



Youth Wiki national description

Youth policies in Slovakia

2021

The Youth Wiki is Europe's online encyclopaedia in the area of national youth policies. The platform is a comprehensive database of national structures, policies and actions supporting young people. For the updated version of this national description, please visit <https://national-policies.eacea.ec.europa.eu/youthwiki>

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Slovakia

Slovakia with its high number of young population belongs to the youngest countries in the European Union. Official youth policy has existed since 1992.

Current Government in its [Manifesto](#) (2020-2024) promotes better conditions for the wellbeing of young people and development of their potential, especially through promoting policies that will help increase Roma youth employment, increasing the attractiveness of entrepreneurship by simplifying the start-up of entrepreneurship, creating favorable conditions for young families leaving in rural areas, support for young farmers, support for sport and educational and training opportunities outside school classes.

As stated in the Manifesto, the Government of the Slovak Republic **recognizes that in addition to the formal education of children and young people, non-formal education and youth work are equally important.** The Government will therefore support the development of appropriate infrastructure and ensure systemic and transparent financial support for non-formal education, including arts education and leisure activities.

Slovak main statement of youth policy is contained in [the Strategy of the Slovak Republic for youth for the years 2021 – 2028](#) (hereinafter Youth Strategy). Promotion of youth is primarily responsibility of Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport (hereinafter MESRS). Due to transversal nature of youth policy, different Ministries are responsible for particular policy fields that affect young people. Age range for youth policy is 0 – 30, but different Ministries can address different age ranges as well, depending on the peculiarities of their fields.

[IUVENTA - Slovenský inštitút mládeže](#) (IUVENTA - Slovak Youth Institute) is the institution of MESRS responsible for various activities concerning youth policy preparation and implementation.

The municipalities are generally responsible for all citizens (including young people) and their task is to implement national policies (concerning also young people) in their territories. Local committees dealing with different themes including “youth” are working at all local governments.

Work with young people and their upbringing is divided between public (NGOs) and state sector (e.g. youth centres.). Public sector is represented by non-profit organizations, some of them working only with children and youth.

In 1990 [Youth Council of Slovakia](#) was established, having currently 26 member organizations with more than 60 000 membership base.

1. YOUTH POLICY GOVERNANCE

Youth policy in Slovakia is coordinated by the **MESRS**. Youth policy is defined in the **Strategy of the Slovak Republic for Youth 2021-2028** (hereinafter Youth Strategy). The Youth Strategy reflects the goals of the EU Youth Strategy for the years 2019-2027 ([1.3](#)).

Children and youth as the target groups are on the agenda of more than 10 public institutions - in particular ministries

[IUVENTA - Slovak Youth Institute](#) implements state policy towards children and youth ([1.4](#)).

Cross-sectorial cooperation on youth policy issues is ensured by two expert groups: the **Interministerial working group for state policy in the field of youth** and the **Committee for Children and Youth** ([1.5](#)).

Implementation of the Youth Strategy of the Slovak Republic is evaluated in the **Youth Reports** ([1.6](#)). Funding of youth work is partly covered by the **Programmes for Youth** (MESRS), a significant long-term source is represented also by the EU Youth Programs since 1998 ([1.7](#)).

Local and regional self-governments constitute their own youth policies on their territory ([1.4](#)).

1.1 Target population of youth policy

Various age limits for “youth” have been defined by Slovak legislation ([National Report on Youth Policy in the Slovak Republic, 2005](#)) hence „youth” as the official legislative term has been introduced only for purposes of the [Act of Youth Work Support \(2008\)](#), in which the age of youth was defined from 0 to 30 years. It created the legal condition for activities including the children and young people from very early age (e.g. activities of young parents and their children).

The Slovak legislation further recognizes similar terms: minor and under-aged.

The term “minor” describes a person aged 15 – 18 ([Criminal Code, 2005](#)). Minors have increased legal protection but they are also the subject to certain restrictions. Persons younger than 18 years of age must not (among other things) play slot machines and must not be engaged in gambling at casinos. Minors are protected also by the [Act on Advertising \(2001\)](#).

The term „under-aged” describes a person who has not reached 15 years of age. They are subject to a number of legal restrictions and regulations, some of which allow them to be employed under specific circumstances ([Labour Code, 2001](#)).

[Criminal Code](#) took over the definition of the term “child” from the Article 1 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. “Child” is a person younger than 18 years of age, unless this person gains legal maturity (based on marriage) before turning 18 years of age.

[Act on Social and Legal Protection of Children \(2005\)](#) uses terms „dependent child” (up to 18 years) and „young adult” (from 18 to 25 years).

1.2 National youth law

Existence of a National Youth Law

Specific national legislation on youth exists since 2008 as the [Act No. 282/2008 Coll. on youth work support](#) was adopted. It regulates the youth work support, non-formal education in the field of youth work, the youth work funding, the accreditation of educational programmes in the field of youth work and the voluntary service within the frame of youth work.

Scope and contents

This act defines the basic concepts used in the context of youth work as the youth work itself, non-formal education, the role of youth worker, youth work coordinator and lecturer in the field of youth work. It sets the highest age limit for young people in accordance with European documents for up to 30 years.

It further describes responsibilities and roles of the state, the self-governing regions and municipalities on local level in developing the youth work.

The act also regulates the accreditation of educational programmes in the field of non-formal education for youth. For this purpose the Accreditation committee in the field of youth work was established as the advisory body for the Ministry of education, science, research and sport of the Slovak republic. Its main role is to assess the applications. The accreditation of educational programs should help to build the awareness of contributions of non-formal education in the field of youth work from the view of gained skills and competencies. It represents a tool with purpose of general recognition of those contributions from educational institutions, employers and public.

The act further defines who the young volunteer is, the characteristics of voluntary service agreement as well as the obligations at the securing of voluntary service. However in 2011 the specific Act on volunteering came into force and it regulates the legal status of a volunteer and legal relations when providing voluntary service.

The financing of youth work is established by the act as well. It describes the purpose of subsidies provision, defines the applicants to whom subsidies may be provided and the requirements on application form. The act also regulates the subsidy provision contract. More information on financing youth policy is accessible in the chapter [1.7](#).

Revisions/updates

The act has been amended in 2020 as a response to the needs of the youth sector. To the most significant changes belong those regarding the role of self-governing regions and municipalities:

- the position of youth-work coordinator especially in the self-governing regions was established;
- each municipality with the city status is obligated to establish, implement, upgrade the concept of youth work development as a strategic document in the field of youth work and evaluate its fulfilment;
- municipalities at the local level have the possibility of establishing the youth parliament. By the amendment the roles of youth parliament were described as well.

With the amendment of the act the quality label "Modern youth center" was established.

As for the youth work funding there has been simplification in the applying process. The required share on grant financing went down from 20 to 10 % with the possibility of including the value of volunteering.

The English version of the Act from 2008 is available [here](#).

1.3 National youth strategy

Existence of a National Youth Strategy

[Strategy of the Slovak Republic for Youth for the years 2021- 2028](#) (2021) was introduced in November 2021 as government's decree and came into force in December 2021.

Scope and contents

The Strategy of the Slovak Republic for Youth for the Years 2021 - 2028 (hereinafter also the "Youth Strategy") defines key areas, objectives, measures and indicators aimed at improving the quality of life of young people. It is based on knowledge and evidence of the real needs of young people and is the result of a constructive dialogue between young people representatives of public administration, regional and local government, and the non-governmental sector. Within two years, more than 300 entities from all over the country were involved in the ongoing consultation processes in the preparation of the Strategy. It is based on basic principles such as dignity, justice, equality, respect and autonomy, and is also based on the principles of active participation, inclusion and equal access to opportunities.

Youth Strategy 2021 - 2028 key areas:**Young people as the centre of interest of the society and politics**

Taking young people's needs and interests into account in policy-making is a key prerequisite for achieving effective solutions to the problems of our society. Regular identification and evaluation of needs and interests of youth and their subsequent reflection in public policy-making remains a key precondition for knowledge and evidence-based decision and policy-making.

Objectives:

- to take into account the needs and interests of young people;
- to improve inter-ministerial and cross-sectoral cooperation for the implementation of youth policies at all levels.

Participation

Youth participation has many dimensions - participation of young people in social events, participation in elections, participation in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of public policies, community life, involvement in non-governmental organizations, etc. Promoting the participation of young people it is an investment in the education of active, responsible and democratically minded citizens. Youth organizations have an irreplaceable place in promoting young people's participation.

Objectives:

- to increase the level of participation of young people in society;
- to increase the level of participation of young people at schools.

Youth Work and Leisure Time

Youth work in all its forms serves to empower young people. It brings them a unique advantage in the transition to adulthood, provides them with a safe environment for gaining self-confidence, for engaging in community life, and for learning in an informal way. Youth work provides young people with the opportunity to acquire key civic, personal, professional, work and business competences and skills. In some cases, youth work is a bridge to education, lifelong learning, training or work, and helps to prevent social exclusion. Youth work in all its forms (including street work), taking into account diverse needs and the interests of young people, in different places (including rural areas, settlements, excluded developed districts, etc.), also acts preventively against socio-pathological phenomena and radicalization of youth and promotes social inclusion and democratic principles.

Objectives:

- to improve the quality of youth work;
- to create conditions for safe, accessible and active leisure time of young people;
- to ensure targeted, transparent, sustainable and affordable funding of youth work.

Volunteering

Volunteering has a direct impact on the formation of young people and their values, on increasing their interest in the environment and the society in which they live. It promotes active citizenship, intergenerational relations, is means of personal development of a young person, provides space for self-realization and opportunity discover your own potential. It is a tool for acquiring and developing skills, it contributes to increasing employability of young people.

Objectives:

- to increase the involvement of young people in volunteering at home and abroad.

Inclusion, Equality and Non-discrimination

Youth work is based on fundamental principles such as dignity, justice, equality, respect and autonomy, while being based on the principles of active participation, equal access to opportunities. That is why inclusion, equality and non-discrimination are not just goals Strategies, but also a horizontal principle, which must be applied in all areas of youth work.

Objectives:

- to apply the principles of inclusion, equality and non-discrimination in working with youth.

Key Competences

Developing and strengthening young people's key competences for both work and private life it is a necessary precondition for achieving a state in which every young person will be able develop their full potential. Informal, cross-cutting, intergenerational, intercultural and community education, as well as other forms of youth work, are an indispensable space for young people, where they can acquire key competencies.

Objectives

- to develop and strengthen key competences and reduce competence inequalities;

Employment

Youth work, including non-formal education, street work and volunteering an irreplaceable in creating programs and support mechanisms aimed at developing the necessary competencies and gaining practical experience in order to improve employability of youth.

Objectives:

- to promote affordable, quality and motivating employment for all young people.

Digital Transformation

Education plays an important role in accompanying young people in a rapidly changing world and building the necessary digital competences. Representative research on high school students has confirmed that young people subjectively perceive that the world is changing much faster than ever before. The role of public institutions and relevant actors is to take action to support them in a rapidly changing world. Important example is the COVID19 pandemic, which has had a major impact on the lives of citizens throughout the world. Digital skills determined the success rate and divided society into those who were able to adapt immediately and those who needed help, possibly for a longer period of time, or they could not adapt at all.

Objectives:

- to promote responsible and secure digital transformation.

Sustainability and the Green Future

Young people are the future of our society and they will be the ones most affected by the effects of climate change. It is therefore necessary to create space for the involvement of young people in creating and preparing a vision for the transformation of society with a view to achieving climate neutrality in terms of the European Green Deal.

Objectives:

- to promote a sustainable and green future for young people.

Healthy Lifestyle and Psychical Health

Physical, cognitive and psychosocial changes that young people go through during adolescence affect their thinking, decision-making and interaction with the outside world. Promoting a healthy lifestyle and well-being of young people should therefore be geared

towards providing information and counseling services, as well as creating and maintaining a supporting environment. At the same time, it is necessary to create conditions for the active participation of young people in preparing and implementing steps aimed at improving their health and maintaining a healthy lifestyle style, with movement, sport and cultural activities playing an important role.

Objectives:

- promoting a healthy lifestyle and mental health of young people.

Responsible authority for the implementation of the Youth Strategy

The central state administration body that has a coordinating role in fulfilling strategic goals is the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic through the relevant department in cooperation with IUVENTA. Ministry for the purposes of the implementation of the strategy, as well as its evaluation, establishes an Interdepartmental Working Group for State Youth Policy (hereinafter "MRPS"), which consults on the policy objectives and measures of the state policy towards youth and which is also involved in the actual implementation and monitoring of the implementation of the strategy. In addition, MRPS members regularly communicate about the opportunities provided to young people within individual departments and sectors. Besides MESRS, other bodies within the public administration are involved in the implementation of the strategy (state administration institutions, but also local government) and the private sector and the non-governmental sector through their activities. Individual subjects also take into account the direction of the state youth policy in developing initiatives and projects that include the youth policy objectives set out in this strategy.

Evaluation of Youth Strategy

The fulfillment of objectives is deducted and evaluated on a regular biennial basis. In the middle of the implementation of the Strategy, its in-depth evaluation will take place, within which it will be possible to revise the individual tasks, or to propose new tasks arising from the current situation and needs. In addition, a comprehensive analytical document, Youth Report, will be prepared, which will provide a detailed view of individual strategic areas.

Revisions/updates

1.4 Youth policy decision-making

Structure of Decision-making

Core legislative documents defining goals, principles, values, system of implementation, monitoring and evaluation have been adopted at national level. These documents are binding for relevant bodies active at all levels, including regional and local level, still the measures chosen in order to reach the objectives may vary.

Documents regulating youth policy at the national level:

- [Act on Youth Work Support \(No. 282/2008 Coll.\)](#)
- [Strategy of the Slovak Republic for Youth for the Years 2014 – 2020](#)
- [Conception of Youth Work Development 2016 - 2020.](#)

Youth Strategy 2014 - 2020 introduced *Interministerial working group for the state policy in the field of youth* (thereinafter referred to as IMGY). See section [1.5 Cross-sectorial approach with other ministries.](#)

Regional Authority Offices (Úrady samosprávnych krajov) in seven Slovak regions take decisions on regional youth policy. As provided in the Act on Youth Work Support, it is their obligation to elaborate regional concepts of youth work support (e.g. [Hlohovec](#), 2021,

[Žiar nad Hronom](#), 2021, [Zvolen](#), 2020). Although it's thematic fields are identical to the national strategy, planned measures differ from region to region.

[Special survey](#) conducted by MESRS in 2015 on the youth policy implementation at regional and local level showed that 91% of local authorities did not establish any separate department for youth or youth policy. Youth policy issues are mostly integrated into agenda of their employees responsible for education or social affairs.

Parliamentary Committee in charge of youth issues

Committee on Education, Science, Youth and Sports

Chairman: Mr. Richard Vašečka

[Committee on Education, Science, Youth and Sports](#) is obliged to discuss issues related to state policy in the field of education, training, state policy in relation to child and youth care and sport and state science and technology policy.

It also participates in supervision of the EU funds use in the field of education

Main Themes

As far as the thematic priorities are concerned, the Youth Strategy 2014 – 2020 followed the structure and the themes of the EU Youth Strategy: education, employability, social inclusion, creativity and entrepreneurship, participation, youth and the world, participation, health and healthy life-style, volunteering and youth work. Previous document on the national youth policy ([Key Areas and Action Plans of the State Policy](#), 2008) included 16 different areas, which were difficult to follow and evaluate.

One-year-long preparation process preceded elaboration of current Youth Strategy 2014 - 2020. It included issuing of [Youth Report 2014](#), which collected all accessible information sources from research and contemporary studies, as well as consulting with young people and youth workers living in all seven regions of Slovakia. Specific thematic groups were established, involving experts (including young experts) and representatives of the relevant youth NGOs. The consultation's results were considered in the final content of Slovak Youth Report 2014 and presented to the public on [National Conference on Youth 2014](#), both organised by MESRS and in cooperation with IUVENTA – Slovak Youth Institute.

Youth Strategy 2014 - 2020 has been adopted with a vision to support all young people, no specific groups have been highlighted. Social Inclusion section underlines the basic principle of Youth Policy to reflect the needs of young people in vulnerable life situation and to develop and implement specific measures, tools and approaches for these specific groups.

The National Agency for Youth

[IUVENTA – Slovak Youth Institute](#) is an independent governmental organisation managed and financed by MESRS. It belongs to the oldest institutions responsible for youth policy implementation since the fifties of the 20th century. During the last decade of the 20th century IUVENTA has completely changed its original agenda which was mainly methodical support provided to one mass children and youth organisation – Socialist Union of Youth.

IUVENTA:

- manages administration of national grant programmes for youth and Erasmus+ (Youth Chapter);
- coordinates research activities connected to youth policy preparation;
- prepares Youth Reports ([2010](#), [2014](#), [2018](#));
- provides services to the Youth Department of MESRS (e.g. coordinates working groups during preparation of various documents, such as Youth Strategy 2014 - 2020, Act on Youth Work Support, Conception of Youth Work Development, etc.);

- supervises youth consultations;
- is a seat of [EURODESK](#);
- nominates experts to various expert groups of European Commission and Council of Europe (e.g. [European Knowledge Centre on Youth Policy](#));
- coordinates national and international rounds of [traditional school subjects' competitions](#).

Cooperation of IUVENTA and MESRS is regulated by [contract](#):

- on activities in the field of national youth policy implementation (including activities of the National agency Erasmus+ for youth and EURODESK and other tasks decided by MESRS, e.g. expert groups, preparation of new legislation, consultations with young people, publications and methodical guides, etc.) and
- on activities connected to school subjects' competitions for pupils attending primary schools and students of secondary schools.

Yearly financial allocation for IUVENTA, resulting from the above contract is approx. 1.5 million EUR; the amount of finances is slightly increasing every year.

Policy monitoring and evaluation

- The Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic (MESRS) is responsible for co-ordination of the youth policy preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
- MESRS monitors and evaluates mainly programmes in its area of responsibilities;
- key documents of current Slovak youth policy such as Strategy for Youth 2014 -2020 and Programmes for Youth were based on evaluation of previous ones: [Key Areas and Action Plans of the State Policy in Relation to Children and Youth in the Slovak Republic for 2008 – 2014](#) and [financial programmes ADAM](#) (Activities of Children and Youth, 2008 -2014).
- IUVENTA – Slovak Youth Institute commissioned external independent evaluation consisting of analyses of final reports, consultations with youth workers, different experts and youth people themselves.
- mid-evaluation of financial programmes 2008-2014 and discussion about new generation of funding programmes took place at [public consultation in 2012](#).
- The results of evaluation of former youth policy document (2008 -2014) were presented in the form of Youth Report 2014 during [National conference](#).
- Monitoring of Youth Strategy implementation is made under coordination of [IMGY](#) and presented on the web site of the Ministry ([2015](#), [2016](#), [2017](#)). Evaluation of Youth Strategy 2014 - 2020 in the second third of its validity was delivered in the [Youth Report 2018](#) and presented in the [National Conference in June 2018](#).

1.5 Cross-sectoral approach with other ministries

Mechanisms and actors

Youth policy in the Slovak Republic is based on the principle of cooperation among sectors and various stakeholders.

There are two mechanisms:

- [Inter-ministerial working group for state policy in the field of youth](#) (coordinated by MESRS) IMGY
- [Committee for Children and Youth](#) (coordinated by MLSAF)

Inter-ministerial working group for state policy in the field of youth (hereinafter referred to as IMGY) has been established by the Youth Strategy 2014 – 2020 as a body responsible for coordination and communication among various stakeholders dealing with youth-related themes/issues. Similar government body has existed since 2008.

IMGY meets twice per year, but in period of preparation of strategical documents IMGY meets as needed. One of the agreed procedures is to organise small working groups of IMGY members according to the topics and expertise. IUVENTA - Slovak Youth Institute is the service institution for [IMGY meetings](#).

IMGY:

- consults, proposes and evaluates the objectives and measures related to the national youth policy,
- seeks effective and complex preparation of the measures directed to the Strategy's implementation and with a view to evaluate fulfilment of these measures,
- assesses and comments the measures for the Strategy's implementation, which require coordination of partial activities of several entities,
- assesses the accepted proposals and submits its own proposals of the measures for implementation of strategic objectives,
- offers a space for exchange of information concerning fulfilment of the measures within the Strategy's implementation in individual areas.

