarantee that national funding for study-related activities in higher education should remain at a minimum of 1% of GDP (currently it stands at exactly 1.0%).

A significant innovation is the introduction of 4-year funding agreements which would cover not only the basic financing pillar but also the developmental pillar, which will support the implementation of institutional priorities which are in line with the national strategic goals. The timetable for rolling out the funding agreements as well as the exact details of their content are not set in law. It is hoped that with the introduction of performance-based agreements, the institutions will be empowered to respond to changes in their environment and autonomously shape the direction of their development and institutional specialisation.

The European Commission is supporting the higher education reform in Slovenia through a year-

⁹ Covering their pedagogical, research and other duties.

¹⁰ The issues under consideration include the one of a balance between the missions of the smaller regional faculties (both private and public) and universities, or the bigger, research-intensive universities.

long peer counselling exercise. In this, experts from different EU administrations are giving Slovenia advice on the design of the new higher education funding model.

7. Modernising vocational education and training and promoting adult learning

Attendance of VET is high and is expanding further into pilot apprenticeships in 2017.

Vocational education in Slovenia, which includes vocational (2-3 years) and technical (4 and 3+2) programmes, is designed to obtain trade-specific qualifications to enter the labour market or to pursue programmes at the tertiary level. The proportion of upper secondary students (ISCED 3) in Slovenia in vocational education and training (VET) increased in 2015 by 0.7 pp. to 67.5 %, which is well above the EU average of 47.3 %. By contrast, the employment rate of recent VET graduates in 2016, at 72.3 %, was below the EU average of 75 %. The pilot implementation of an apprenticeship scheme is expected to begin from the school year 2017/2018, starting at seven VET schools with a maximum of 200 apprenticeships. The Apprenticeship Act creates opportunities for unemployed people, among others, to join apprenticeship schemes. The government sent to Parliament in July 2017 a draft amendment to the Vocational and Technical Education Act which touches on technical issues. These include a procedure to verify learning work places and the setting-up of a single register of learning work places at national level. It also includes provisions addressing part-time students.

Box 2: Job rotation of VET trainers and mentors in companies

A programme to improve the professional competences of teachers was launched in 2016 as part of a Ministry of Education initiative. Running until 2022, the programme has funding of EUR 1.65 million, of which EUR 1.32 million is from the European Social Fund and the rest from the Slovenian government. Its aim is to improve teaching quality and learner experience by giving teachers and mentors the opportunity to update and complement their knowledge, skills and competences through job rotation.

Teachers of vocational modules and organisers of work-based learning will spend 2 or 4 months in a company. In this period they will be substituted by suitably qualified and trained experts from the host companies or by previously unemployed teachers. The planned number of in-company mentors and teachers participating in the programme is 560, with 297 in Eastern Slovenia and 263 in Western Slovenia.

Adult learning is widespread but the lack of learning by low-skilled adults in Slovenia is a serious issue. Adult participation in learning is 11.6 %, just above the EU average of 10.8 %. National statistics show that in 2015, 89 % of employees took part in professional training and 84.1 % of all businesses offered professional training to their employees (Statistical Office Slovenia, 2017). However, variations in adult skill levels are wide, with older people having the lowest proficiency. Older and low-skilled workers continue to have low employment rates and the unemployed older and low skilled are under-represented in active labour market policy measures. Especially problematic is the very low employment rate of low-qualified women aged 50-64 — 29.6 %, against the EU average of 39.1 %. As a result, under the 2017 European Semester the Council of the EU recommended Slovenia to '*Intensify efforts to increase the employability of low-skilled and older workers, particularly through targeted lifelong learning and activation measures*' (Council of the European Union, 2017).

The authorities are seeking to develop a long-term skills strategy and regulate the adult education system. The National Skills Strategy, currently being developed with facilitation from the OECD, intends to build a consensus around the skills challenges and their long-term solutions. A diagnostic report was published in June 2017, with a set of nine broad recommendations covering the development of skills, activation and their effective use, as well as the functioning of the skills system (OECD, 2017). In addition, the Ministry for Education, Science and Sport held a public consultation on the draft Adult Education Act in March 2017. The proposal went into inter-ministerial consultation in June 2017.

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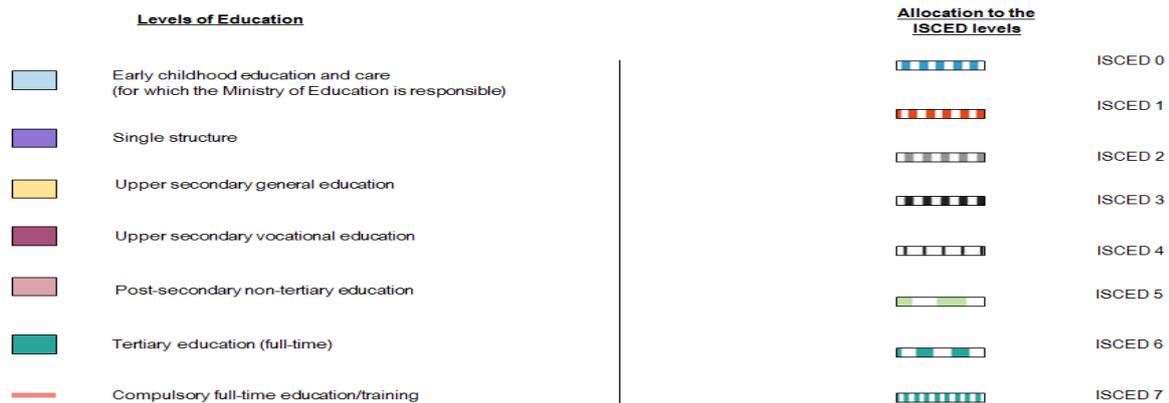
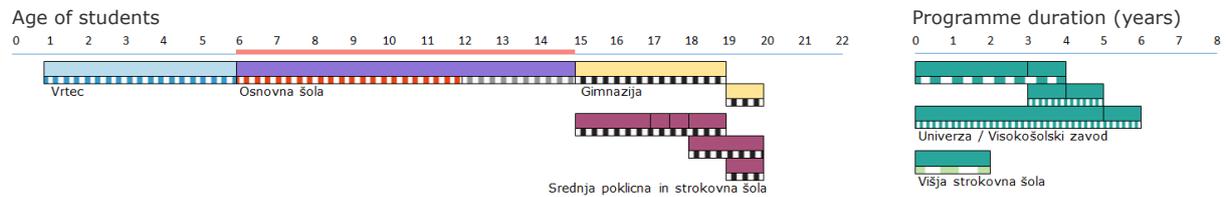
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9. Annex I. Key indicator sources

Indicator	Eurostat online data code
Early leavers from education and training	edat_lfse_02 + edat_lfse_14
Tertiary educational attainment	edat_lfse_03+ edat_lfs_9912
Early childhood education and care	educ_uoe_enra10
Employment rate of recent graduates	edat_lfse_24
Adult participation in learning	trng_lfse_03
Public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP	gov_10a_exp
Expenditure on public and private institutions per student	educ_uoe_fini04
Learning mobility	edu_uoe_mobg03

10. Annex II. The structure of the education system



Source: European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2016. *The Structure of the European Education Systems 2016/17: Schematic Diagrams*. Eurydice Facts and Figures. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

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