IMGY consists of representatives of regional authority offices, governmental institutions, umbrella youth organisation, employers and unions, as follow:

- [Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic,](#)
- [Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic,](#)
- [Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic,](#)
- [Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic,](#)
- [Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic,](#)
- [Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic,](#)
- [Ministry of Transport, Construction and Regional Development of the Slovak Republic,](#)
- [Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic,](#)
- [Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic,](#)
- Regional Self-government Offices (8 regions) (Úrady samosprávnych krajov)
- [Association of Towns and Communities of Slovakia](#) (Združenie miest a obcí Slovenska),
- [Union of Slovak Towns](#) (Únia miest Slovenska),
- [Confederation of the Trade Unions of the Slovak Republic](#) (Konfederácia odborových zväzov Slovenskej republiky),
- [Association of the Information and Counselling Youth Centres in the Slovak Republic](#) (Združenie informačných a poradenských centier Slovenskej republiky),
- [Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities](#) (Úrad splnomocnenca vlády SR pre rómske komunity)
- [Youth Council of Slovakia](#)
- [Student Council of Higher Education](#) (Študentská rada vysokých škôl),
- [Asociácia CVČ SR](#) (Asociácia centier voľného času),
- [Association of Regional Youth Councils](#) (Asociácia krajských rád mládeže),

Committee for Children and Youth

[The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic](#) facilitates activities of the Committee for Children and Youth ([Výbor pre deti a mládež](#)) being one of the committees of [the Governmental Council for Human Rights, National Minorities and Gender Equality](#) (Rada vlády pre ľudské práva, národnostné menšiny a rodovú rovnosť).

It gathers together the representatives of various ministries, local and regional governments, as well as non-governmental non-profit organisations.

This committee elaborates represents the basic instrument for targeted and coordinated actions for implementation of the Convention of the Rights of the Child and its optional protocols at the national level.

1.6 Evidence-based youth policy

Political Commitment to Evidence-Based Youth Policy

According to the Act on Youth Work Support, the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic (hereinafter the MESRS) is obliged to analyze and evaluate the needs of young people.

Youth Strategy 2021 – 2028 considers research and youth policy cooperation to represent its key values, together with cross-sectorial approach, participation and inclusion. By participation it is understood, that the youth policy would be defined in dialog and in cooperation with researchers and experts in order to secure evidence-based youth policy. Participation also reflects the dialogue with young people during the whole process of youth policy-making. Data gathered by various researches created the source of background information for Youth Strategy 2021-2028. Its evaluation will be presented in the form of Youth Reports, therefore research data are required to prove the reliability.

In general, there are two terms used in youth policy: „knowledge-based youth policy“ and „youth policy based on the real needs of young people“. The first term is used for the creation of youth policy in cooperation with experts on the topics and experts on the youth as the social group. The second term encompasses consultations with young people as the starting point of youth policy. However, the official definition on „knowledge-based youth policy“ is not available in the Slovak legislation and official documents.

Cooperation between policy-making and research

MESRS as the coordinator of youth policy maintains regular cooperation with representatives of youth research.

Mechanism of cooperation

1. [Online database of youth researches](#)
2. Involvement of youth researchers in youth policy documents' preparation and evaluation.

The online database of youth research, formally called [Data Archive of Youth Research](#) (DAYR), has been running since 2006. Archive contains academic and ad-hoc research projects and surveys. Surveys and research projects are divided into two catalogues. Surveys based on mainly representative samples of youth in the Slovak Republic are collected in the Data Catalogue. The Data Catalogue allows the access to the survey list ordered by the year of data collection. Identification sheet of the survey enables direct access to the abstract, brief conclusions, research documentation (questionnaire), methodological procedure (sample, representativeness), to the data file and references to the publication of the survey results. Regional surveys or research projects without formalised identification sheets are placed in [the Surveys – Data Catalogue](#) (Prieskumy – katalóg dát).

Data from various surveys are incorporated into the evaluation documents on youth policy: [Youth Report 2010](#), [Youth Report 2014](#) and [Youth Report 2018](#).

National Statistics and available data sources

There is no centralised/integrated and regularly updated statistical system on youth in the Slovak Republic.

No specific indicators have been established for the youth population.

[The Centre of scientific and technical information of the Slovak Republic](#) (Centrum vedecko-technických informácií SR) - CVTI, offer some data sources in the section [Education Information](#) in the subsection *Youth and Sport*, for example:

- Analysis of statistical data monitored in [sport](#) for 2019
- Data on [Youth](#) for 2019
- Data on [civic associations](#) in Slovakia for 2018
- Activity evaluation of [Youth Information Centers](#) for 2018
- Activity evaluation of [Leisure-time Centers](#) for 2018

Policy themes informed by research

Regular scientific data from the official research projects and surveys are provided in the field of education, employment, health, social inclusion, participation and volunteering. There is a lack of data concerning youth and culture.

Data on Education

Although MESRS is responsible for coordination of youth policy preparation and implementation, the majority of scientific research financed by MESRS is dedicated to the area of basic and applied research in education, pedagogy, creative and performing arts and other sciences linked to specific higher education institutions and the Slovak Academy of Science. MESRS runs two agencies to provide financial support to academic research: [KEGA](#) and [VEGA](#). Not all research projects supported by KEGA and VEGA are focused on youth.

Data on Employment and Social Inclusion

In 2015 the main topics of interest were [youth unemployment](#) and [young people with disabilities](#) and their access to labour market. Research projects were carried out mainly by [Institute for Labour and Family Research](#).

Data on Health

[Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic](#) supports surveys and research projects focused on children and youth in the following fields (see Department of Children and Youth Hygiene):

- protection of health of children and youth,
- trends in physical growth and development,
- prevention of risk behaviour,
- special problems of minority groups

During the years 2016-2019 the [Public Health Authority of the Slovak Republic](#) (run by the Ministry of Health) carried out a survey called [Health awareness and behavior of Slovak population](#).

Emerging issues

Extremism and radicalism as a threat to Slovak Youth

In 2016 far-right national populist neo-Nazi political party in Slovakia reached the legitimate number of voters and became a part of Slovak National Parliament. Since then various surveys ([2016](#), [2018](#)) showed that 20% of young people were strong supporters of radical movements. In 2017 – 2019 some state and public institutions conducted researches and started the discussion about extremism and radicalisation of Slovak youth with better knowledge of motivation, profile, background and other characteristics of young radicals (or other young people who support them). A [survey](#) by the Youth Council of Slovakia conducted in 2019 showed that every fifth young person would vote for the above mentioned extremist political party in the next parliamentary elections.

Young People and Risk of Extremism ([Mladí ľudia a riziko extrémizmu, 2017](#)) conducted by Institute for Public Affairs focused on values and attitudes of young people in light of their potential extremist preferences. Strategical Policy Institute was engaged in topic extremism, radicalisation and paramilitary groups ([Mládež, radikalizmus a polovojenské organizácie, 2018](#)) and correlations / motivations between them. In 2018 MESRS financially supported qualitative survey of Open Society Foundation focusing on the [causes of radicalisation of young](#) (14 – 18 years old) Slovaks (e.g. family background, the desire to belong somewhere, simple solutions to complicated problems etc.).

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Youth

According to some experts, young people are more vulnerable to the side effects of a pandemic, especially in the case of **mental health**. For example IPčko, the online counselling for youth, has experienced an [increase](#) in contacts with teenagers since the beginning of 2019. 21% more clients in contrast to the last years discussed the topic of suicide. As stated by IPčko, the COVID-19 pandemic and social isolation hit the group of young people the hardest. The one positive effect of pandemic is that the more open discussion on mental health began.

The youth **unemployment** rate [has risen](#) much more sharply than the overall unemployment rate in the working-age population. The statistics of labor offices show that in December 2020, almost 11,000 school graduates were still unemployed, which is significantly more than in previous years.

Evidence-based evaluation of youth policies

Since 2010 the youth policy has been evaluated in the form of youth reports. The first [Youth Report 2010](#) was prepared in order to evaluate individual areas of then in force national youth policy document.

National Youth Reports

[Youth Report 2014](#) has been prepared in order to evaluate national youth policy, its outcomes and impacts in the period between 2011– 2013. The Youth Report 2014 was also the starting point for a new youth strategy preparation. Youth Report 2014 was established on the basis of information regarding the status of youth in the Slovak Republic, which was obtained from research and surveys. [Strategy of the Slovak Republic for Youth 2014 – 2020](#) was prepared with regard to the findings of the Youth Report 2014.

[Youth Report 2018](#) was adopted by The Slovak Government on the 13th of June. Wide discussion on the finding of Youth Report and on the further priorities of national Youth Strategy took place during National Conference on Youth ([Národná konferencia 2MB](#)).

Other data providers for some thematic fields of Youth Strategy 2014 – 2020.

The main providers of data on youth in Slovakia are MESRS (by the activities of CVTI), the [Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic](#) and the [Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family](#).

Available statistics, updates and accessibility by various key players in youth policy:

- [Demographic data on youth](#) - annually updated, available on the web-site of the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic
- [Data on employment](#) - monthly updated, available on the web-site of the Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family

Other data sources:

- Data connected to Implementation of Convention on the Rights of Child (e.g. state welfare benefits, injuries, child deaths, foster-care institutions, abuse and neglect of children, allowances for disabled, integration of children with special educational needs into the educational system etc.) – periodically updated reports by the [Committee for Children and Youth of the Government Council for Human Rights, National Minorities and Gender Equality](#)
- [Longitudinal representative surveys of CVTI](#) (previous Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education) aimed at human rights in a school-and-family environment, social - pathological phenomena in young people's lives, drug consumption, lifestyles and value orientation, political and civic participation of youth etc.
- Data on human rights provided by the [Slovak National Centre for Human Rights](#)

Budgetary Allocations supporting research in the youth field

Subsidy scheme of the MESRS, "The Programs for Youth for 2014 - 2021" focus mainly on non-formal education in youth work and on the development of youth policy in Slovakia. In 2018, the Programme "Evidence on youth" focused on:

- obtaining relevant and reliable information on young people for needs the development of youth policy measures at various levels, through research;
- the cooperation and networking of the various actors active in youth research for the needs of youth policy-making.

1.7 Funding youth policy

How Youth policy is funded

A specific budget is regularly allocated for youth policy implementation at the central level. The Division of secondary education and lifelong learning operates within the structure of the MESRS bearing responsibility not only for coordination of the youth policy implementation, but also for related budgetary issues. Thus the division covers the costs occurred when [developing European and international cooperation in the field of youth](#), as well as the costs connected to elaboration of various analyses and studies. The State, through budgetary provisions of the MESRS, provides yearly financial contributions to [IUVENTA – Slovak Youth Institute](#) in order to undertake activities helping in youth policy implementation.

Programmes for Youth 2014 - 2021

In 2013, the MESRS adopted the [Programmes for Youth for years 2014 – 2021](#) providing financial support to the bodies developing activities and projects in the field of youth work and youth policy implementation. Calls for projects are being published regularly within the Programmes, specified further within the following sub-programmes:

- [SUPPORT of Youth Organisations](#) (funding regular activities of the youth NGOs and their systematic work with youth);
- [PRIORITIES of youth policy](#) (funding projects submitted according to the actual themes, such as e.g. the structured dialogue; the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the EU theme: talent and potential of young people; support of the EU basic values in the context of actual societal challenges; building of the quality systems in youth work and production of evidence on the youth work impacts);

- [VOICE of youth](#) (funding projects of bodies ensuring representation of the young peoples' needs at the national and regional levels);
- [SERVICES for youth](#) (funding projects of bodies developing youth information and counselling services and services in the field of youth volunteering);
- [COMMUNITIES](#) for youth (was launched in 2016 - first projects focused most on aggregation of local and regional data on youth and youth policy were granted);
- EVIDENCE on youth (was launched in 2017).

Support to youth work from 2022

MESRS, in cooperation with IUVENTA, has developed a new financial system for the youth work support. for registration to the list of eligible applicants for subsidies in the field of youth work. Several consultations were held on the creation of the system with organizations implementing or supporting youth work. The consultations followed the outputs from the consultation meeting of the Monitoring Committee on the setting up of the new subsidy scheme implemented by the end of 2021. The new system of support for youth work is divided into 7 thematic areas:

- a year-round regular and systematic work with youth of a supraregional character;
- representative structures for youth participation;
- volunteer opportunities for young people
- youth information and counseling services
- helplines for youth
- low-threshold youth programs
- current priorities in youth work.

The total number of children aged 5 – 15 living in a particular municipality, as well as the total number of young people aged 15 – 18 living in a particular Slovak region are being considered during calculation of the income tax shares for every and each municipality and county in Slovakia, providing also financial sources for their interest-based (out-of-school) education. Thus the youth policy implementation has been reflected in the budgets of authorities at local and regional level. Still, they are autonomous when taking decision on the use of allocated funds. The research "[Survey on the Youth Policy at Regional and Local level 2015](#)" has confirmed that not all the allocated funds have been used by the municipalities for the sake of youth policies implementation. Some of them provide funding to Youth Centres, the others have adopted grant schemes devoted to youth only and some have only supported youth activities within existing granting schemes. Only few municipalities provide funding consisting of combination of the above listed alternatives.

What is funded?

The financial sources of the MESRS subsidy scheme provide funding to various stakeholders, but mainly to the youth NGOs. The eligibility criteria, as well as the quality indicators have been identified by MESRS in a very active communication and cooperation with the representatives of the youth NGOs and other stakeholders. External experts are invited to provide written assessments on submitted projects and grant requests. Their views are being considered by the members of the selection committee, which produces final proposal for funding to the Minister of Education, Science, Youth and Sport of the Slovak Republic. Funding is available on the basis of the [Act on Youth Work Support](#) provisions.

Financial accountability

All the beneficiaries are subject to audit by the Internal Audit Unit of the MESRS, according to provisions of the [Act on Control in State Administration](#). Two or three beneficiaries are randomly selected to present their accounts for checking. In case of identification of any

discrepancies the beneficiary is obliged to pay back the entire misused finances to the MESRS or to the Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic, in accordance with the valid financial regulations.

Use of EU Funds

The European Social Fund was used in the programming period 2007 – 2013 to support national projects in the field of youth policy and youth work within [the Operational Programme Education](#).

[National Project KomPrax](#)

Project KomPrax – Competencies for Practice was aimed at young leaders, youth leaders and youth workers, according to provision of § 2 of [the Act on Youth Work Support](#) in order to acquaint them with competencies (such as communication and presentation skills, team work, project management, etc.) useful for their full participation in social and economic life. More than 12 thousands participants took part in the project educational activities directly, but the project has affected more than 24 thousand people via small community-based projects (granted by an amount up to 200 EUR) implemented by the project participants. Research activities were implemented throughout projects' realisation in the period 2011 – 2015 in order to gather information on young people with fewer opportunities. The project also provided space for many activities aiming at the [recognition and validation of non-formal learning in youth work](#), such as "Declaration on Recognition of Contribution of Non-formal Education in Youth Work" (Pešek, Dudáč and Tomanová, 2012) currently supported by more than [100 various stakeholders](#), regional round tables and national conference, as well as national [competition for creative young people on the topic of recognition](#).

[National Project Praktik](#)

Project Praktik – Practical Skills through Non-formal Education in Youth Work was aimed at innovation in youth work. The projects objectives were to enhance the quality of interest-based activities in youth work and thus ensure the development of practical skills; to create the space for youth leaders to participate actively in the preparation of activities and to guarantee the know-how transfer from youth workers to youth leaders. Seven topic centres were established within the project implemented from 2013 till 2015 in seven Slovak counties, elaborating on the following topics:

- healthy life-style promotion;
- practical use of ICT promotion;
- development of practical skills while working with small tangible materials;
- search and support of talented young people;
- support and development of experience-based activities in environmental education;
- support and development of education towards citizenship and multiculturalism;
- support and development of global education.

About 250 youth workers and 250 youth leaders took part in project educational activities and consequently prepared educational activities for more than 2400 children and young people. New methodologies for interest-based education in youth work were elaborated in the form of videos and distributed to youth workers.

Project KomPrax: more than 6 million EUR

Project Praktik: around 4 million EUR

There are no evaluations of the youth-related initiatives/activities/programmes funded through EU schemes.

There is no information on planned measures in the field of youth policy to be supported through EU funds available.

Other than KomPrax and Praktik, here are some other projects concerning youth implemented by the MESRS organizations and funded by The European Social Fund:

1. The Methodology and Pedagogy Centre (MPC): [PRINED](#) – Inclusive Education Project
2. The State Institute of professional education - [the National Qualifications Framework](#) project.

1.8 Cross-border cooperation

Cooperation with European countries

Slovak Republic currently cooperates in the field of youth with following partners:

Czech Republic

Cooperation in the field of youth between the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic is supported by the Protocols on Cooperation, which take the form of the meeting of the Czech-Slovak Joint Commission for Youth. The area of Czech-Slovak cooperation in the field of youth is set at several levels: the level of ministries and theirs directly managed organizations, the level of national youth councils and the level of youth information centers.

In accordance with Article 13 of the Protocol between the MESRS and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic on cooperation in the field of education, youth, physical education and sports for 2002-2006, after a six-year break, [the seventh meeting of the Slovak-Czech Joint Commission for Youth](#) was held in May 2018 in Bratislava. The Commission focused on informing about current developments in the field of youth policy in both countries, talent support, the system of using the Structural Funds and current projects of national youth councils. It also focused on the exchange of experience in the field of preparations for the implementation of the European Solidarity Corps and the preparation of the Presidency in the V4. The meeting of the commission was attended by representatives of ministries and their directly managed organizations, representatives of the National Youth Councils of the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic and directors of national Erasmus + agencies.

Montenegro

In June 2017, a Cooperation Program was signed between the MESRS and the Ministry of Education of Montenegro in the field of education for 2017-2021. This document also includes direct cooperation and exchanges between youth councils institutions working with children and young people.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

In 2017, the Memorandum in the field of youth was finalized between the MESRS and the Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The memorandum focuses mainly on the support and development of cooperation between youth organizations and institutions in the Slovak Republic and Bosnia and Herzegovina, strengthening bilateral cooperation by exchanging documents and research materials published at youth conferences and meetings in both countries, organizing joint youth working groups consisting of young people from these two countries. and joint planning of other youth programs. This memorandum is a document of a political nature, from which the parties do not derive rights and obligations under international law (Article 1 (3) of the Rules for the Conclusion of International Treaties and Contractual Practice)

A memorandum on cooperation in the field of youth between the MESRS and the Ministry of Civil Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina was signed in April 2018 in Sarajevo. In 2019, a [delegation](#) from Bosnia and Herzegovina visited Slovakia.

The Republic of Serbia

The agreement between the MESRS and the Ministry of Sport and Youth of the Republic of Serbia for the period 2012-2016 in the field of youth work was signed on 31 January 2012 in Bratislava. The co-operation took place mainly in the form of study visits at various levels (ministerial, institutions, non-governmental sector) and through the coordination on youth policy issues at European level. The relevant institutions working in the field of youth in both countries and the non-governmental sector were involved in the cooperation. In December 2015, during a bilateral visit to Bratislava, an Action Plan for Cooperation for 2016 was drawn up, during which exchanges of experts aimed at sharing experiences in the field of youth policy at the local level took place. In October 2019, a [Memorandum of Understanding](#) was signed in Belgrade between the MESRS and the Ministry of Youth and Sport of the Republic of Serbia on cooperation in the field of youth and sport.

V4 Visegrad Group

Visegrad Group (V4 - Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovak Republic)) has been developing relationship with substantial dialogue across a wide range of youth issues. In the field of youth, the cooperation of the Slovak Republic with the V4 countries is carried out annually on the basis of the official program of the currently presiding country in the Visegrad Group.

As part of the Slovak presidency of the V4 countries (1 July 2018 - 30 June 2019), the MESRS in cooperation with IUVENTA organized a seminar in April 2019 on the support and development of talents called [Discover Youth Talents](#) for the V4 countries, the Eastern Partnership and for the first time, for the Western Balkans. The aim of the seminar was to discuss the positive influence and enabling the full development of the potential and talent of individuals in non-formal and informal learning, to share examples of good practice and to emphasize the role of talent support and development in various fields.

International cooperation

Republic of Korea

On November 21, 2017, an international agreement was signed in Seoul, a [Memorandum of Understanding](#) concluded between the MESRS and the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family of the Republic of Korea on cooperation in the youth field. The aim of the memorandum is to encourage and strengthen cooperation between countries in the youth field through youth exchanges, the exchange of information and experience and participation in events.

In July (SVK → KR) and in September (KR → SVK) 2018, a Korean-Slovak youth exchange program was implemented as part of the implementation of a memorandum, which was attended by five youth delegates from each country. The aim of the exchange was to gain knowledge about youth policies, exchange experiences in the field of activities for young people, participate in professional discussions on youth policy, develop non-formal education or get acquainted with the life and problems of youth in individual countries.

The United Nations Youth Delegate

MESRS in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic and the Association of Regional Youth Councils (AKRAM) renewed the function of the youth delegate of the Slovak Republic to the UN. The mission of the project is to represent Slovak youth at the UN, representing the interests of Slovak youth at the global level, promoting and fulfilling human rights and subsequently spreading awareness of the UN and opportunities for participation, active citizenship and sustainable development goals among Slovak youth. IUVENTA is the coordinator of the [UN youth delegate](#) programme.

Slovak Youth Delegate to the World Health Organization

In 2020, the MESRS, in cooperation with IUVENTA, the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic and the Student Council of Universities, created a new program for young people - [the Slovak Youth Delegate to the WHO](#).

The Eastern Partnership

The Slovak Republic took over the presidency of the V4 in July 2014, during which a Memorandum on cooperation in the youth field between the V4 countries and the Eastern Partnership countries was prepared and signed (signed in Bratislava on 22 June 2015). By signing it, the ministers declared their interest in developing and supporting cooperation in the field of youth of both groups. The memorandum was not signed by Azerbaijan, but it still plans to continue cooperating with the V4 and EaP.

1.9 Current debates and reforms

2021

In 2021, The Government of the Slovak Republic approved the [Concept on combating radicalization and extremism by 2024](#). The concept includes an analysis and summary of trends in the development of radicalization and extremism in Slovakia and the EU, including a report on the attitudes and changing priorities of the left and right extremist scene or perilous religious groups. The material also states a significant increase in hate speech and a decline in public debate, which is a breeding ground for deepening extremism and hate speech, especially in the era of social networks. Also the fact that extremist groups try to influence the public through leisure and hobby clubs. The concept also clearly maps the situation in the Slovak Republic in the years 2015-2019, while noting the rise of the anti-Roma agenda, false reports or conspiracy theories. The overview also includes research on racism and xenophobia among young people in Slovakia conducted by the Slovak National Center for Human Rights and IUVENTA.

2022

The Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports of the Slovak Republic and the Slovak NGO working in the field of youth work are preparing, in addition to the consequences of the pandemic on the school and out-of-school youth environment, for the consequences of the war in Ukraine in connection with helping children and youth from Ukraine. The new subsidy scheme adopted in 2022 also reflects this situation.

2. VOLUNTARY ACTIVITIES

The **first evidence of volunteer activities** in Slovakia can be found in the Middle Ages. Nevertheless, volunteering is an area that needs sustained support for its development. The period of socialism (1948 -1989) stopped the volunteer sector's development and jeopardized its principles. After the revolution in 1989, the civil society and, in particular, the civil associations that were forbidden by the Communist regime again came to the fore.

Volunteering has been lacking the legislative framing. Since 2008, "**youth volunteering**" was introduced in legislation as a result of incoming European Union Youth programs (in particular the **European Voluntary Service**). **Act on Volunteering** exists since 2011. Platform of Volunteer Centres and Organizations, which brings together active non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders is a strong partner of the **MESRS** and the **Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic** – the most important public sectors influencing the development of volunteering.

The largest program supporting international youth volunteering is Erasmus + and all previous EU Youth Programs since 2000. Young people in Slovakia can get information on volunteering opportunities through the several portals provided mainly by volunteer centers. There is also a tradition of **Volunteer Week** and the regular **awards to volunteers** for their valuable work at all levels ([2.7](#)).

2.1 General context

Historical developments

The history of volunteering in Slovakia is closely linked to the history of civil society development. Nowadays, two lines of civil society exist (Brozmanova Gregorova and Hirt, 2006), while volunteering (including youth volunteering) has been developed within:

- Organisations fulfilling public benefit aims (e.g. social and charity related activities);
- Organisations developing mutual benefit and associative life of citizens (mutually beneficial activities, outreach and social aims).

From the Middle Ages to 1918

The first civil society organisations were linked to the activities of church and middle class. These were aimed at assistance to poor people, etc. Such activities were voluntary, philanthropic and individualistic, but often incidental (Kováčiková, 2000). Target groups care was not sufficient and it encouraged the development of so-called brotherhoods and guilds, which functioned on the principles of solidarity and mutual help.

In the middle of the 19th century, the national movement represented a strong impulse for the establishment and development of several associations, while student associations were significantly developed (Brozmanová, et al., 2009). After the unsuccessful revolution aimed at recognition of the independence of Slovaks in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the majority of associations ceased to exist. All associations were kept under state surveillance, and they were obliged to get registered and submit statutes. Till 1860, only a few associations were approved, some functioned secretly (Dudeková, 1998).

The national cultural organisation Matica Slovenská started to operate in the sixties of the 19th century. Despite the official restrictions, it influenced the establishment of various associations. Young people representing the middle class participated significantly in their activities.

Restrictions towards freedom of associations and assemblies became more intense during the World War I. Associations were paralyzed; many people were under police surveillance.

From independent state towards the communist regime (1918 – 1989)

The period of the First Czechoslovak Republic (1918 – 1939) has also been called 'the age of associations'. The freedom of associations was guaranteed by the Constitution. The number of voluntary associations increased enormously. Social and health associations were strongly positioned. Mass associations operating in the whole territory of Slovakia were established (Buerkle, 2004).

Voluntary work tradition was interrupted by the military occupation and World War II., and later, by the establishment of a socialist state – the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. Any activities of associations were purposefully and systematically reduced or strictly controlled (Tošner and Sozanská, 2002).

After 1945 the activities of about 10 thousand associations involving more than half-million members were renewed. Associations recognized by the military totalitarian regime were dismissed within the whole of Slovakia, but some organisations such as Matica Slovenská, Živena (organisation supporting women), various good causes, and fire services maintained. These organisations were obliged to change their Statutes (Dudeková, 1998).

In 1945 uniform mass organisations were created by the decision of the communist government: for trade unions (ROH), women (Živena), sport (Sokol), and youth (Czechoslovak Socialist Union of Youth). All the other associations were obliged to become their members. From 1948 the leading role of the Czechoslovak Communist Party was established. The existing associations were changed to "voluntary organisations" by law and thus forced to become a part of the "approved" organisations or terminate. The usage of terms, such as association or assembly, was canceled as well as voluntary membership

and inner democracy. The property of associations and foundations was nationalized. "Civil organisations" were given political tasks to build a socialist society. From 1948 the third sector lost independence from the state and practically did not exist. Space for voluntary activities was offered mainly in secret activities of the Catholic Church and in some environmental organisations and some groups of Socialistic Union of Youth (Dudeková, 1998).

According to some authors volunteering (including youth volunteering) had (or acquired) three forms during socialism. The first one was 'socialist volunteering' supported by the state and ideology. Activities were aimed at welfare services. The second form of volunteering was 'pragmatic volunteering' motivated by careerism, fear of penalties, reciprocity, but also by escape into a social micro-world (e.g. activities in small informal organisations aimed at children's leisure). The third type of volunteering was recognized as 'dissident', which was offered by the church and dissident organisations (Frič and Pospíšilová, 2010).

Revolution 1989 – present day

In 1990 a law was adopted, which guarantees the right to free assembly. For a long time, denied right for self-determination resulted in the establishment of many political parties and non-governmental organisations. Together with the development of civil society, the phenomenon of volunteering has been developed, too.

Youth volunteering was dealt within one of the first complex national youth strategies (National Youth Policy Conception till 2007) first from 2001, in connection with Youth Participation. The arrival of the European Union programmes in the youth field, in particular in terms of European Voluntary Service, raised this topic of international volunteering and the adoption of relevant legal documents.

[The Act on Volunteering](#) (2011) and [The Act on Youth Work Support](#) (2008) were adopted with the aim to define volunteering and youth volunteering in particular (more in "Definition and Concepts").

Main concepts

The definition of "youth volunteering" has not appeared in the Slovak legislation yet. However, other terms such as "youth volunteer" or "voluntary service in youth work" are sufficiently covered in the legislation.

The Act on Volunteering provides, first of all, the legal status of a volunteer and legal relations in providing services, activities, and other performances to volunteers. The Act influences youth volunteering by defining the minimal age for voluntary engagement to 15 years and through the clear distinction of volunteering and practical training during education (especially in social services or social care areas).

The Act on Youth Work Support defines who is a youth volunteer and what a voluntary service in youth work is.

On the basis of the above-mentioned Acts and complex research (Brozmanová, et al., 2009, Brozmanová, Siekelová, Šolcová, 2018) it is possible to define youth volunteering in Slovakia as conscious unpaid activities provided by individual persons aged 15 – 30 years on the basis of freedom of choice for the benefit of other people, society or environment, except for family members and a household of a volunteer.

Based on the latest research on participation in civil society in Slovakia conducted in 2019 as a part of the National project "Better public policies thanks to the better understanding of civil society", 38.0% of young people aged 15 up to 30 were involved in formal volunteering (volunteering within the organization). The participation of the overall population in the formal volunteering was in 2019, around 36.0%, and there were no significant differences according to age.

The greatest space for the involvement of volunteers is provided by non-governmental organisations followed by communities, municipalities, and state administration

organisations. To the most frequent areas in which young volunteers operate belong the field of environment, sports, health and social services.

2.2 Administration and governance of youth volunteering

Governance

Main actors

Youth volunteering in Slovakia is not strictly regulated by the public authorities. Several institutions are involved in its management:

1. **Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic** (hereinafter MESRS) coordinates preparation and implementation of youth policy, including youth volunteering. **IUVENTA – Slovak Youth Institute**, an organisation managed directly by the Ministry, develops particular activities supporting youth volunteering. IUVENTA administers Programmes for Youth (national grant programme), as well as the EU Erasmus+ Programme for the field of youth and sport and European Solidarity Corps. IUVENTA provides mainly education, conceptual, information, research and supportive activities in the field of youth volunteering, e.g. Youth Report 2010, 2014, 2018, Strategy of the Slovak Republic for Youth (2014 – 2020), National coordinator of the European Year of Volunteering (2011), etc.

2. **Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic**, notably **Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for the Development of Civil Society** (hereinafter referred to as Office). Although the area of “youth” volunteering is not explicitly listed among the Office competences, it is implicitly included in many priorities and activities developed by the Office with the aim to implement Strategy of Civil Society Development in Slovakia till 2020. Ministry of Interior is also responsible for the legal issues regarding volunteering.

The above listed public authorities play roles of conceptual documents creators in the area of youth volunteering development and, being the case of the Ministry, also the role of financial support provider in the field of youth volunteering development in youth work.

These authorities do not take the initiative in activating organisations to reach aims and fulfill measures in the area of youth volunteering development. This task belongs to non-governmental organisations autonomously developing their activities.

3. Among the main actors representing the non-profit sector in the field of regulation and implementation of youth volunteering have been recognized the following ones:

The Platform of Volunteer Centres and Organisations (thereinafter referred to as Platform) was established in 2011, both as a result of activities organised within the European Year of Volunteering and activities of voluntary centres (existing in Slovakia since 2009). The Platform aims to support the creation of a favorable environment to support volunteering in all its forms and areas. Some examples of the Platforms’ activities are mentioned here: the building of voluntary centres, advocacy for volunteering towards government and public administration, supporting creation and development of volunteers’ coordinators in non-governmental and public organisations, promotion of volunteering as a tool of non-formal education and as a tool for preparation of young people for the labour market.

Youth Council of Slovakia (hereinafter referred to as RMS) gathers 25 non-governmental organisations devoted to children and youth and engaging more than 65 thousand members. RMS represents the interests of members towards government and public administration, networks organisations, guarantees the exchange of information and experience, organises education. RMS represents the Slovak Republic in the European Youth Forum.

Another significant element of volunteering infrastructure in Slovakia is represented by volunteer centres. The volunteer centres are service organisations. Those centres interconnect volunteers and organisations, promote volunteering, provide training courses, consultations, and supervisions in the field of volunteers management, they network volunteering organisations, develop companies' volunteering, visualise the societal value of volunteering, create cross-sectoral partnerships between volunteering organisations, self-government and companies as well as they carry out researches in the field of volunteering – they observe development and trends in that area. Youth belong to the primary target group in all volunteer centres.

Children's and youth volunteer organisations such as Slovak Scouts, Christian organisations e.g. DOMKA (Salesian Youth Association), eRko (Association of Youth Christian Companionships), INEX or smaller organisations having a local effect and providing leisure-time activities to children and young people, such MO Plusko, DO Fénix etc. are important key players in the development of volunteering.

Cross-sectoral cooperation

Government Council for Non-Governmental Non-Profit Organisations is standing as an expert, advisory, coordination, and consultation body of the Slovak Government in the area of non-governmental, organisations and civil society development.

A good example of cross-sectoral cooperation within youth volunteering is the creation of the **Strategy of Education towards Volunteering**, which was adopted by the MESRS in April 2018. The MESRS assigned the Platform of Volunteer Centres and Organisations with the elaboration of the strategy and also allocated financial resources for its creation. Subsequently, the representatives of the MESRS, IUVENTA, the Platform of Volunteer Centres and Organisations, several national non-governmental organisations, the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Republic Government for the Civil Society Development, as well as primary-and-secondary-school teachers – all actively participated in the creation of the strategy.

2.3 National strategy on youth volunteering

Existence of a National Strategy

There is no independent national strategy on youth volunteering. A strategy for the development of youth volunteering is included in the content of two strategic documents:

The Strategy for Youth for the years 2014 – 2020 in the Slovak Republic (hereinafter referred to as the Youth Strategy) was adopted by the Slovak Government on 23 rd April 2014.

The strategy of Civil Society Development in Slovakia till 2020 was adopted in 2012. An important part of the Strategy is the development of volunteering in Slovakia.

Scope and contents

Youth Strategy 2014- 2020

The strategic aims for youth volunteering:

- To involve as many young people representing various groups as possible through creating of diverse volunteering opportunities in reaction to the actual needs of young people and trends in volunteering;
- To ensure sustainable integration of young people in volunteering.
- The other aims of youth volunteering activities are as follows:
- To link volunteering and formal education;

- To support recognition of skills of young people gained through volunteering by the institutions representing formal and non-formal education sectors and the labor market;
- To ensure visibility of volunteering for both, the individuals and the society, and to raise awareness of the value of volunteering;
- To support volunteering of youth people with specific needs;
- To create tools for the support of organisations working with young volunteers, so they are ready to react to the specific needs of young people;
- To create conditions (financial, personnel, organisational) for long-term voluntary programmes engaging young people;
- To support cross-border mobility of young volunteers.

The Youth Strategy emphasizes a need to create measures according to various needs, including the needs of specific groups.

The Strategy of Civil Society Development in Slovakia till 2020 covers the issue of youth volunteering through the **Program of Support for Volunteering and Volunteer Centers from 2013**.

The Strategy and Program have been implemented through the Action Plans. Currently, there is an Action for the implementation of Strategy for 2019 and 2020, and it is focused on volunteering in two points: the first is legal issues connected with volunteering (also relevant for youth volunteering) and financial mechanism for support of long-term volunteering and volunteer centers.

In 2018 **Strategy of Education towards Volunteering** was adapted. The goal of this strategy is to create prerequisites for the implementation of education for volunteering at all levels of education, to define the objectives and principles of education for volunteering, and to set up measures for its implementation. The strategy and its introduction into practice should help volunteering to become a natural part of the lifestyles of people and communities in Slovakia, and thus connect formal education with real life.

Youth volunteering is a subject to legislation of two acts: [Act 406/2011 on volunteering](#) and on amendments of certain acts [Zákon č. 406/2011 Z. z. o dobrovoľníctve a o doplnení niektorých zákonov] and [Act 282/2008](#) on support of youth work and on amendment of act 131/2002 on higher education and on amendment of certain acts as amended [Zákon č. 282/2008 Z. z. o podpore práce s mládežou a o zmene a doplnení zákona č. 131/2002 Z. z. o vysokých školách a o zmene a doplnení niektorých zákonov v znení neskorších predpisov].

Act 406/2011 on volunteering has been adopted by the Slovak National Council and entered into force on 1st December 2011. The Act provides the legal status of volunteers and legal relationships in the delivery of services, activities, and other volunteers' performances. It defines who is and who is not a volunteer and what is and what is not a voluntary activity. It also provides who may and who must not be a beneficiary of voluntary activities and sending organisations, including their rights and obligations in relation to volunteers and elements of a contract on voluntary service.

Act 282/2008 on the support of youth work has been adopted by the Slovak National Council and entered into force on 1st September 2008. The Act defines (or clarifies) who a youth volunteer is, what is voluntary service in youth work, what elements must be included in a contract on voluntary service, and what obligations are relevant to organise working with volunteers in the field of youth work.

Responsible authority

[Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic](#) bears responsibility for the implementation, coordination, and monitoring of [Youth Strategy](#). By its resolution 192/2014, the Slovak Government approved the creation of an *Interministerial working group for the state policy in the field of youth (further IMGY)*. The

group's members take an active part in delivering on the Strategy objectives through the particular measures and special-purpose projects and prepare yearly reports on the current state of the Strategy implementation for the above ministry.

The Programme on Support of Volunteering and Volunteering Centres has been created under the auspices of the [Governmental Plenipotentiary for the Development of Civil Society](#) (Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic). The Plenipotentiary bears an advisory role for the Slovak Government. It has not been stated in the Programme who bears responsibility for its implementation, coordination, and monitoring.

Revisions/ Updates

Neither the Strategy for Youth for the years 2014 – 2020 in the Slovak Republic nor the Programme on Support of Volunteering and Volunteering Centres have been revised yet.

Other official documents containing guidelines on youth volunteering

2.4 Youth volunteering at national level

National Programme for Youth Volunteering

There is not a single National Programme for Youth Volunteering in Slovakia. The topic of youth volunteering has been included in the content of the Youth Strategy 2014 – 2020 and Programme on Support of Volunteering and Volunteering Centres (2013).

Funding

The Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic provides specific financial support to youth work development through the Programmes for Youth. Being one of the key topics of the Youth Strategy 2014 – 2020, youth volunteering has also become one of the Programmes' objectives. Yearly financial allocation for the Programmes, reserved to support the entire Programmes' goals, including youth volunteering, represents 2.3 million Euro in 2019 and 3,2 million Euro in 2020.

The specific subprogram within the Programmes for Youth supporting the development of volunteering at the national and regional level is called „Service for Youth in Volunteering“. In 2020 according to the final protocols within the subprogram, the amount 294.776 Eur was allocated for organizations developing youth volunteering. Part of financial allocation within the programme „Support of Youth Organisations“ was also given and targeted at the support of volunteering as well as education towards volunteering (volunteering is a natural part of youth work in youth organisations). Other financial sources for youth volunteering support are represented by the Erasmus+ program, European Solidarity Corps, private foundations, and donors.

Characteristics of youth volunteering

There are no official statistics on youth volunteering in Slovakia. Slovak Statistics Office gathers the data on volunteers every year, but with no reference to their ages. Thus the only information source provides the representative research from 2017 focused primarily on youth volunteering (Brozmanová, Siekelová, Šolcová, 2018), and the latest research on participation in civil society in Slovakia conducted in 2019 as a part of the National project "Better public policies thanks to the better understanding of civil society" which also focused partly on youth volunteering (Čavojská, Feherpataky-Kuzmová, Fishbone Vlčková, 2020).

Compared to 2011, the participation of young people has increased in formal as well as informal volunteering. Over the last 12 months, according to the representative research in 2019, 36.0% percent of young people have been involved in formal volunteering, and 70.0% have been providing help to neighbors or friends (informal volunteering).

(Čavojská, Feherpataky-Kuzmová, Fishbone Vlčková, 2020). Young people who are active in formal volunteering are also active in informal volunteering and vice versa.

7.0 percent of young people were involved in formal volunteering a minimum once a week, 8.0 percent participated once or two times for a month, and 22% less than once for a month. 52.0 were not involved. (Čavojská, Feherpataky-Kuzmová, Fishbone Vlčková, 2020)

The largest areas in which young people volunteer are the environment, sport, health, social services and children and youth organizations. More than half of youth volunteer assistance is provided by non-governmental, non-profit organizations, 12.2% are engaged in volunteer activities within schools.

The most frequent activities carried out in volunteering are the organization and coordination of leisure activities for children, youth, senior citizens, clients in social services facilities, organizing or assisting in the realization of activities or events (e.g. promotion of the organization, its mission, selected topic) and activities related to the preservation, protection and the restoration of the environment, animal welfare and wildlife protection. Youth volunteering is differentiated in terms of education, socio-economic position, housing and membership. Formal volunteering significantly involves more young people with a university education, from towns, secondary and tertiary school students, and members of organizations. Informal volunteering involves mainly young people with higher education, and members of organizations. The older the young volunteer, the length and frequency of volunteer activities increases. (Brozmanová, Siekelová, Šolcová, 2018),

In the sources of information on volunteer opportunities, direct resources predominate. The most common form of getting information about volunteer opportunities is information from people with whom a young person is in close contact, i.e. friends, family, acquaintances, and relatives. For young people involved in volunteering, teachers were the source of information on the possibility of volunteering in 16 percent of cases. (Brozmanová, Siekelová, Šolcová, 2018),

Young people are motivated to volunteer for altruistic, egotistic, and normative motives, with no significant differences between them. The most important barriers to engage young people in volunteering are lack of time, lack of information, and non-requests for help. (Brozmanová, Siekelová, Šolcová, 2018),

Support to young volunteers

Support to young volunteers is provided on the basis of the Act on Volunteering and the Act on Youth Work Support. There are obligations for hosting and sending organisations provided in both the acts:

- Ensuring equipment for volunteers (in particular work clothes, personal protective equipment and professional equipment);
- Ensuring health insurance for volunteers, if agreed in a contract on voluntary service;
- Conclusion of the contract on professional indemnity insurance with respect to voluntary service.

The Act on Volunteering is even more specific and provides also the ways of ensuring volunteers diets, accommodation, transportation, etc. Except of these obligations, sending or hosting organisations after reaching an agreement with a volunteer may pay their voluntary insurances (sickness insurance, occupational pensions, unemployment insurance). The aforesaid options have not been applied in practice due to insufficient financial means in organisations.

Quality Assurance (QA)

There are no official mechanisms for monitoring and quality assurance of youth volunteering in Slovakia. Youth policy, including youth volunteering, is being assessed

occasionally through the assessment of Youth Strategy (2010, 2014), but regular monitoring and quality assurance do not exist.

Minimum obligations of organisations, when sending and receiving volunteers have been defined by the legislation within the Act on Volunteering and the Act on Support of Youth Work. No public institution monitors whether and to what extent these obligations have been respected by organisations working with volunteers.

Thanks to the financial support provided by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic, the Quality standards for the management of volunteers were created in 2014 by the Volunteering Centre in Banská Bystrica (NGO) in cooperation with the Platform of Volunteer Centres and Organisations (NGO). General standards have been defined relevant to work with any target groups, including young people. These standards were implemented in more than 100 (at 28.5.2020) organisations within a project of the Platform of Volunteering Centres and Organisations financed by the aforesaid ministry. The standards have been aimed at the following areas of work with volunteers:

- Coordination of volunteers;
- Legal and ethical framework;
- Financial and material resources for volunteering;
- Team integration;
- Duties and profiles of volunteers;
- Recruitment and selection of volunteers;
- Training of volunteers;
- Communication with volunteers and their support;
- Appreciation and recognition of volunteers;
- Evidence, documentation and evaluation of a voluntary programme.

The procedures for external assessment of these standards have also been defined. But the implementation of standards has not been included in any legislation, it is rather a matter of individual organisations – their aspiration to acquire quality label and thus communicate their quality work with volunteers to the donors and general public.

Specific standards for the field of youth volunteering have been included in the process of accreditation for sending and hosting volunteers in the framework of the European Solidarity Corps. These standards are valid for all countries, and their assessment is guaranteed by the National Agency of the EU Erasmus+ Programme for the field of Youth and Sport established in Slovakia in IUVENTA – Slovak Youth Institute.

Target groups

Young people aged 30 years or less have been defined as a target group by official documents related to youth volunteering in Slovakia (Strategy for Youth for the years 2014 – 2020 in the Slovak Republic). Volunteering of young people with specific needs has been mentioned in the provisions of the aforementioned Strategy, but only as “worth to support”, with no particular measures included. Specifications for the term ‘young people with specific needs’ also have not been defined (or clarified) in the Strategy itself, but it is mentioned in the Programmes for Youth (Programy pre mládež) supporting youth work and youth volunteering as follows: ‘young people with fewer opportunities (mládež s nedostatkom príležitostí) are those young people who for various reasons do not have equal conditions for their personal development in comparison to most children and youth in the society. The lack of opportunities can be caused by educational, social, cultural, health, economic or geographic disadvantage or other form discrimination.’

2.5 Cross-border mobility programmes

EU programmes

Within the EU programmes in cross-border volunteering, the Slovak Republic takes part in the [European Solidarity Corps](#) (ESC) and the [Programme EU Aid Volunteers](#).

The Programme European Solidarity Corps is administered by the [National Agency of the EU Erasmus+ Programme for youth and sport](#) in Slovakia, located at IUVENTA – Slovak Youth Institute. For hosting volunteers through ESC, specific quality standards have been defined for sending and hosting organisations, which must be respected within accreditation. According to the [European Youth Portal](#), 121 organizations from Slovakia are registered for ESC. They are offering volunteering opportunities for volunteers also from abroad.

In the **Programme EU Aid Volunteers**, the only organization in Slovakia accredited as a sending organization; The Programme is managed and monitored by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA).

Other Programmes

Programme **SLOVAK AID** enables young volunteers aged 18 – 30 and experts to be sent to developing countries within official development aid. The Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic coordinates the programme. The programme is implemented by the [Slovak Agency for International Development Cooperation](#) established by the specific [law](#). Participating countries are Kenya, Moldova, and Georgia. Volunteers and experts may be sent to any country listed by the OECD Development Aid Council. Programme regulations and sending processes have been described by the [Programme document](#). The document is updated every year.

Several organizations are also volunteers sending organizations abroad to developing countries: [Salesian missionary volunteering](#), [Slovak Catholic Charity](#), and [Adra](#). They are using their specific programs.

Legal framework applying to foreign volunteers

The [Act on Volunteering](#) and the [Act on Youth Work Support](#) also provide legal status for foreign volunteers in Slovakia. Only volunteers from selected countries need a visa. The list of such countries can be found in [Council Regulation 539/2001](#). A volunteer staying in Slovakia needs a temporary residence authorization. More information is available on the webpage of [Borders and Foreign Nationals Police of the Slovak Republic](#).

Slovak Police Force Presidium – Authority of Borders and Foreign Nationals Police keeps statistics of legal and illegal migration to Slovakia, including statistics on temporary residence authorization for volunteers. These statistics are available on the webpage of the [Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic](#)

2.6 Raising awareness about youth volunteering opportunities

Information providers

IUVENTA – Slovak Youth Institute provides information on various opportunities for young people, not only on volunteering, using the basic instrument [EURODESK – European Information Network](#), in which Slovakia participates, too. IUVENTA has been managing the European Union programmes for youth since 1998. IUVENTA has contributed to youth volunteering's popularization, focusing on recognizing volunteering and its impact, building up organizations' competencies working with young volunteers, and developing volunteering with vulnerable young people, especially Roma.

As a specific contact point, we can mention **regional Volunteer Centres**, which enable young people to receive information. Volunteer centers are service organizations. The centers connect volunteers and organizations, promote volunteering, provide training, consultation, and supervision in volunteer management, network volunteer organizations, develop corporate volunteering, highlight the societal value of volunteering, build cross-sectoral partnerships between volunteer organizations, local government, and volunteering, monitor developments and trends in this area. Regional volunteering centres are established in each region, although their level of activity is different. In recent years, the MESRS made financial support available to the centers via the Programmes for Youth within a specific programme called 'SERVICES for Youth.' All the above-mentioned regional centers, except the one in Banská Bystrica, have linked their online databases to volunteering opportunities and volunteers.

[The Platform of Volunteering Centres and Organisations](#) provides information on volunteering, manages campaigns, and provides networking opportunities for various organizations. The government resources financially supported the Platform in the last years.

The [Slovak Youth Council](#) is also involved in advocacy activities and development activities in youth in general and thus even in volunteering. It contributes to creating an environment that enables youth organizations to carry out their activities effectively and without obstacles. It promotes young people's involvement in the formulation of policies, programs, and measures in all relevant contexts of their lives.

Young people have the opportunity to obtain information about volunteering not only in volunteer centers and specific organizations, but there are also several online platforms for volunteer opportunities in Slovakia: www.dobrovolnictvo.com (for all Slovakia); www.centrumdobrovolnictva.sk (for Banská Bystrica region), www.dobrovolnictvoba.sk (for Bratislava region), www.dckk.sk (for Košice), www.ncdnitra.sk (for Nitra region), www.dobrovolnictvpo.sk (for Prešov region), www.dctn.sk (for Trenčín region), www.dobrovolnictvott.sk (for Trnava region), www.dobrovolnictvoza.sk (for Zilina region), <https://dobrovolnici.ludialudom.sk/> (for all Slovakia).

Key initiatives

The most important activities aimed at promoting volunteering can be considered: [Volunteer Days](#) (organized by CARDO), [Volunteer Week](#) (organized by the Platform of Volunteer Centers and Organizations and selected regional volunteer centers) and the [72 Hours project](#) (organized by the Slovak Youth Council), [Volunteer Market](#) (organized by volunteer center in Bratislava) and the I Love My Region campaign in the PO region (organized by the Christians in the City and PSK platform). The Dumb Feeling campaign aimed at involving young people with disabilities in volunteering (implemented by the Platform of Volunteer Centers and Organizations in 2014). During these campaigns, people had the opportunity to participate in volunteer activities in organizations, implement their own projects, but also participate in workshops, discussions and open days.

Activities for recognition of volunteering and appreciation of volunteers' activities

Youth Council of Slovakia awards the prize '[MOST](#)' every year in various categories. The award represents a moral appreciation of young volunteers' activities and supports their visibility.

'[Heart on Palm](#)' ([Srdce na dlani](#)) represents developed more than ten years ago by National Volunteering Centre (SAIA – SCTS). Later, it was implemented by several regional volunteer centers. The nation-wide award [Heart on Palm](#) is organized by the C.A.R.D.O. since 2011. Since 2020 the national award is organized in cooperation with the Platform of Volunteer Centers and Organization.

In 2020 Platform of Volunteer Centers and organization, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Research, Science, and Sport, launched the award for primary and secondary

schools involving students volunteering based on a service-learning strategy called [Engaged school](#).

2.7 Skills recognition

Policy Framework

There is no policy framework for recognition of skills gained through volunteering.

Existing arrangements

There is no official mechanism for the recognition of skills gained through volunteering.

[The online tool D-skills for employment](#) represents a pilot initiative, and it is a result of the project VOLWEM – Volunteering as a Way to Employment. D- skills is the pilot project that can potentially lead (in the future) to the national system of skills validation in the future. Self-assessment is available to those volunteers whose organization participates in D-skills project. There are strict quality standards for an organisation where young people (but not only young people) can volunteer, and not many organisations are ready to go under such scrutiny.

D-skills has two levels: a certificate issued by Matej Bell University, which validates experiences suitable for employment, and a confirmation document to acknowledge volunteer experience in a more general way.

This tool enables volunteers to realize, name, record, and prove competencies gained or developed in volunteering. Their skills assessment is accompanied by photographs, videos, or by other output related to volunteering. The questionnaire is verified by a coordinator from an organisation providing volunteering opportunities for the particular volunteer. The gained competencies are recognized by the committee established at Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica. A certificate listing relevant competencies is issued subsequently. The online tool D-skills for employment was made officially accessible at the beginning of 2015. More information is available in [Manual D-skills for employment](#).

The spectrum of opportunities for gaining experiences as volunteers is much broader in Slovakia, and various documents are given to volunteers. Many young people use Youthpass as evidence of volunteering experiences, especially from European Solidarity Corps.

2.8 Current debates and reforms

Forthcoming policy developments

The Strategy of Children and Youth Education for Volunteering was adopted in April 2018. Within the strategy, several measures related to the implementation of the strategy in practice were accepted. The creation of *educational programs for teachers at the various schools for education for volunteering, which was based on the service-learning strategy, can be considered* the most significant. The training is currently provided by Platform of Volunteer Centers and organization.

The two important documents are in 2021 in preparation. The first is Strategy for Youth; the second document is Strategy for Civil Society Development. Both documents should be adopted in April 2021 by the Slovak Government.

As significant, we can also consider *the non-profit sector and civil society research*, which started to be implemented in 2018 under the auspices of the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Republic Government for the Civil Society Development. The research is carried out within the project called ['Better public policies through better knowledge of civil society'](#), which is financed from the European Social Fund under the Effective Public Administration programme. The critical part of the research is also volunteering. The study

results are expected to contribute to changes in public policies in several areas, including volunteering.

Ongoing debates

The ongoing debates are part of the Action plan of Strategy for Civil Society Development for 2020 and 2021. They are focusing on legislation changes regarding volunteering and preparing the financial mechanisms for supporting long-term volunteering programs.

3. EMPLOYMENT & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

In Slovakia, the overall unemployment rate is 6,6 % (September 2020), but the **unemployment rate of young people younger than 25 years of age is nearly 20%**. Yearly, more than 32 000 of young people leave the country in search for education and work abroad ([3.1](#)).

The **Youth Guarantees Implementation Plan** is the most complex strategy to strengthen youth employment in Slovakia. Close co-operation of employment, education and economy sectors is inevitable base for significant change in this field ([3.2](#)).

Projections of the labour market development are produced and relevant information is transferred to educational institutions under the management of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family in the Slovak Republic (MLSAF) and the Ministry of Education, Science Research and Sport (MESRS). There were some important tools introduced to lower insufficient correlation between education and the labour market needs and between education and the labour market demand (National Occupation Framework, National Qualifications System) ([3.3](#)).

The MLSAF provides counselling services via its Labour Offices and the MESRS is focusing on career guidance within the network of schools. Non-profit sector and professional employment organizations are very active in career guidance and counselling, too ([3.4](#)).

System of **Vocational Education and Training** has gone through significant reconstruction since 2015 ([3.5](#)).

Development of entrepreneurial skills is covered by several projects in formal and non-formal education and learning ([3.8](#)). The Acceleration Programme of **National Business Centre** is one of the example how beginner entrepreneurs can get professional guidance and access to new technologies ([3.9](#)).

3.1 General context

Labour market situation in the country

After the economic recession in 2008 the unemployment rate in Slovakia has reached 14,5% in first quarter of 2013. It took almost a whole decade to economy being fully recovered and the unemployment rate to decrease to 5,6% (4Q 2019). According to **official data** there have been positive trends recorded on the Slovak labour market over recent years.

However, the whole world economy is nowadays under the pressure due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The Covid-19 pandemic has spiraled Europe into an unprecedented economic recession, which is likely to bring back dramatically high unemployment rate. In Slovakia, it has already increased by 14,7%, year-on-year, in the 2nd quarter of 2020, adding more than 22 800 persons into unemployment status. Such sharp increase was last recorded ten years ago (in the second quarter of 2010). The registered unemployment rate has increased from 4.92 % (December 2019) to 7.35 % (October 2020). Due to the lasting

Covid-19 pandemic, the economic crisis is deepening and the forecasts continues to announce worsening situation on the labour market.

Before the Covid-19 crisis the economic growth of the Slovak economy was based mainly on the high-quality production of foreign companies combining the use of cheap work and imported technologies. In 2020, the distribution of employment in Slovakia by economic sector is 2.1% of the employees in the agricultural sector, 36.06% in industry and 61.83 percent in the service sector. However, continuation in this model is not sustainable in the long term in order to meet socio-economic needs of the society.

The adverse factors:

- dropping average age of citizens,
- major regional differences in employment,
- high long-term unemployment,
- the labour force offer higher than demand,
- instability of working places/posts.

Substantial increase of unemployment during the crisis is triggered also by insufficient measures in the education system and inclusion of disadvantaged groups: low skilled people, woman, the Roma people, elderly aged 45 – 54 and the people with disabilities. For example the unemployment rate of young women aged between 15 to 29 years in 2019 is around 19,5% against 9,7% of men in the same age group while the EU average for young unemployed women in the same age group is 14,6%.

The unemployment rate of low-skilled young people at the level of 46.5 % is too high when comparing to the EU average (26.5 % in 2016). In 2016, there were less than half of young people under the age of 25 years registered in the system of Youth Guarantee. Almost one in five (18.2 %) of young people was registered as unemployed for more than 12 months. Considering the increasing number of early school leavers and shortages of skilled workforce, these are the worrying developments.

When the economic growth before 2020 has positively influenced youth unemployment, the young people are the most touched by the Covid-19 crisis.

While there were 71 878 young people under the age of 29 years registered as unemployed in Slovakia in 2016, their number decreased to less than 40 000 in 2019. According to EUROSTAT, the share of young people aged 15 – 29 years not in employment, education or training (NEET) in Slovakia in December 2019 represented 15,9 %, still over the EU average (12,6 %). The economy crisis under the Covid-19 Pandemic has already added more than 16 000 young people to the unemployment rate counting in October 2020 more than 59 000 young people without work (23,5 %).

The Covid-19 pandemic is also affecting young people's starting wages. Starting a career today is a real challenge for young people. In general in time of the economic crisis, employers often wait longer to hire new employees until the situation stabilizes over the long term.

Entering the labor market is a very important step for graduates not only for their career, but also for their potential earnings in the future. The annual wages of graduates starting work during the crisis are about 9% lower than the wages of comparable graduates during the economic boom according the a study by [Cockx in 2016](#).

The Covid-19 affect drives existing wages down ([ILO 2020](#)). In European Union it decreases 6,5 points in average while women are affected more than men (8,1 points decrease for women against 5,4 points for men).

Yearly, almost 32 000 of young people leave the country in search for education and work abroad. The reasons behind are schools of higher quality and better readiness of graduates for the labour market, adequate placement in the labour market, more working opportunities and higher remuneration ([Kremský, 2015](#)).

Definitions and concepts

There is no specific terminology for the field of employment in Slovak legislation or practice.

3.2 Administration and governance

Governance

Employment, including youth employment, is of competence of the state administration and belongs to priorities of the Slovak Government formulated in government strategy for the next decade, till 2030, in document „[Modern and successful Slovakia](#)“.

Fundamental strategic documents in the field of youth employment and entrepreneurship:

- [Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Social Fund Plus \(ESF+\)](#)
- [Council Recommendation on A Bridge to Jobs – Reinforcing the Youth Guarantee and replacing Council Recommendation of 22 April 2013 on establishing a Youth Guarantee](#)
- [Initial Position of the Slovak Republic to the EU Cohesion policy post 2020](#)

The Youth Guarantee strategy is to ensure that all young people under the age of 30 years receive a good-quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within a period of four months of becoming unemployed or leaving formal education, in line with Principle 4 of the European Pillar of Social Rights.

The event of Covid-19 affected the preparation of the strategy and the Youth Guarantee and the text of the proposal for the council recommendation was updated.

Youth Guarantee scheme in Slovakia will be based on the Council recommendation and will be structured around four phases:

1. mapping
 1. Identifying the target group, available services and skills needs
 2. Enabling prevention through tracking and early warning system
2. outreach
 1. Raising awareness and targeting communication
 2. Stepping up the outreach to vulnerable groups
3. preparation
 1. Using profiling tools to tailor individualised action plans
 2. Performing counselling, guidance and mentoring
 3. Enhancing digital skills with preparatory training
 4. Assessing, improving and validating other important skills
4. offer
 1. Making employment and start-up incentives work during the economic recession
 2. Aligning the offer to existing standards to ensure quality and equity
 3. Providing post-placement support and implementing feedback

The recommendation asks the member states to pay attention to the gender and diversity of the young people who are being targeted.

Although young people are one of the groups the most at risk of unemployment, no particular public institutions dealing with youth employment policymaking exist in Slovakia.

- [The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic](#) (hereafter referred to as “the MLSAF”);
- [The Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic](#) (hereafter referred to as “the MESRS”);

- [The Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic](#) (hereafter referred to as “the MoE”);
- Regional and local governments.

Institutions active in the field of (youth) employment and entrepreneurship:

1. **Offices of Labour, Social Affairs and Family** (hereafter “Labour Offices” only) are organisations of the MLSAF, dealing with implementation of employment services, cooperating with non-governmental employment services while offering opportunities for employment or practical training. These Labour Offices are managed by the [Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family](#) (COLSAF).
2. The [Labour and Family Research Institute](#) (IVPR) has been established by the MLSAF in order to carry out research of social and family, labour market, employment, employees’ relations and other policies. Research results have often been used during preparation of legislation, concepts, strategies and programmes of the MLSAF.
3. **Municipalities** implement certain initiatives of the MLSAF and provide certain employment services, while they also develop their own initiatives and programmes.
4. The [State Institute for Vocational Education and Training](#) (SIOV) has been established by the MESRS in order to prepare reforms, develop projects ensuring correlation of VET and the labour market and career counselling in line with the MLSAF counselling system, as well as to provide the seat for the project of practice firms at the secondary schools (SCCF).
5. The [National Institute for Lifelong-learning](#) has been established by the MESRS to monitor educational needs and produce relevant prognoses, to provide counselling services via its own network and to implement the national qualification framework.

There are more key players dealing with the theme of (youth) employment, such as representatives of employers’ associations, trade unions, churches, chambers of commerce, universities and non-governmental organisations taking part in the work of the **Solidarity and Development Council**.

Non-governmental non-profit organisations have been engaged with solutions for unemployment, but very few of them target young people, mainly in the field of career counselling and orientation at the labour market (anchor/see 3.4).

Cross-sectorial cooperation

Cooperation on the Youth Guarantee SR implementation is described in the **cooperation agreement** signed by the MLSAF, the MESRS, employers’ organisations, trade unions and schools.

Cooperation in the field of youth entrepreneurship development between the MESRS and the MoE (**Ministry of Economy**) is aimed at the creation of alternative entrepreneurship forms, loans, mentoring programmes, etc. The ESF sources of the Operational programme Research and Innovation have been utilised.

3.3 Skills forecasting

Forecasting system(s)

Projections of the labour market development are produced and relevant information is transferred to educational institutions under the management of the MLSAF and the MESRS.

There are three information sources in Slovakia containing information on the labour market needs development:

1. Sector-driven innovation - The SRI project (MLSAF, Trexima 2019 – 2022) responds to developments in the Slovak labor market, especially the needs of individual sectors of the economy affected by innovation, digitization, new technologies and also global challenges in the political and economic European and global context.

Following the innovation processes, the requirements of employers of individual sectors for the appropriate qualification of the workforce, their key competencies, professional knowledge and professional skills are comprehensively identified. Sectoral strategies will thus be reflected in human resource development strategies in terms of new jobs as well as retraining processes of those not foreseen in the sectors in the future. From the aspect of the system solution of the National System of Occupations, it will be an innovation of the created, as well as the creation of new national employment standards (hereinafter referred to as "NMS"). The transfer of sector-driven innovations to the system of monitoring and anticipating labor market needs will be reflected in the system of lifelong learning, especially training for the Slovak labor market. The National System of Occupations (NSP) is defined by Act no. 5/2004 on employment services as a nationwide, unified information system describing the standard demands of the labor market for individual jobs. The NSP determines the requirements for professional skills and practical experience required to perform work activities in the labor market. Its center is the Employment Register made up of national employment standards, which describe employers' requirements for qualified employment.

2. MLSAF and the company [Trexima](#) developed in 2014 and 2015 the ESF national project 'Projections [for development of the labour market in the Slovak Republic](#)', providing information on the structure of vacancies and on projections for offer, skills and the labour market needs until 2020.

The State Institute for Vocational Education and Training, in cooperation with 7 employers' associations, developed a web portal <http://www.potrebyovp.sk/> containing an interactive map of placement of graduates on the labour market (enabling selection according to school or regions) and information on projected employers' needs until 2019.

Another information sources on prognoses of the labour market in Slovakia:

"National Occupation Framework" (**Národná sústava povolání**) was the ESF project implemented by the MLSAF in 2014 – 2015 with the aim to facilitate correlation between education and the labour market needs and between education and the labour market demand.

Non-governmental non-profit organisations:

In 2011, **INEKO** developed a research of employers in order to identify qualifications, which shall be demanded during next 5 years, as well as to identify reasons for the weak cooperation between schools and employers (**INEKO, 2011**)

Economic Policy Institute and **NEXTERIA** initiated the web portal "**Nemaj na saláme**", identifying the most employable fields of university studies.

Skills development

Formal education

Secondary schools managing authorities (regional governments, ministries) are obliged to use information on the labour market and projections of the labour market needs (**Act 324/2015 amending Act on VET**).

No criterion of consistency with the labour market projections has been set up within the accreditation of fields of university studies (Criteria of Accreditation/ **Kritéria pre akreditáciu**).

The MLSAF, in cooperation with the MESRS, publishes **information on placement of the secondary schools graduates on the labour market**, according to regions, secondary schools, and study fields and on regional level.

Self-governing regions elaborate regional strategies for the secondary education taking into account the labour market needs (**Act on VET, § 31**).

The MESRS decides on fields of study and publishes the list of such, which **fell over the scope of the labour market**.

This list is created in cooperation with the MLSAF, professional organisations and trade unions, using the following criteria:

- The unemployment rate of graduates;
- The total number of students studying the respective field;
- The associated need of employees;
- Sectorial concepts of VET;
- Regional education strategies etc.

Non-formal and Informal Education

There is no systemic offer of non-formal learning opportunities; there are only rare initiatives supported by various financial sources, such as:

- The ESF national project '[KOMPRAX – Competencies for practice](#)' was implemented by IUVENTA – Slovak Youth Institute during 2011 – 2015 and, within the youth work field, targeted 8 thousand young people. The project was aimed at the development of their soft skills, important for successful entry to the labour market (communication skills, problem solving, responsibility, team work, etc.)
- Non-profit organization [EPIC](#) from Bratislava develops competencies of young people through various projects, such as '[Job Interview Simulator](#)' or '[Capacities of youth workers on the field of youth employment services](#)'.
- The civic association V.I.A.C from Trstená aimed at the development of competencies of young people according to their individual needs within the project '[Domestic voluntary service for young unemployed people](#)'.

Initiatives to disseminate information on the main skills needed

Dissemination of information on the labour market and on its actual needs is guaranteed by the MLSAF and the MESRS.

Labour Offices create self-service information zones for pupils and students enabling access to portals containing information on the labour market (opportunities to entry the labour market, performance requested by the employers, etc.) and organize information fairs.

3.4 Career guidance and counselling

Career guidance and counselling services

The MLSAF provides counselling services via its Labour Offices and the MESRS within the network of schools. Professional organisations and non-profit sector are active in this field, too.

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Career guidance provided in the sector of the MLSAF:

Information and Counselling Centre ([Informačno-poradenské stredisko](#)) helps to create CV and motivation letter using templates and guides;

- provides services connected to the choice of employment and employment changes;
- provides information on further study opportunities and on professions demanded by the labour market;

- helps with selection and adaptation of personnel;
- ensures communication with the future employer

Information Fairs ([Burzy informácií](#)) for students of the primary schools final year are organised in cooperation with education counsellors working at schools to promote craft professions and

- to provide information on schools, fields of study and demanded professions;
- to ensure consultations with employers;
- in cooperation with [EURES Slovakia](#) to provide information on studies, internships and voluntary service abroad.

Expert Counselling Services are delivered to an individual or to a group in order to identify personal qualities and abilities and to assess competencies. Moreover, the individual action plan, containing procedures and timetables of measures for successful placement on the labour market, is produced.

Career guidance provided in the framework of the MLSAF has been financed within the Youth Guarantee SR since 2013.

Career guidance provided in the sector of the MESRS:

Centres of pedagogical and psychological counselling and prevention operating in 78 districts and employing 800 experts ([Euroguidance, SAIAC, 2014](#)) provide counselling for primary school pupils and secondary school students. These centres also organise activities in cooperation with Labour Offices, such as special information days, job fairs, consultations with parents, etc.

There are 82 [Centres of specialised counselling and prevention](#) employing 518 experts and providing counselling to young people with disabilities attending special schools. There are 2 119 education counsellors working at schools.

Students of the final year of secondary schools may opt for a specialised schools subject 'An introduction to the labour market'. Counsellors from Labour Offices are invited as lecturers.

400 career counsellors working at secondary schools were trained within the national project [Development of Secondary Vocational Education](#).

Activities implemented by the ministries and the COLSAF: job fairs, contacts between employers and graduates ([JOB EXPO](#), [JOB FORUM](#) etc.)

Non-governmental non-profit organisations

There is no unique system of career guidance within the non-profit sector, but some activities and initiatives:

There are 9 [Youth Information Centres](#) in Slovakia providing information on employment opportunities in Slovakia and abroad and on entrepreneurship;

Organisation [Tandem, n.o](#) provides information to secondary schools students on choice of their employment and planning of their future;

Organisation [K.A.B.A. Slovensko](#) implements project 'Skills and competences assessment – new career guidance and counselling approach' ([Hodnotenie schopností a zručností – nový prístup v kariérovom poradenstve](#));

Organisation [TeCeMko](#) provides [group counselling](#) for primary schools pupils and secondary school students

Organisation [People in need](#) provides career guidance to young people living in remote locations (Project Together we overcome barriers/ [Spolu ideme cez bariéry!](#));

Civic association V.I.A.C. implements project '[Compass](#)' combining career guidance with mentoring and internship;

Organisation **Alliance for Youth** focuses on career guidance and counselling in the field of job interviews, etc.

Non-profit organisation EPIC implements projects aimed at **enhancing of youth employability**, such as 'Simulator of job interviews', 'Employment services delivered by youth workers' and 'Youth Employment Week'.

Umbrella professional organisations:

- Association of education counsellors ([Asociácia výchovných poradcov](#)) works in the field of professional orientation and career education of primary school pupils and secondary schools students. It gathers employees providing education, study and career counselling.
- Association of university counsellors of Slovakia ([Asociácia vysokoškolských poradcov Slovenska](#)) works in the field of career guidance for university students.
- Slovak union of supported employment ([Slovenská únia podporovaného zamestnávania](#)) works in the field of career guidance for disadvantaged groups, including youth. There are 31 agencies working within this union.
- Association of lecturers and career counsellors ([Asociácia lektorov a kariérových poradcov](#)) works in the field of professional and social status of lecturers and career counsellors and ensures their professional development.

The main users of these services:

Labour Offices provide information and counselling services mainly to registered job-seekers directly at their premises. In 2019, counselling services were provided to 8 824 young people aged 15 – 30 (35,24 %) (**Annual report 2015 COLSAF**).

Career guidance and information services within the school system (also in cooperation with the MLSAF) are provided to pupils and students directly at primary and secondary schools and also by visiting various activities, such as information days, job fairs, etc. In 2019, counselling services were provided to 19 943 pupils and students altogether (**Annual report 2019 COLSAF**).

All the measures are set up uniformly for all the target groups, applying individual approach according to the profile.

Funding

Complex information on financing of individual measures is not available.

Quality assurance

Currently, mechanisms for monitoring of quality of provided services are missing – mainly the numbers of clients have been monitored so far. Quality is partly covered by studies and researches of SAV (Slovak Academy of Sciences) or other organisations, such as for example [SGI](#).

3.5 Traineeships and apprenticeships

Official guidelines on traineeships and apprenticeships

There are no terms 'apprentice' and 'apprenticeship' used in Slovak legislation; it only names 'a student involved in vocational education and training'.

Regulatory framework

Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Slovakia is a coherent part of the Slovak educational system supervised by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic (MESRS).

The 'professional experience' and 'internships' have been defined by the Act 61/2015 on Vocational Education and Training /[Zákon o odbornom vzdelávaní](#) (hereafter "the Act on VET" only).

The aim of the Act on VET [amendments as of 14/06/2018](#) is to make the access to VET system more efficient for employers (mostly for SMEs). Therefore:

- a new working post of the main instructor in practical instruction/traineeship has been introduced;
- the concept of an 'enterprise school' has been introduced, providing an employer with an opportunity to train workforce also for other employers;
- some powers of regional municipalities have been withdrawn, e.g. identification of number of school classes at secondary schools;
- the system of career guidance has been described;
- the deadline for signature of a traineeship contract has been prolonged;
- a workplace for practical instruction/traineeship may be established by several employers, mainly by small and medium enterprises;
- an upper limit for a pupil's hourly remuneration for his/her productive work has been withdrawn;
- the rules applying to salaries reduction for secondary vocational schools have been amended;
- the administrative procedures applying to verification of distinctiveness of employers to provide practical instruction have been simplified;
- the share of practical instruction at the other employer or in a workshop, involved in the dual education system, has been increased.

The document National Programme of Education Development /[Národný program rozvoja výchovy a vzdelávania](#) 2018 – 2027 (June 2018) provides directions to the Slovak educational system for the following ten years. These are measures covering better linkage of education with the labour market:

- support of internal traineeships for teachers and trainers in the field of VET;:
- carrying out of a research aimed at tracking of university graduates, based on the CEDEFOP experience on skills management;
- development and implementation of professionally oriented bachelor studies;
- introduction of new legislation supporting the dual VET in the tertiary education, as well as introduction of financial incentives for employers.

There are three VET models in Slovakia:

1. VET is held solely at school – both the theory and practice is delivered at school and at school workshops;
2. Schools and employers share their responsibilities for VET – the theoretical part is held at school and practical training is held partly at school and partly at employers' premises. The contract on practical training provision is signed between a school and an employer;
3. Education and training is provided both at school and employers' premises – an employer may sign traineeship contracts with students prior to start of their studies at secondary vocational schools (before the 1st September), while the employer and the respective school have also signed the contract on providing dual VET. Unlike in German speaking countries, learners are regular secondary school students, not employees of this employer. A student usually starts his/her VET at the age of 15.

According to State Institute for Vocational Education/[Štátny inštitút odborného vzdelávania](#) ([SIOV](#)), in 2019/20 there were 5 854 of pupils, 725 employers, 176 secondary

VET schools involved in the dual education system in Slovakia, thus offering 82 field of studies and 5 055 learning posts.

In 2018/2019, more than 3 000 of local training places has been created. The total capacity of certified workplaces, standing ready for the system of further education in the future, is 12 000 and 1 450 employers. There is a challenge concerning small and medium enterprises, as their involvement in this field has still been very low. SIOV started to create collaboration with regional governments to enhance involvement of MSP.

The VET programmes requiring/offering traineeships in terms of dual system of VET:

- Study programmes (4 – 5 years) including practical training, which are completed by school-leaving (maturity) exam and by awarding a certificate of traineeship/apprenticeship (ISCED 354);
- Study programmes (3 – 4 years) completed by awarding a certificate of traineeship/apprenticeship (ISCED 353).

Vocational education and training has been developed by the SIOV providing methodology and expertise to the secondary schools (including in the theme of vocational training). This organisation performs also the tasks of secretariat to the Governmental Council for VET/[Rada vlády pre OVP](#)

In December 2017, the [MESRS officially announced acceptance of the Slovak Qualifications Framework](#) (SKQF), as well as of the National Qualifications System of the Slovak Republic. It also announced finalization of the implementation process of SKQF/EQF on documents proving education levels, in compliance with the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2008 on establishment of the European Qualifications Framework for lifelong learning.

The National Qualifications Framework includes qualifications levels according to the criteria for acquired knowledge, skills and competencies, which are interconnected with qualifications levels according to the European Qualifications Framework.

The National Qualifications System /[Národný kvalifikačný rámec](#) represents a public register including partial and full description of qualifications accepted in the Slovak Republic and required for particular professional activities relevant for a particular profession in the form of qualifications standards and evaluation criteria.

Social security coverage

Traineeship contracts must be signed between employers and secondary schools pupils in order to provide financial remuneration to pupils for their work performed within a traineeship. There are no compulsory payments or other social insurance obligations either for employers or for pupils (secondary school) and students (university) resulting from traineeships, as pupils and students do not become employees on the basis of traineeship contracts.

The system of social security is included in the Act on VET, which includes provisions concerning two types of contracts:

- Traineeship contract - template ([Učebná zmluva -VZOR](#)) between an employer and a student elaborates on the rights and responsibilities of both contract parties during the process of the students' preparation for the occupation, content of practical training and professional competencies acquired by the student, as well as on financial and material conditions provided to the student, etc.
- Contract on dual VET - template ([Zmluva - VZOR](#)) between an employer and a secondary vocational school specifies the numbers of students and professional employees involved in education and training processes by the both contract parties, etc.

The practical training as a whole is of the employers' responsibility, which also covers all the related costs.

Guidelines on cooperation among social partners in the design

The fundamental framework of coordination and cooperation among the social partners in VET is defined by the Act on VET (§28), stating that 8 ministries (including the MESRS, MLSAF, the Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic, etc.) share this responsibility at the national level and the regional government offices are responsible at the regional level. Professional organisations and trade union associations are included in the coordination and cooperation framework. Inclusion of social partners in VET has been improved primarily at the planning stage, in curricula creation and in awarding of qualifications.

Participation of companies in VET is possible via the following structures:

- The Governmental Council for VET ([Rada vlády pre odborné vzdelávanie a prípravu](#)) – the supreme coordination body, delivering opinions on the Plan of labour market needs in the field of VET, elaborates the publicity plan and recommends new fields of studies to the MESRS;
- Regional Councils for VET (in all 8 regions of Slovakia), which are responsible for elaboration of regional development strategies;
- Sector Councils, which are responsible for setting of professional/occupational and qualification standards and for delivering expert opinions to the policymakers;
- Professional organisations, such as chambers and employers' associations, which have been identified as partners of educational institutions in relevant fields of studies by legislation (so called 'organisation competent in the field of VET');
- The Employers' Council for the Dual Education System/ [Rada zamestnávateľov pre systém duálneho vzdelávania na koordináciu aktivít v „duálnom“ vzdelávaní](#), which is responsible for coordinated approach in verifying employers' competence to deliver practical training and in documenting of awarded certificates, as well as for participation in elaboration of master plans, etc.

The Act on VET Amendment strengthened involvement of social partners, mainly in planning, curriculum development and the award of qualifications.

In the framework of the National Programme of Education Development implementation plan, there is a priority to support exercise of professional organisations competence concerning secondary schools fields of studies.

The link with the National Youth Guarantee

The National Youth Guarantee became a significant support tool in VET development, as it not only supported measures in the field of employment, but also accumulated financial sources and made it available for accelerated solutions in the field of VET.

There were [some national projects](#) supported within the operational programme Human Resources of the European Social Fund, offering young people aged 29 and under a professional experience or a training period:

The national project '[Practice to Employment](#)' offers a young person an opportunity to acquire or deepen his/her professional skills, knowledge and practical experience by mentoring and practical training provided by an employer, which created a half-time working place for at least 9 months. An employer is entitled for a financial contribution if a working place/post has been created and a mentor provided, all with the aim to deepen skills, the knowledge and practical experience of a young person. One mentor may work maximum with 3 young people during a period from 3 to 6 months.

The national project 'Education of Young Job-seekers' ([Vzdelávanie mladých uchádzačov o zamestnanie](#)) strives to create opportunities for re-skilling (within the instrument REPAS+) and for the support of key competencies (within the instrument KOMPAS+). A job-seeker recording a problem in accessing labour market may choose type of training, as well as a training provider. The Labour Office shall pay the particular training fee and a

financial contribution to travel and subsistence costs of a job-seeker. Implementation of the project started in July 2017 and was prologated until 2023.

The national project 'Graduate practice starts a career' ([Absolventská prax štartuje zamestnanie](#)) is aimed at creating opportunities for practical training and employment for unemployed young people younger than 29 (according to Art 51 of the Act on Employment Services). The practice must last from 3 to 6 months and the working place/post must be kept for at least 9 months. 5 244 job-seekers joined and 5 543 project participants terminated their graduate practice in 2017.

Promoting traineeships and apprenticeships

The ESF national project 'Dual Education and Enhancement of Quality and Attractiveness of VET' ([Duálne vzdelávanie a zvýšenie atraktivity a kvality OVP](#)) is implemented by the State Institute for VET (ŠIOV).

The project promotion activities are aimed at the group of:

- students, with the aim to increase their interest in life-long learning (further LLL);
- employers (mainly SME), with the aim to enhance their participation in the dual education system (increased offer of traineeships).

For the target group of parents, 3 promotion films on 10 particular professions offered by employers within the LLL as traineeships have been produced within the project and broadcasted on TV.

The LLL benefits have been promoted through internet and social networks, such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc., too.

Other important aspects of promotion are various recruitment means of employers trying to gain the interest of students, such as the open door days, excursions for students, illustrations of practice of a profession, presentation of an employer at parents' association meetings, etc.

The State Institute for VET developed the new portal '[mojdual.sk](#)' devoted to pupils of 7th and 8th grades of primary schools in order to timely influence their choice of secondary studies.

[The newsletters](#) providing up-to-date information have been regularly produced within the national project implementation.

SIOV was represented at the [European Vocational Skills Week which took place in Berlin, Germany](#) from 9. to 13. november 2020, in compliance with the European Commission initiative of 2016. It includes events at local, regional, national and European level.

The same ministry performs duties of the National Authority for the EU Erasmus+ Programme, which represents another means of [promotion of internships and apprenticeships](#).

A significant role in promoting VET and dual education system played the ESF national project 'Development of secondary vocational education' (2013 -2015 [Rozvoj stredného odborného vzdelávania](#)) which made it possible to establish 21 practical centres of VET with state-of-the-art equipment and to develop a [portal monitoring the labour market needs in relation to VET](#).

Recognition of learning outcomes

The dual education system in formal education includes study programmes completed by awarding a

- Certificate of traineeship/apprenticeship and followed by a school-leaving (maturity) certificate – ISCED 354;
- Certificate of traineeship/apprenticeship – ISCED 353.

The European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training ([ECVET](#)) has not been systematically implemented in Slovakia yet; neither it has been included in the state policy. It has only been applied within mobility projects (apprenticeships, traineeships) of the [Erasmus+ Programme](#). This helps organisations of VET to build-up strategic partnerships with other organisations and companies, in order to achieve close integration of VET and the labour market.

Funding

In 2020, according to [National Reform Program](#) the goal is to link education to labour market needs. A bill will be submitted for the legislative process to modify the existing system of proposing and approving of experimental testing of study programmes so that it reflects the needs of the labour market and the society.

The implementation of projects under the “[Linking Secondary-level Education to Practice](#)” call with the allocation of EUR 30 million targeting vocational training is continuing. As at January 2020, 58 schools’ applications for a non-repayable grant had been received, amounting in aggregate to more than EUR 11 million. By now, schools have filed 29 applications for a non-repayable grant in the total amount of EUR 7 million. One accredited vocational bachelor’s programme is now existing at the Slovak University of Technology.

The ESF Operational Programme Human Resources stands as the important source of financing and provides almost 34 million € in order to implement the national project 'Dual Education and Enhancement of Quality and Attractiveness of VET' ([Duálne vzdelávanie a zvýšenie atraktivity a kvality OVP](#)). The project is implemented from January 2016 till December 2020.

Financial incentives provided on the basis of the Act on VET:

- a financial contribution of 1000 € to guarantee traineeship/practical training is particularly appealing for smaller employers;
- flat-rate expenditures deductible from the tax base are 3 200 € or 6 400 € per pupil/student, according to the number of hours of practical training provided;
- tax expenditures are possible beyond financial norms for employers and enterprise schools providing practical training in the framework of VET;
- taxable income can be deducted by tax expenditures, except expenditures on long-term assets, of 75 % or 150 %, according to the number of hours of practical training provided.

Quality assurance

The quality of traineeships is secured by the contracts, which include [provisions on specific conditions](#) to be fulfilled by employers.

The MESRS has elaborated the Report on Quality Implementation in VET, following the recommendation on the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET (EQAVET)/[Správa o zavádzaní kvality v odbornom vzdelávaní a príprave v nadväznosti na odporúčanie Európskeho referenčného rámca pre zabezpečovanie kvality v oblasti odborného vzdelávania a prípravy EQAVET 2015](#). Indicators provided in this report do not assess the quality of traineeships.

The State Education Inspectorate elaborates the yearly [Report on Education Status](#), which includes also audit findings concerning traineeships guaranteed by the contract partners of schools.

3.6 Integration of young people in the labour market

Youth employment measures

There are two long-term measures available to young people in Slovakia, developed under the management of the MLSAF:

- 'Graduate practice' (Absolventská prax) is from 3 to 6 months long practice at an employer aiming at deepening of expertise and gaining of practical experience in a respective field ([Act on Employment Services, § 51](#)).
- 'Support for the first job' (Príspevok na podporu vytvorenia pracovného miesta v prvom pravidelne platenom zamestnaní) means a financial contribution paid to an employer, who is supposed to create a new working place for a young person (younger than 25 and unemployed at least for 3 months or younger than 29 and unemployed for at least 6 months) and maintain it for a period from 6 to 12 months. ([Act on Employment Services, § 51 a](#)).

Within the Operational Programme Human Resources 2014 - 2020 (Priority Axis 2: Youth Employment Initiative) several financial contributions were provided to unemployed (including young) people, in order to support work travel, work mobility (to cover the lodging costs) and self-employment. There are also several services and support measures available also to young people, such as

- information and counselling on occupational choices;
- expert guidance, including creation of individual action plans;
- education and training of employees – new expert knowledge, skills and abilities for the labour market

Within the projects implemented in the framework of the Youth Guarantee SR in the period 2012 – 2020, there were more than 100 000 young people supported thorough various activities which led to the main output: support employment of young people.

The financial contribution provided to support first working places, tested within the Youth Guarantee SR projects, has been included among provisions of §51a of the Act on Social Services.

The new operational programme Slovakia for the programming period 2021 – 2027 will strengthen the support to young people especially thorough one-stop-shop places where young people will receive at one place all integrated services to help them find the first job and to ensure that the job is decent.

The programme will also promote creating of local partnerships between local employers, public employment services, schools, municipalities, NGOs and others relevant partners, which should led to establishment of local acting groups in view to help disadvantaged young people.

Flexicurity measures focusing on young people

Currently, there are no flexicurity measures aimed specifically at young people implemented in Slovakia.

Still, some measures available also to youth – such as establishment of the 'Working time account' by the [Slovak Labour Code](#) or provision of financial contribution to all parents with no regard to their employment – have been reflected by the Slovak legislation already (Trexima, 2016). Similarly, the reform of VET has been launched. But the reform of school system has not been sorted yet and the system of life-long-learning, as well as active measures of the labour market still do not mean an essential change to young unemployed people.

Reconciliation of private and working life for young people

Currently, there are no measures focusing on reconciliation of private and working life specifically for young people implemented in Slovakia.

Young people, equally to the other employees, are entitled to make use of shorter working hours, shared working place or home office/teleworking, which are covered by the provisions of the Slovak Labour Code.

In 2015, the national project 'Family and work' (**Rodina a práca**) was tested, focusing on support of the use of flexible forms of work by mothers with children younger than 10 years. The project was also aimed at several support activities, such as establishment of nurseries and children corners directly at firms, provision of financial contributions to cover cost of nannies, consultation and counselling services for employers in the field of reconciliation of private and working life of their employees – mothers. The MLSAF has announced continuation of this project during the programming period 2014 – 2020.

The new project 'The reconciliation of work and family life' (**Zosúladenie rodinného a pracovného života**) will finish in 2021 and its outcomes will be evaluated. This project is very important especially for the matter of young unemployed women who has more difficulties to find a decent job not only when they have already children but also before. This project financed within the European Social Fund led the Slovak government to plan an update of the Slovak code in 2021 to promote fathers' parental leave to increase the equality between women and men in the matter of share between work and family life.

Funding of existing schemes/initiatives

Measures promoting youth employment financed by the sources of the state budget in 2019

National programmes focused on the development of active policies of the labour market and on enhancement of youth employability received funding amounting to 30 546 174 € (**COLSAF, Annual report 2019, p 129, Table E**). Expenditures spent on two permanent measures focused on young people – 'graduate practice' and 'support of the first working place/post' – amounted to 15.2 % from the total. In 2019, the measure 'graduate practice' was used by 3 575 young people and they received the total financial contributions of 1 977 147€. In 2019, the overall financial contribution supporting creation of the first working places/posts amounted to 2 676 457 € and it was spent in favour of 751 young people (**COLSAF, Annual report 2019, p 11**).

Measures promoting youth employment financed by the sources of the ESF

There is 10 national projects supported within the Priority Axis 2: Youth Employment Initiative of the Operational programme Human Resources, aimed at graduate practice, informal education (requalification; increasing of competences), mentoring, professional practice, creation of a working place/post and support of self-employment of young unemployed people.

The total financial allocation within the Priority Axis 2 amounts to 287 701 523 €, out of which

- 64 171 912,99 € is allocated within the Youth Employment Initiative/ the Youth Guarantee SR;
- 166 655 943,61 € is allocated within the ESF;
- 56 873 667,1 € is allocated from sources of the state budget ([MLSAF, 2019](#)).

Quality assurance

The evaluation results of measures focused on employment solution for (not only young) people are published in Yearly Reports produced by the COLSAF and in reports of the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic.

Only the following results have been monitored, so far:

- the number of participants and expenditures spent;
- the age of participants;
- the sex of participants;
- the highest completed level of education;
- the terms of unemployment before inclusion of a participant to the respective measure;
- if relevant – the number of working places/posts created

In case of projects supported by the ESF it has also been monitored, whether graduates were still included on the labour market after the respective project end.

The following has still been missing in Slovakia:

- A systemic tool for feedback from young people participating on the projects;
- An assessment of not only efficiency and effectiveness, but also of the policies design and quality of their implementation.
- An opportunity to change a measure or terminate its financing upon quality assessment results on the level of outputs.

3.7 Cross-border mobility in employment, entrepreneurship and vocational opportunities

Programmes and schemes for cross-border mobility

Within the support of cross-border entrepreneurship the commencing Slovak entrepreneurs can use the following state programmes, schemes and supporting institutions, which are defrayable (refundable) from the public sources.

Cross-border cooperation programmes

Cross-border cooperation programmes ([Programy cezhraničnej spolupráce](#)) are focused on intensifying of cooperation between the Slovak Republic and the surrounding neighbouring EU-countries (the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Austria). Within the particular programmes they generally tackle **the area of transfer of innovations** or labour-force (work-force) mobility. Entrepreneurs are welcome to get involved in the current calls within relevant areas.

The Visegrad fund aims to promote closer cooperation between the V4 countries through joint cultural, scientific and educational projects, youth exchanges, cross-border cooperation and tourism promotion.

Slovak Investment and Trade Development Agency (Slovenská agentúra pre rozvoj investícií a obchodu – [SARIO](#)) aims to contribute to the increase of influx of foreign investors and simultaneously support Slovak companies and firms that are oriented to the global world market. Entrepreneurs can use mainly **following services**:

- **intermediation of specific supply** of Slovak products towards international markets,
- **intermediation of foreign demands** in the domestic entrepreneurial environment (by means of the service aimed at searching of the foreign partners for Slovak companies and firms – [Business Partner Search Profile](#)).
- ensuring of the presentation for Slovak companies and firms at both - Slovak and foreign trade-fairs and exhibitions - with a view to actively promote Slovak entrepreneurial environment (for instance by organising of several events within [SARIO Business LINK](#), which take place during significant Slovak trade-fairs),

- organising and accompanying of entrepreneurial missions abroad and in the Slovak Republic,
- provision of the **consulting and educational service** [Export Slovensko](#) focused on support of Slovak products export (for instance it gathers complex information on the state support of export in the Slovak Republic including information on projects, news and events from twelve state institutions supporting export),
- creation of attractive territorial and sector-oriented projects aimed at fostering of economic cooperation and development of co-operative activities,
- exchange of information and co-operation with partner foreign organisations,
- **concentration of information on foreign markets**, international tenders and other attractive events abroad.

Slovak Business Agency (**SBA**)

- In the field of cross-border cooperation the SBA provides advisory services, which can be used by those interested in entrepreneurship abroad, and perhaps even by the subjects already operating at the foreign market. Some of the questions, which have already been solved successfully by entrepreneurs, are publicised on this organisation's web-site, so they are accessible to all visitors. SBA is concurrently a part of the [European Enterprise Network](#), within which it ensures access to databases for entrepreneurs:
- **Database for partnership offers** (for search of innovative technologies and partners for cooperation across the entire Europe – it contains more than 15 000 trade and technological profiles from more than 50 countries).
- In addition to the activities of the [Enterprise Europe Network](#) (EEN) SBA also carries out pilot projects to open the themes of the initiative **Small Business Act** some of which are aimed at promotion of internationalization of SMEs.

European Exchange Programme for Entrepreneurs

It is a **European cross-border exchange programme for entrepreneurs** providing commencing entrepreneurs with an opportunity to learn something from experienced entrepreneurs running small businesses in other participating countries. The exchange of experience takes place during **the stay of a commencing entrepreneur in the experienced entrepreneur's place**, where they help the commencing entrepreneur acquire skills needed for running a small firm/business. The stay is partly co-financed from the EU-sources.

The European Solidarity Corps programme (**Európsky zbor solidarity**) administered by IUVENTA - Slovak Youth Institute, creates opportunities for young people to volunteer or work on projects in their own country or abroad that benefit communities and people around Europe (including activities in the field of entrepreneurship).

The National Scholarship programme of the Slovak Republic is funded by **Slovak Academic Information Agency**. The program supports study/research/teaching/artistic mobility of international students, PhD students, university teachers, researchers and artists at higher education institutions and research organisations. It supports two-way mobility - international scholarship holders to Slovakia, as well as Slovak scholarship holders abroad.

Slovak Chamber of Commerce and Industry SCCI ([Slovenská obchodná a priemyselná komora - SOPK](#))

SCCI implements a broad portfolio of activities, within which it focuses also on **advisory and consulting services** for entrepreneurs, who operate or are interested to operate at the foreign market. They provide mostly **legal counselling** in the field of support and protection of business/enterprises and **counselling in international commerce**, customs and technical regulations. Services provided by SCCI are available also through

a network of regional chambers (SCCI). In conclusion, it should be said that the support within the SCCI is focused rather on larger companies.

Legal framework

In Slovakia, there is no specific legislation that regulates either the stay of foreign young workers, apprentices, interns and young entrepreneurs or the departure of Slovak young workers, apprentices, interns and young entrepreneurs abroad (specific insurance, levies, work permit, taxes...).

3.8 Development of entrepreneurship competence

Policy Framework

In the Slovak Republic there is no national strategy directly targeted at entrepreneurial skills development. Nevertheless the theme related to the increase of entrepreneurial literacy is part of the [Strategy of the Slovak Republic for youth for the years 2014 – 2020](#). Entrepreneurial literacy will also be one of the main debates in the coming years.

Formal learning

Junior Achievement Slovensko is an organisation that operates in the field of formal education on the Slovak Republics territory. It implements the following programmes called Applied Economy (**Aplikovaná ekonomika**) and Entrepreneurship in the tourist industry (**Podnikanie v cestovnom ruchu**), within which students can test their first actual entrepreneurship in a students' firm. At the time being there are nearly 1 000 schools and more than 26 000 students engaged in these programmes.

The vocational subject "Economic exercises/practice at a training firm" is focused on the increase of entrepreneurial skills and is coordinated by Slovak Centre for Training Firms (SCCF – **Slovenské centrum cvičných firiem**). This **centre is a unit of the State Institute for Vocational Education (Štátny inštitút odborného vzdelávania)**. The **training firm** operates as a real firm – it has basic departments of an ordinary actual enterprise. It provides a **simulation of activities of departments in an actual firm**, whereas students are allowed to make a mistake, which does not have such economic impact as it would have in an actual firm, but its function is solely educational.

The Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic imposes an obligation on schools to incorporate themes of the National Standard of Financial Literacy (**Národný štandard finančnej gramotnosti**) into their school educational curricula. Schools can implement a project called More than money (**Viac ako peniaze**) aimed at **financial literacy support**, alternatively other projects. A handbook named Financial literacy 1 (**Finančná gramotnosť 1**) is available and is assigned for first-graders, second-graders, third-graders and fourth-graders at primary schools.

Non-formal and informal learning

Košice IT Valley plays an important role in the development of the IT industry in the Košice. The institution is an initiative of educational institutions, government and leading IT companies. The main activities: motivation of children and youth to study and later to work in Information Technologies and Robotics; improving the quality of IT training programs offered by universities, high and elementary schools and IT businesses, etc.

Education for entrepreneurs in diverse forms is offered also by incubators and **co-working spaces** (financed mostly by private donors) within their accompanying events (lectures, seminars, webinars and so forth); as example we can mention co-workings such as **Connect Co-working**, **RubixLab** in Bratislava, **Banka Žilina** in Žilina, **Eastcubator** and Creative Centre Halmiho Dvor ("Halmiho Dvor" = Slovak for Halmi Yard) in Košice. From among incubators, the University technological incubator (**Univerzitný technologický inkubátor**) in Bratislava can be presented as an examples.

EPIC non-profit organization whose donors are EU funds has been committed to promote social entrepreneurship. Within their projects, they prepared a page with studying materials on **social entrepreneurship**.

Another organisation that works in the field of non-formal education is Nexteria, mostly by means of its 3-year **developing educational programme Leadership Academy**, which consists of diverse courses, discussions, projects and networking events. This programme is focused not only on entrepreneurship; however its aim is development of skills, which school-leavers use also in starting their own enterprise/business.

Summation of useful information for commencing entrepreneurs is also provided by **Information youth centre**, which on its portal sums up basic entry information on entrepreneurship.

Educators support in entrepreneurship education

Ensuring of preparation of teachers, who teach subjects aimed at entrepreneurship education is carried out mainly by the non-profit organisation **Junior Achievement Slovensko**. It offers to pedagogues/educationists a possibility to get involved in the programmes, which make the educational process playful, interesting and attractive and will bring new opportunities to students as well as to pedagogues/educationists. The programmes are designed for **primary and secondary schools**. Except for these programmes they offer also a **teaching aid – creative cards**. Those form a compact set of didactic methods for problem-solving within teamwork.

Simultaneously the Junior Achievement Slovakia intermediates for teachers of primary and secondary schools a possibility of free access to **the biggest European database of tools and methods** aimed at support of entrepreneurship education.

Another subject in the field of support of educationists/teachers is the **Slovak Centre of Training Firms**, which in the framework of its assignments implements also continuous education of teachers in training firms.

In 2007 -2008 the **Young Entrepreneurs Association of Slovakia** initiated a project called **Quality at school, success in life**. The project's output is a **six-textbook set** designed for teachers at secondary schools, which serve in pedagogical process for teaching of entrepreneurship-oriented subjects.

3.9 Start-up funding for young entrepreneurs

Access to information

At present the **National Business Centre** (Národné podnikateľské centrum) founded by the **Slovak Business Agency** has **several programs** focused on initial stages of entrepreneurship:

- **The Acceleration Program** is designed for future entrepreneur who has business ideas with the aim to set up own business. The program offers individual personal or online consultation, workshops and co-working centre, through which is possible to develop a business or meet new business partners.
- **The Incubation Program** encompasses, except for the usage of offices within the incubator, also a wide scope of services resting in individual coaching, professional consultations and networking.
- **The Growth Program** offers individual consultancy and wide a range of group events focused on growing companies on the local and international market.
- **The Internship program** includes several options of travelling abroad and gaining knowledge on a global level: internship opportunities in a foreign business incubator, professional institution, technology park or attending events focused on start-up community.

- **The Creative Point** is a creative space providing new technologies suitable for prototyping - such as 3D printers, laser, CNC milling machines, scanners and plotters to develop skills and creative ideas. The aim is to support entrepreneurs by making attractive free technical and technological services available by accessing to these machines.

An initiative **Startup Sharks** is based on The Scheme for Support of Start-ups (scheme of support de minimis) and supports innovative and technological start-ups.

The program consists of 3 parts:

- The Start-up Pool within which entrepreneurs could visit international start-ups events.
- The Start-up Sea offers counselling service or training courses aimed at diverse entrepreneurship - related themes.
- The Start-up Ocean proposes an internship programme within the National Business Centre.

EIT RawMaterials provides funding and entrepreneurship coaching to early stage start-ups with a focus on idea-to-market/early-stage start-ups with relevance for the partners.

The activities are composed:

- Start-up and SME Booster – supports promising Start-ups and SMEs at regional Innovation Hubs (Co-Location Centres) to validate their business models and connects with the networks of partners.
- RawMaterials Accelerator – RM Accelerator activities improve the success rate of market entry of scalable start-ups, focusing on addressing market risk. The Accelerator also includes coaching and instructions on a pan-European level to partners of the EIT RawMaterials. RM Accelerator supports scientists, researchers and entrepreneurs in developing their concepts for raw materials innovations into market-ready products and services.

Business and Innovation Centers (BICs) are institutions for promoting innovation and entrepreneurship. It is an initiative of European Commission, the private and public sectors to promote economic development and innovation potential in the European region through the following offices: BIC Banská Bystrica, BIC Bratislava, BIC Prievidza, BIC Spišská Nová Ves and BIC Košice operate in Slovakia. For example, BIC Bratislava offers services such as business consulting, financing, technology transfer, regional development, investment consulting, advice on EU programs and networking.

The main aim of the **The Technology Transfer Centre** (Národné centrum transferu technológií) at **The Slovak Centre of Scientific and Technical Information** (Centrum vedecko-technických informácií) is the complex support in the technology transfer of institutions like universities, institutes at the Slovak Academy of Sciences and other public research institutions.

SIEA Slovak Innovation and Energy Agency (**Slovenská inovačná a energetická agentúra**) through the project **inovujeme.sk** ("we innovate") created regional consultation centres aimed at providing advisory services to target groups, especially business entities, which are specialized on innovation and technology.

Access to capital

Start-ups can use a relatively wide scope of financial sources either from the **risk capital** (it is a situation, in which the capital-provider becomes one of the co-owners of the enterprise), **debt financing** (credits, microloans) or **bank guarantees**.

In the area of **risk capital** they can acquire the needed capital for their start from several private or public sources. The National Holding Fund /NHF/ (**Národný holdingový fond**), whose founder is the Slovak Business Agency, dominates among the public sources. This company provided financial sources to more than 140 firms in a total amount of 10 million

Euros. Under the National Holding Fund there are several funds, from among which it is the Fund for Innovations and Technologies /FIT/ (**Fond inovácií a technológií**) that focuses itself on start-ups. This fund invests from 20 000 to 1 500 000 Euros and it reaches its investment horizon between 4 – 6 years. It specialises itself mainly in the **area of environment, sustainable energy sources, industrial innovations, e-commerce, information technologies, telecommunications and software solutions**.

Except for the aforesaid fund, there are funds in Slovakia, which came into existence within the JEREMIE initiative (Common European Sources for Small and Middle Enterprises). It is a common initiative of the European Commission (Directorate General "Regio") and the European investment fund (EIF) aiming to enhance the access of small and middle enterprises to the external financing. Funds, which originated from the JEREMIE-sources, are administered by two administrators:

- **Neulogy Ventures** - they offer the initial capital from 50 000 to 200 000 Euros and the starting current capital from 300 000 to 1 500 000 Euros for enterprises operating mostly **in the area of information and communication technologies, power engineering and medical diagnostics**.
- **Limerock** - maximal investment amount in one company reaches 2 750 000 Euros and the investment horizon varies from 4 to 6 years.

Another group of sources form private funds and then finances from **entrepreneurship angels**. Several entrepreneurship angels are associated in the **Club of business angels** (**Klub podnikateľských anjelov**), founded by the **Young Entrepreneurs Association of Slovakia** (**Združenie mladých podnikateľov Slovenska**), **SLOVCA (Slovak Venture Capital and Private Equity Association)** and **Slovak Business Agency**.

Credit financing for starting enterprises is offered by the Slovak Guarantee and Development Bank **/Slovenská záručná a rozvojová banka** (credits for young entrepreneurs, female entrepreneurs, young farmers etc.). As for microloans the Start-ups have the **Microloans Programme** (**Mikropôžičkový program**) available within the Slovak Business Agency. The minimum loan is 2 500 Euro and the maximum is 50 000 Euro. The payment should be paid from 6 months to 4 years.

As for providing of bank guarantees the entrepreneurs are allowed to use mainly the service provided by the Slovak Guarantee and Development Bank (**Slovenská záručná a rozvojová banka**). Bank guarantees are provided also for the reason of fostering formation, development and stabilisation of the Small and Middle Enterprises in the Slovak Republic, or of the sustainable energy sources.

The European Investment Fund (EIF) operates within the scope of financing for beginners entrepreneurs, which falls under the **Slovak Guarantee and Development Fund** (**Slovenský záručný a rozvojový fond**), dealing with provision of bank guarantees and risk capital.

3.10 Promotion of entrepreneurship culture

Special events and activities

Secondary school students involved in the subject Applied Economy (**Aplikovaná ekonómia**), have a possibility to present their projects every year at the national fair of students' companies called **JA Fair of Entrepreneurship Talents (JA Veľtrh podnikateľských talentov)**.

EIT Jumpstarter aims at supporting and developing idea holders and research teams turning ideas into business models. The Jumpstarter can assist idea holders that are just getting their ideas off the ground. The competition is covered by EIT RawMaterials, initiated and funded by the EIT (European Institute of Innovation and Technology) a body of the European Union.

Under the auspices of the Deputy Prime Minister for Investment and Information is on a yearly basis organized the competition for **the Young Innovative Entrepreneur (Mladý inovatívny podnikateľ roka)**, which is part of the worldwide Creative Young Entrepreneur Award.

TECH INNO DAY is organized by University Technology Incubator of the Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava. It is an event where clever students could present their startups ideas. There is also possibility to discuss and get knowledge from experienced mentors and entrepreneurs.

Innovative Idea Competition (Súťaž inovatívnych nápadov) offers the possibility to young innovators join competition of innovative ideas, projects and business solutions. The event is organised by Incubator **Technical University of Košice** (TUKE) which is part of the University Science Park TECHNICOM ecosystem.

Networks and partnerships

Several activities for commencing entrepreneurs are provided by the Young Entrepreneurs Association of Slovakia (**Združenie mladých podnikateľov Slovenska**). It orientates its activity to exchange of experience, mentoring, networking of young entrepreneurs, financial aid during the starting entrepreneurship stages, presentation of successful, ethic, and exemplary entrepreneurs as well as entrepreneurship-practice examples, identification and removal of barriers within young people's entrepreneurship.

Creating of entrepreneurship network and organising of networking events or partnerships fall within the scope of activities of several regional **incubators and co-working spaces** e.g. **The University Technology Incubator** at Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava or **The Start-up centre** at Technical University in Košice.

3.11 Current debates and reforms

It is expected that several open calls will be published in the new programming period of 2021-2027 for project proposals aimed at enhancement of youth employment, such as programmes to facilitate transition from school to the labour market, second-chance schools, etc. (MLSAF)

In 2021 and 2022, the national project '[Reconciliation of family and work life](#)' shall continue in order to facilitate reconciliation of working and private life of mothers/fathers. (MLSAF)

The on-going discussions on formal creation of the [National enterprise centre](#) (NPC) resulted in its opening in 2017, which should focus on the development of an incubator programme for young entrepreneurs and on the creation of regional branches.

The national project 'Bud aktivny' (Be Active) is planned for 2021, which shall include 30 hours of individual consultations for a young job seekers (younger than 29) and financial contributions awarded to those active young people, finding themselves a job.

4. SOCIAL INCLUSION

Social inclusion is becoming one of the most discussed topics in the field of youth work in Slovakia.

The main challenges related to social inclusion of young people in Slovakia are:

- Young people from geographically remote and marginalized communities (Roma young people),
- Young grown-ups leaving the orphanages, re-educational institutions, foster families,

- Youth with para-abilities (especially young people with visual and hearing impairments),
- Young asylum seekers,
- Young homeless people. For more information see chapter [4.1](#).

The youth social inclusion policy is governed by the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic, the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic, and their budget and allowance organisations. See more in chapter [4.2](#) on the Administration and Governance.

The issue of social inclusion is not enough legislatively saturated in the Slovak republic (Chapter [4.3](#)). In the area of social inclusion of young people Slovak republic finds the legislative support in national and international enactment and documents that were accepted and ratified. Social inclusion of young people is one of the key objectives of the Slovak Youth Strategy 2014-2020. However, the Slovak Republic does not have a separate strategy for the social inclusion of young people. The good news is that the Strategy on Inclusive Education is currently being prepared and should be approved by the Slovak Government in 2021.

There are several inclusion programmes in Slovakia where children and youth are important target groups e.g. in national programmes for the development of inclusive education, deinstitutionalization of orphanages, development of community centers, field social work and others. For further details see chapter [4.4](#).

Non-public institutions and non-governmental organizations in Slovakia are particularly active in the supporting excluded groups and in fighting radicalization and extremism ([4.5](#)).

The chapter [4.6](#) addresses to quality services affecting the social inclusion of young people in Slovakia. There is a number of information sources and systems where consultations and advice can be obtained on topics such as housing, health, social assistance, also on specific groups such as people with para-abilities or ethnic minorities. Youth work programmes fostering social inclusion of young people in Slovakia are discussed in the chapter [4.7](#). Moreover, chapter [4.8](#) provides brief information on forthcoming policy developments relevant to the topic of the social inclusion of youth in Slovakia.

4.1 General context

Main challenges to social inclusion

In the Slovak Republic, **Roma young people** are the most at risk of social exclusion, facing multiple disadvantages: low level education achievements, hidden/open segregation in education, high unemployment rates, societal discrimination, inherited poverty, etc.

Young grown-ups leaving the orphanages, re-educational institutions, foster families may face barriers mostly when it comes to housing and employment.

Disabled youths (including young people with visual and hearing impairments) have been considerably disadvantaged while ensuring equitable access to education, employment, own housing, etc.

Recently, **young asylum seekers and young homeless people** have been listed among the groups of young people the most at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

Definitions and concepts

Many diverse descriptions of social inclusion have been provided by political and scientific papers published in Slovakia.

A considerable attention has been paid to definition of social exclusion, being a prerequisite for social inclusion. **Social exclusion** is characterised as the inability to participate in social, economic, political and cultural life, due to the following factors: low income, poor health, inadequate education, limited contact with members of the majority population and discrimination ([World Bank et al. 2002](#))

Youth Report 2014 ([Správa o mládeži 2014](#)) provides definition of **social inclusion of young people**: it is a process ensuring that socially excluded persons or those at risk of social exclusion have been offered opportunities and possibilities helping them to fully participate in economic, social and cultural life of a society and live their everyday lives in a way, which is considered a routine. With regard to youth, this process may be understood also as a complex system of interventions leading to creation of opportunities for young people with fewer opportunities.

4.2 Administration and governance

Governance

In the field of social inclusion, the Slovak Republic fully respects obligations adopted at the level of the European Union, United Nations Organisation and UNESCO. The theme of social inclusion has been developed at the governmental level and **at the level of state** and some competencies have been transferred to local or regional governments e.g. establishing of social care homes for children (Act on the Organisation of the Government Activities and on the Organisation of Central State Administration/ [Zákon o organizácii činnosti vlády a organizácii ústrednej štátnej správy](#)). The Governmental Council for Human Rights, National Minorities and Gender Equality ([Rada vlády pre ľudské práva, národnostné menšiny a rodovú rovnosť](#)) play the role of permanent, expert, advisory, coordination and consultative body in this field.

Main actors

The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic (referred to as MLSAF), bearing the final **responsibility for the field of social inclusion**, deals also with the employment strategy, labour market policy, social insurance, public social benefits, social care, social/legal child protection, social guardianship, gender equality and equal opportunities.

The Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic (referred to as MESRS) bears responsibility for preparation, coordination and evaluation of the state youth policy. Therefore the **Slovak Youth Strategy for 2014 – 2020** covering also the empowerment of youth and their social inclusion, has been elaborated under auspices of this ministry.

Other state bodies and institutions involved in tackling the theme of social inclusion:

- [The Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic](#) deals with social inclusion of inhabitants living in Roma communities via its Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities ([Úrad splnomocnenca vlády SR pre Rómske komunity](#))
- [Public Defender of Rights office](#), where also the Children Ombudsman operates ([Detský ombudsman](#))
- The Commissioner for Children (Komisár pre deti) ensured by [Act](#), protecting the rights of the child granted by The Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Non-governmental non-profit organisations ensuring social integration, including the youth as the target group:

- [EPIC, n.o.](#) (employment and employability)
- People in Need / [Človek v ohrození, o.z.](#) (social and community work)
- [Foundation Socia](#) / Nadácia Socia (systemic changes for socially excluded persons)

- Milan Šimečka Foundation/ [Nadácia Milana Šimečku](#) (human rights and multicultural education)
- [Foundation Pontis](#) / Nadácia Pontis (Company Social Responsibility, persons with hearing impairments)
- [Open Society Foundation](#) / Nadácia otvorenej spoločnosti (participation, public voice, media campaigns)
- [Effeta, o.z.](#) and NGO Myslim / [Myslím, o.z.](#) (persons with hearing impairments)
- Union of blind and visually impaired persons of Slovakia / [Únia slabozrakých a nevidiacich Slovenska](#), NGO Word / [SLOVO, o.z.](#) (persons with visual impairments)
- NGO Margaretka / [OZ Margarétka](#), Slovak union of physically disabled people / [Slovenský zväz telesne postihnutých](#), Slovak union of disabled persons / [Slovenský zväz zdravotne postihnutých](#), NGO Barlička/ [OZ Barlička](#) (physically disabled and disabled persons)
- NGO Predys / [OZ Predys](#) (learning difficulties, attention-deficit)
- Association for support to mentally disabled / [Združenie na pomoc ľuďom s mentálnym postihnutím v Slovenskej republike](#), NGO ECHO/ [OZ Echo](#) (mentally impaired)
- Land of harmony Foundation / [Nadácia Krajina harmónie](#) (mentally impaired and physically disabled persons)
- [A-Centrum](#) (youth with autism spectrum disorder)
- [IMPACT HUB](#) (support of young entrepreneurs, including social entrepreneurship)
- NGO EDUMA/ [EDUMA, n.o.](#) (support of social inclusion via education of the society)
- NGO Divé maky / [Divé maky, o.z.](#) (development of Roma youth)

Cross-sectorial cooperation

The MLSAF facilitates activities of the Committee for Children and Youth ([Výbor pre deti a mládež](#)), being one of the committees of the Governmental Council for Human Rights, National Minorities and Gender Equality. It gathers together the representatives of various ministries, local and regional governments, as well as non-governmental non-profit organisations. This committee elaborates the **National Action Plan for Children**, ([Národný akčný plán pre deti 2015 - 2017](#)) representing basic instrument for targeted and coordinated actions for implementation of the Convention of the Rights of the Child and its optional protocols at the national level.

Moreover, the [Inter-ministerial working group for state policy in the field of youth](#) has been established by the MESRS and it bears responsibility for implementation of inclusive education.

4.3 Strategy for the social inclusion of young people

Existence of a National Strategy on social inclusion

No national strategy on social inclusion of young people has been adopted in the Slovak Republic so far. The Slovak Youth Strategy for 2014 – 2020 stands as the only document adopted at national level, which includes specifically the theme of social inclusion of young people but individual support measures are implemented on the bases of other documents such as [Youth Guarantee initiative](#) or [Strategy of the Slovak Republic for Integration of Roma up to 2020](#) etc.

Scope and contents

No national strategy on social inclusion of young people exclusively has been adopted in the Slovak Republic so far.

Responsible authority

No national strategy on social inclusion of young people exclusively has been adopted in the Slovak Republic so far.

Revisions/Updates

The Strategy on Inclusive Education will be prepared in 2021.

4.4 Inclusive programmes for young people

Programmes for vulnerable young people

No actual national programmes aimed solely at social inclusion of young people currently exist in the Slovak Republic. In 2015- 2020, there were several national projects implemented contributing to social inclusion. Projects were targeted at various groups including children and young people.

1. National project 'School open to all' (**Škola otvorená všetkým**)

- in 2017 -2019
- implemented by Institution for Teachers' Education and Training;
- project took place in all regions and was based on close co-operation with kindergartens and primary schools with at least 20% of Roma pupils;
- the aim: support of inclusive environments in primary schools and kindergartens;
- activities: acceleration programmes for Roma children personal development of stimulation, inclusive teams dealing with improvement of inclusive school environments established at primary schools, afterschool activities open for children with disadvantaged backgrounds, Roma parents involved into some afterschool activities as mentors etc.
- targets: 130 primary schools, 50 kindergartens, approx. 2500 Roma children /socially disadvantaged background;
- The total financial volume: approx. 29 800 000 EUR (OP Human Resources, ESF).

2. National projects from '**Take Away Package**' represent specific type of national projects and are implemented by the Office of Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities. These projects ensure a complex approach to social inclusion in the field of education, field social work and community work. Marginalised Roma communities, including youth, represent the essential target groups of these projects. Projects are implemented in specifically selected 150 towns and villages in Slovakia.

2.1. National project 'Support of Inclusive Preschool Education of Marginalized Roma Children I.' (**Podpora predprimárneho vzdelávania detí z marginalizovaných rómskych komún I.**)

- in 2017 -2020;
- the aim: support of inclusive environments in kindergartens;
- activities: acceleration programmes stimulating personal development of Roma children, inclusive teams improving of inclusive kindergartens' environments, Roma parents and their children groups outside kindergartens etc.;
- targets: 150 kindergartens, approx. 3000 Roma children;
- total financial volume: approx. 19 900 000 EUR (OP Human Resources, ESF).

2.2. National project 'Community centres in Towns and Villages with Marginalised Roma Communities I. ' (**Komunitné centrá v mestách a obciach s prítomnosťou MRK I.**)

- in 2016 -2019;
- the aim: to support social inclusion and positive changes in municipalities through support of community centres and development of community work;
- activities for children and young people: preschool clubs; assistance in preparing for school and teaching; preventive activities; hobby groups, activities to support of employment or other services leading to employment etc.;
- targets: 150 centres;
- total financial volume: approx. 18 600 000 EUR (OP Human Resources, ESF).

2.3. National project '**Field social work at municipalities I'** (**Terénna sociálna práca a terénna práca v obciach s prítomnosťou marginalizovaných rómskych komúní I.**)

- in 2016 – 2019;
- the aim: to support financial literacy, employability and employment of marginalized communities, especially Roma;
- activities: personal support on the way to integration (e.g. looking for job, help with using other services and support measures etc.);
- targets: Roma/socially disadvantaged citizens of 150 towns and villages;
- total financial volume: approx. 26 500 000 EUR (OP Human Resources, ESF).

3. National project '**Support of the Selected Social Services of Crisis Intervention on the Community Level'** (**Podpora vybraných sociálnych služieb krízovej intervencie na komunitnej úrovni**)

- in 2015 -2019 by the Implementation Agency of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic;
- targeted at marginalised Roma communities and the major part of project activities involves children and young people – mostly through organisation of various programmes aimed at their preparation for school and support of their personal development;
- aim: to improve the situation of the socially excluded groups or those threatened with social exclusion through the support of professionalization of the selected social services of crisis intervention at local level (Community centres, low-threshold daily centres, low-threshold social services for children and family).
- activities: social and personal services;
- targets: approx. 980 young people
- total financial volume: approx. 20 915 000 EUR (OP Human Resources, ESF).

4. National project '**Quality of Social Services'** (**Kvalita sociálnych služieb**)

- 2019 – 2023 [implemented by the Implementation Agency of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic;
- aim: support the social inclusion of vulnerable target groups through the provision of quality social services;
- targets: approx. 1000 new and innovative social services for disadvantaged groups (including young people);
- total financial volume: approx. 3 700 000 EUR (OP Human Resources, ESF).

5. National project '**From standardization of the consulting system and prevention to inclusion and success in the labor market'** (**Štandardizáciou systému poradenstva a prevencie k inklúzii a úspešnosti na trhu práce**)

- 2019 – 2023 implemented by the Implementation Agency of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic;
- aim: contribute to the quality of processes in a multidisciplinary approach to the child and his family through the system of educational counseling and prevention
- targets: 1718 trained pedagogical and professional school employees in the following topics: social-psychological training, education in therapy, supervision of counseling activities and career counseling
- total financial volume: approx. 18 107 672,80 EUR (OP Human Resources, ESF).

Funding

All above mentioned projects and programmes were financed by the European Social Funds and by national contribution from the State Budget.

Quality assurance

Quality assurance is based on ESF rules and accepted methodologies.

4.5 Initiatives promoting social inclusion and raising awareness

Intercultural awareness

www.prijatelni.sk ("acceptable for job")/ Roma Employment Campaign - Fighting Prejudices

- May 2019 – ongoing
- [NGO Divé maky](http://divemaky.sk/) <http://divemaky.sk/>
- The campaign invites to a special (fictitious) page that would make the CV more suitable for work interview. The page would "whiten" your photo page if it is too dark and changes address or name if it evokes a Roma origin and increases the chances of being invited to a job interview.
- The aim is to point to the fact that a CV sent by a Roma candidate has 50% less chance of receiving a response.

[Deň krivých zrkadiel 2019](#)/Crooked Mirrors Day 2019

- 9th June 2019
- NGO Združenie na pomoc ľuďom s mentálnym postihom <http://www.zpmpvrs.sk/>
- the aim is to show the potential of the people with mental diseases;
- activities of the campaign taking place in capital and bigger centres of Slovakia (Bratislava, Dolný Kubín, Komárno, Košice, Malacky, Nitra, Trnava)
- presentations of products and activities of target groups.

Other on-going programmes and initiatives of non-governmental non-profit organizations

NGO	Name of the initiative/Programme	Theme	Activities
Trust Fund Telekom at Pontis Foundation	Online tlmočník (Online interpreter)	Persons with hearing impairments	Education/Training, Dialogue.

Proti prúdu (Upstream)	Nota Bene Newsletter Nota Bene Books Luggage porters	Support of homeless people	Dialogue, Training, Campaign
EDUMA, n.o. (From Emotions to Knowledge)	Online živá knižnica (Online living library)	Inclusion	Dialogue through storytelling
Unia nevidiacich a slabozrakých Slovenska (Union of blinds and partially-sighted of Slovakia)	Biela pastelka (White pastel)	Visual impairment	Regular campaign

Young people's rights

NGO	Name of the initiative/programme	Theme	Activities
OZ Equity	Som neNORMALne fér I am abnormally fair	Equity and Equality	Campaign
Nové školstvo, o.z. (New schooling)	Chceme vedieť viac (We want to know MORE)	Inclusive education	Campaign

Other programmes and initiatives of non-governmental non-profit organizations

NGO	Name of the initiative/programme	Theme	Tools/Activities
eSlovensko o.z.	Nehejtuj.sk http://nehejtuj.sk/	Cyber bullying	Campaign
Open Society Foundation	A call for humanity / Výzva k ľudskosti Tell it to my eyes / Povedz mi to do očí BUT can not hide the hate / ALE hejt neskryje	Support for migrants/refugees	Grant programme, Campaign, Dialogue

Key initiatives to safeguard democracy and prevent radicalisation leading to violent extremism

Radicalization of Youth? Its Causes and Prevention in Youth work – international conference

- March 2019
- Ministry of Education, Science, research and Sport of the Slovak Republic (organised by IUVENTA – Slovak Youth Institute);
- to create platform for learning and inspiration by sharing experiences and innovative approaches to empower young people through youth work;
- youth workers, teachers from 22 countries,

- program presented outcomes of expert groups (European Commission, Council of Europe), various researches and good practices from youth work.

Living Libraries / Živé knižnice

- ongoing
- IUVENTA – Slovak Youth Institute
- to fight prejudices among young people by allowing them to meet people from groups frequently facing discrimination in Slovak society;
- elementary and secondary schools in the regions (2018 – Bratislava, Nitra, Žilina, 2019 – Prešov, Košice, Banská Bystrica, Trenčín, 2020 – online).

Funding

Financing of activities run or covered by IUVENTA is through state budget of the MESRS. State subsidies in the field of youth work are provided on the basis of the [Act on Youth Work](#) Support and under conditions specified by the Programmes for Youth for 2014 – 2020. Other initiatives are covered by other donor sources.

Quality assurance

There is no quality assurance apart from the standard participants evaluation.

4.6 Access to quality services

No single information source for youth on opportunities for inclusion or on specific opportunities in Slovakia are available. Stand-alone services for young people in the field of housing, health, social services or financial literacy exist only occasionally.

Selected state policy programmes accessible by youth:

Housing

The major support of social inclusion of young people in the field of housing is provided on the basis of the Act on Social Services ([Zákon o sociálnych službách](#)):

The MLSAF may provide financial subsidies in order to

- Establish houses at the halfway (for persons after enforcement of a sentence; grown-ups leaving orphanages, etc.);
- Build apartments of a lower standard of living for low-income households;
- Help disadvantaged young adults from orphanages to cover their repayments of mortgages;
- Ensure social housing for physically and mentally disabled young people;
- Ensure independent living for young people experiencing replacement family care and state institutional care;
- Help young people to repay their mortgages by decreasing the interest rate during first 5 years of repayment period (covered by the Act on Banks / [Zákon o bankách](#)).

Social services

- Programme for community centres development;
- Programme for accessible care services;
- Programme for field social work;
- Provision on the specific beneficiary (Inštitút osobitného príjemcu) meaning that the state social payments provided to the most deprived persons are used to cover their

essential civilian needs; therefore not the beneficiary, but some organisation, institution or other natural person manages these social payments.

- SOS programme for young adults ([SOS program](#) pre mladých dospelých) targeted at young people living at orphanages.

Health care

- [Programme Healthy communities](#) (Zdravé komunity) aimed at field health assistants active in marginalised communities;
- National children and adolescents care programme in the Slovak Republic for 2008 – 2015 / [Národný program starostlivosti o deti a dorast v Slovenskej republike na roky 2008 – 2015](#) of the Institute for Public Health
- National Prevention Program Healthy Heart for Slovakia / [Národný program prevencie ochorení srdca a ciev - Zdravé srdce pre Slovensko - časť pre deti a dorast](#)

Financial services

The national standard of financial literacy ([Národný štandard finančnej gramotnosti](#)) was updated by the MESRS in 2014 and it is currently implemented at all school stages. This standard provides definitions of themes, competencies and sub-competencies. A [specific web portal](#) has been developed by the Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic in order to provide user-friendly information to the general public.

Provision of state services in the field of social integration of young people is closely connected to assessment of the needs of social services, social payments and compensatory aid or payments. The amount of social payments is either fixed or adjusted to the level of minimum income of a Slovak citizen by a certain percentage.

Overview of a state financial aid provided to disadvantaged young people:

- Subventions for food ([Dotácia na podporu výchovy k stravovacím návykom dieťaťa ohrozeného sociálnym vylúčením](#)) may be granted to encourage healthy eating of a child at risk of social exclusion by providing lunch or other meal at kindergarten or primary school. Subventions for school articles may be granted to a child at risk of social exclusion in order to cover expenditures spent for purchase of articles needed for education at kindergarten or primary school.
- Social scholarships ([Sociálne štipendium](#)) may be granted to students attending full-time course of study at Slovak universities. Conditions, equal for all the universities, are defined by the MESRS.
- Housing allowance ([Príspevok na bývanie](#)) may be provided to the most deprived citizens in order to cover their costs of housing.
- Protection allowance ([Ochranný príspevok](#)) for seriously disabled unemployed may be granted if the most deprived citizen is not able to earn any income.

There are several information channels offering young people the opportunities to gain information:

- [Web site IUVENTA - Slovenský inštitút mládeže](#) (Slovak Youth Institute) provides information on calls for project proposals, reports, training opportunities for young people, youth leaders and youth workers;
- [Web site Sociálna politika](#) (Social Politics) is an experiment trying to disclose to the general public the expert papers on social policy, drawn in a user-friendly way and free of charge;
- [Web site MLÁDEŽ](#) (YOUTH) is a website managed by the National Youth Council, providing information on opportunities for young people, dialogue with young people on public matters, grants, volunteering opportunities and job offers in non-profit sector;

- [Web portal InfoLib](#) includes the list of information channels for users with various kinds of disabilities;
- [PARK](#) is a television broadcast of Slovak public service broadcaster elaborating on the themes of social and societal challenges of young people.

Young people with specific needs may follow the websites of civil society organisations, as well as specialised television and radio broadcasts. These are normally targeted at the particular population as whole (e.g. Roma people, visually impaired, hearing impaired, etc.) and do not select information appropriate to young people.

Selected information channels covering up-to-date information for specific youth groups in the field of culture, education, housing, health and social support:

Roma communities	http://www.gipsytv.eu http://www.rtvsk.sk (magazín So vakeres?) http://romovia.sme.sk http://www.minv.sk/?romske-komunity-uvod
Persons with hearing impairments	http://www.myslim.sk www.efeta.sk http://www.rtvsk.sk (Television club for deaf persons, interpretation of main news into sign language) www.nepocujucedieta.sk
Persons with visual impairments	www.rtvsk.sk (commented broadcasting) https://www.skn.sk (library for blind and partially sighted) http://www.unss.sk/uzitocne-info.php
Disabled persons	http://www.sztp.sk (physically handicapped) www.socia.sk
Replacement families	www.navrat.sk http://www.anr.sk
University students	http://cezap.sk (Centre for support of students with special needs)

Information channels of ministries and other public institutions:

www.upsvar.sk	Information on social payments to disabled, unemployed, people with low income; replacement family care; etc.
www.employment.gov.sk	Support at the labour market; protection of disabled employees
www.mindop.sk	Transportation support for seriously disabled persons; state housing policy
http://www.health.gov.sk/	Preventive health examinations free of charge; thermal bath treatment for children and young people
www.socpoist.sk	Sickness benefits payments, opinion on invalidity; orphan's pensions; maternity benefits
http://www.uvzs.gov.sk	Information on health protection and hygiene

<https://www.sfrb.sk>

Housing support; mortgages for young people

Quality assurance

In case of social inclusion programmes resulting from legal provisions the standards are adopted, which need to be followed in order to obtain a state social payment. The MLSAF provides the greatest contributions to measures in the field of social inclusion. [The Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family Yearly Reports](#) include statistical data of mostly quantitative performance indicators.

Any natural or legal person has the right to request data on the basis of the Act on Free Access to Information / [Zákon o slobodnom prístupe k informáciám](#)

Quality assurance may also be initiated by lodging a complaint to any of the following [Parliamentary Committees](#):

- Constitutional and Legal Affairs Committee
- Financial and Budgetary Committee
- Economic Affairs Committee
- Agricultural and Environmental Committee
- Public Administration and Regional Development Committee
- Committee on Social Affairs
- Committee on Health
- Defence and Security Committee
- Foreign Affairs Committee
- Education, Youth, Science and Sports Committee
- Culture and Media Committee
- Human Rights and Ethnic Minorities Committee

Currently, quality is being monitored by the media, activists and broadly also by the non-governmental watch-dog organisations, such as [Fair-play Alliance](#), [League for Human Rights](#), [Transparency International Slovakia](#) which follow the scope and quality of social inclusion.

4.7 Youth work to foster social inclusion

Policy/legal framework

[The Act on Support of Youth Work](#) limits its provisions in the field of social inclusion to responsibility of local and regional governments to support, within youth work, activities of young disabled persons. Still, it represents the legal framework enabling youth organisations to use financial subsidies, acquired within the Programmes for Youth for 2014 – 2020, in favour of health protection of young people and in line with the youth work principles.

At the policy level, there are several documents adopted in relation to youth work and its capacity to foster social inclusion of young people:

- [The Slovak Youth Strategy for 2014 – 2020](#), providing that youth work should aim at searching solutions for youth unemployment, underachievement at school, social exclusion, etc.
- The Concept of Youth Work Development for 2016 – 2020 ([Konceptcia rozvoja práce s mládežou 2016 - 2020](#)), defining the youth work principles, as follows: youth work

should consider actual situation of a young person and strive to fulfil his/her needs; youth work should help young people to exercise their rights; youth work should aim at the overall life quality of young people.

Main inclusive Youth-Work programmes and target groups

Inclusive programmes in youth work have been developed at local and regional level, normally in cooperation of local youth work actors (non-governmental non-profit organisations, leisure time activities centres) with their partners representing other sectors, such as education, employment, volunteering.

National project KomPrax – Competencies for practice ([Komprax - Kompetencie pre prax](#)) was implemented by IUVENTA – Slovak Youth Institute during 2011 – 2015. The total volume of finances provided by the European Social Fund was 6 million €, out of which 2 million € were used [to finance small local projects](#) (up to 200 €) prepared by the participants within their training.

The project was aimed at quality development in youth work. As a result, the quality standards in youth work have been defined, making it possible to [verify and recognise key competencies of youth workers and informal youth leaders](#) acquired through non-formal education activities in youth work. Various education modules were developed within the project, aimed at several categories of youth workers, as well as youth leaders. All the training modules, while dealing with identification of needs and intercultural learning, included the theme 'support of young people with fewer opportunities and excluded groups of young people'. A training module for Roma youth leaders active in youth work represented a specific project activity. Prior to the development of these training modules, a study on education needs was elaborated, with participation of youth workers engaged with various target groups.

Youth work providers in the field of social inclusion for young people

In Slovakia, activities involving socially excluded young people have been developed mainly by non-governmental non-profit organisations, ensuring

- Regular activities involving young people with fewer opportunities;
- Information on the needs of young people with fewer opportunities and on access to them;

Instructions for youth leaders enabling them to advocate for interests of young people with fewer opportunities.

The Programmes for Youth for 2014 – 2020 ([Programy pre mládež 2014 - 2020](#)) represent the essential financial tool for support of youth organisations. The Programmes support such activities contributing to the achievement of goals defined by the Slovak Youth Strategy, including in the field of social inclusion of young people. Among the target groups of the Programmes, a specific priority has been given to young people with fewer opportunities – young people facing any disadvantage caused by educational, social, physical, psychological, economic, cultural reasons or by living in rural areas. It is not possible to determine the yearly financial allocation devoted to social inclusion.

Training and support for youth workers engaged in social inclusion programmes

Qualification 'youth worker' (kvalifikácia Pracovník s mládežou) has been included in the [National qualification framework](#), but it is not possible to acquire such qualification or confirmation of such qualification within the formal education system. Trainings and other support measures are available to youth workers within accredited educational activities prepared by non-governmental organisations and/or within an offer of national and international trainings in the field of youth (Erasmus+, Salto Youth, etc.).

Essential tasks in the field of youth policy implementation have been performed by IUVENTA – Slovak Youth Institute, which elaborated and adopted internal 'Strategy of inclusive approach towards customers with fewer opportunities and with specific needs' in

2013. Social inclusion became one of the priority themes for IUVENTA, which resulted in production of several [accredited educational programmes](#) and **publications on Human Rights Education**.

Financial support

The most important part of youth work has always been happening at local level – in cities, towns and villages, where young people actually live. The state financial subsidies (MESRS) are provided to such trans-regional and national youth non-governmental organisations, which register their active branches at local level. As far as other financial sources are concerned, the current system of gathering information on tax incomes and spending at regional and local levels does not allow identifying the volumes provided by municipalities for the sake of youth work supporting social inclusion. The research 'Municipalities and Youth 2015' ([Samosprávy a mládež 2015](#)) has proved the fact, that the most finances are usually provided to organise sport activities for children and young people (67 %), followed by local cultural actions (27 %). This does not exclude activities with possible aim of social inclusion of excluded groups of young people.

The most well-known public donation project supporting activities of children and young people (including structures active in youth work), often aimed at social inclusion, is 'An hour for children' ([Hodina deťom](#)) organised by Children of Slovakia Foundation.

Quality assurance

No standards for the field of social inclusion in youth work or national register on youth organizations providing such services exist in Slovakia.

4.8 Current debates and reforms

Currently, two main debates have been progressing in Slovakia:

1. The Strategy for the Gradual Development of Inclusive Education in Slovakia up to 2030 (in preparation)

[The National Program for the Development of Education and Training](#) approved by the Government of the Slovak Republic on 27 June 2018, envisions the creation of the Strategy for the Gradual Development of Inclusive Education in Slovakia. This task was assigned to the [Research Institute of Child Psychology and Pathopsychology](#) (hereinafter VUDPAP) on behalf of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic. For this purpose, VUDPAP proposed a working group in cooperation with [the Coalition for Joint Education](#) (hereinafter Inclucoalition). The working group consist of 20 experts from various fields.

2. The Strategy of the Slovak Republic for Integration of Roma communities up to 2030 (in preparation)

In July 2020, the Office of [the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the Slovak Republic for Roma Communities](#) initiated the first meeting of the Steering working Group for the preparation, revision and update of the Strategy of Slovak Republic for Integration of Roma communities up to 2030. Representatives of ministries, other central state administration bodies, self-government, academia and civil society are directly involved in the process of preparing the new strategy. Their active involvement will increase the quality of the new strategic document, which will reflect the needs of the population in Roma communities. The strategy is one basic conditions for drawing financial resources from EU funds for Roma integration in 5 key areas - housing, education, health, employment and non-discrimination.

5. PARTICIPATION

Young people's participation in public affairs and social life does not include only their right to vote and to be voted, but also activism in leisure time. The term „youth participation“ is anchored in the legislation ([Act on Youth Work Support](#)) as active involvement of youth in the process of planning, deciding and implementing of events and projects in the field of the societal and economic life ([5.1](#)).

The electoral turnout in European elections in 2019 was the lowest of all EU member states – 22,74%. Although young people's participation in the elections increased compared to 2014, their involvement in **political participation**, in general, **has been low** in the long run ([5.2](#)).

Young people's interests are represented by youth organizations, such as **Youth Council of Slovakia or Regional Youth Councils**, as well as, organizations representing **university and secondary school students** ([5.3](#)).

The greatest opportunity for young people to influence the development of legislation is **during preparation of strategic documents** by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic who is responsible for youth policy in Slovakia ([5.4](#)).

Slovakia does not have a binding document specifically dedicated to the topic of youth participation. The topic is elaborated in a separate chapter as a part of **the Strategy of the Slovak Republic for Youth for the years 2014 – 2020** ([5.5](#)).

Support for the youth organizations is provided in particular via **Programmes for Youth** (Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports of the Slovak Republic) that ensure their sustainability by contributing to the development of their infrastructure and activities with multi-annual grants ([5.6](#)).

In addition to compulsory subjects in formal education, e.g. **Civic education, School Councils** are established at primary and secondary schools and **Academic Senates** at universities as platforms for the development of competences in active participation ([5.7](#)).

Raising **awareness about political and civic participation** is mostly a domain of non-governmental organizations. There have been several initiatives, campaigns or projects addressing the topics of democratic values, intercultural dialogue or youth participation in general ([5.8](#)). Guidelines for participation of young people in the policy-making processes and for transparent public communication with young people are part of the outputs of such projects. Its implementation, as well as **e-participation** targeted specifically at young people, is still at its beginnings and depends primarily on regional/local governments and their willingness and ability to put the youth agenda among their priorities ([5.9](#)).

Youth participation will be an integral part of **the forthcoming national Youth Strategy and the new generation of Youth Programmes** for 2021-2028 ([5.10](#)).

5.1 General context

Main concepts

Young people's participation in public affairs and social life does not include only their right to vote and to be voted, but also activism in leisure time. Its assumption is young people's right to be heard and to take part in making decisions about things that affect them ([Strategy of the Slovak Republic for Youth for the Years 2014-2020](#)).

The term „youth participation“ is anchored in the legislation ([Act on Youth Work Support](#)) as active involvement of youth in the process of planning, deciding and implementing of events and projects in the field of the societal and economic life.

Institutions of representative democracy

National level

The Slovak Republic is a parliamentary democracy.

The main legislative body is the unicameral parliament – the National Council of the Slovak Republic with 150 members that are elected for four years.

The main executive body is the Government of the Slovak Republic and is appointed by the president. It consists of the head of the government – the prime minister, deputy prime ministers and representatives of 14 ministries of the Slovak Republic:

1. [Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic](#)
2. [Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic](#)
3. [Ministry of Investments, Regional Development and Informatization of the Slovak Republic](#)
4. [Ministry of Transport and Construction of the Slovak Republic](#)
5. [Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic](#)
6. [Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic](#)
7. [Ministry of Defence of the Slovak Republic](#)
8. [Ministry of Justice of the Slovak Republic](#)
9. [Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic](#)
10. [Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic](#)
11. [Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic](#)
12. [Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic](#)
13. [Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic](#)
14. [Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic](#)

The head of the state is the president who is elected for a five-year term by direct popular vote and has relatively representative role with limited powers.

The main judicial body is the Constitutional Court of Slovakia that consists of 13 members. The members of the constitutional court are appointed by the president who chooses the half of the candidates nominated by the parliament. The court resolves the constitutional issues.

Regional and local level

Slovakia is a centralised country consisting of 8 self-governing regions and around 2 900 municipalities. The representatives at the regional and local level are elected every four years. The representative institutions at the regional level are regional councils – the head of the region is a governor. The representative institutions at the local level are municipal councils – the head of the municipality is a mayor.

Elections

Participation in the elections is voluntary. A proportional electoral system is applied in Slovakia; the citizens vote on the basis of ballots, which they deliver to the ballot boxes in person or they can post them. The citizens vote in approximately 6,000 polling districts during the elections (Act on Conditions of the Exercise of Voting Rights/[Zákon o podmienkach výkonu volebného práva](#)).

People with Slovak nationality living abroad or Slovak citizens who are abroad during the election dates can use the right to vote by post. They have to send request to the local self-government office, and they will obtain all documents in advance (35 days before the election date). Currently, it is possible to vote by post only at the national parliamentary elections.

The voting right is not transferable onto another person.

5.2 Youth participation in representative democracy

Young people as voters

The citizen of the Slovak Republic can take part in elections (from the local level up to the EU-level) from the age of 18 years (Act on Association in Political Parties/[Zákon o politických stranách](#)). The same age limit must also be reached regarding participation in a referendum.

Discussions on decrease of the voters' age limit are being carried out; nevertheless the official solution of this question in the form of a specific parliamentary negotiation or a referendum is not planned within a short-term time-horizon.

Concerning young people's participation in elections no special measures exist – possibilities such as voting in a hospital or while at home treatment, voting in a prison and the like are available for them equally as for other groups of citizens.

In the parliamentary elections in 2020, the number of first-time voters (age 18 - 21) was 213 000 (the exit poll statistics). In the European elections in 2019 the participation has risen compared to the previous elections in 2014. According to the results of the Eurobarometer, the youth participation (age 18-24) has risen from 6% to 11%. Similarly, the number of young people (age 25-34) increased to 25%. The electoral turnout in European elections was the lowest of all EU member states – 22,74% (European elections 2019 in Slovakia: Results and context/[Európske voľby 2019 na Slovensku: Výsledky a súvislosti](#)).

Over the years there have been several initiatives led by the non-formal groups of students in cooperation with regional youth councils to organise students' mock elections before local, regional, national and European elections. The aim of the initiative is to help high-school students learn how to practice their voting rights. The national elections 2020 were carried out in 173 schools (60 000 students) with the turnout of 57% ([www.studentskevolby.sk/en](#)).

Young people as political representatives

Young people can become members of a political party from the age of 18 years (Act on political movements and political parties/ [Zákon o politických stranách a politických hnutiach](#)). There are, however, no official political parties' youth wings. The majority of the active political parties have their own youth organisations and their number has been recently rising together with the number of arising political parties. There is no official information available regarding the age and the number of members and in the majority of cases, people of age 15-35 can become members.

A candidate at the local and regional level must be a resident of a municipality/self-governing region who has a permanent residence in a municipality or military district belonging to the territory of the constituency in which he or she stands and who reaches the age of 18 at the latest on the day of the election. A mayor/chairman may be elected a resident of a municipality/self-governing region who reaches the age of 25 at the latest on the day of the election (Act on the Conditions of Electoral Law/[Zákon o podmienkach výkonu volebného práva](#)).

A person may be elected for a Member of the National Council of Slovak Republic if he or she is at least 21 years old on the day of elections and has a permanent residence in the Slovak Republic (Act on the Conditions of Electoral Law/[Zákon o podmienkach výkonu volebného práva](#)).

A candidate in European election can be a citizen of the Slovak Republic who reaches the age of 21 at the latest on the day of the election and has a permanent residence in the territory of the Slovak Republic or a citizen of another Member State who reaches the age of 21 at the latest on the day of the election has not been deprived of the right to be elected in the Member State of the European Union of which he or she is a citizen and has a permanent residence in the Slovak Republic.

There is no quota of seats reserved for young people by law; neither in the National Council nor on the list of candidates.

As of last national parliamentary elections in 2020, the average age of the Members of Parliament was 47. Only 9 out of 150 MPs were under 30 years old. The youngest Member was 22 years old. Officially, there are no functions within the representative assembly reserved for young people.

5.3 Youth representation bodies

Youth parliament

There is no legal framework establishing the youth parliament on a national level. The National Youth Parliament was founded in 2016 as a civic association out of student initiative. It represents the needs of the local youth parliaments on a national level. It allows for the exchange of contacts and experience between parliaments. A member of the local youth parliament can apply for membership by filling in the application supported by the proof of his/her membership in the local youth parliament; or any person who shows a serious interest in membership, if he/she receives a recommendation from a member of the National Youth Parliament. There is no set number of the members, nor is there an age limit for members. Most members are in the high school age. The parliament has been struggling to meet on a regular basis and organise activities, it was, however, involved in the process of amending the law that defines the term "youth parliament" in the legislation.

In 2019, National Parliament approved an amendment of the [Act No. 282/2008 on youth work support](#). It created the legal regulation of the youth parliament and gave municipalities the opportunity to set up a youth parliament. The composition of the youth parliament, the method of establishing the youth parliament and the role of the youth parliament is determined by the municipality. Details are to be set out in the rules of procedure of the parliaments. Representatives of the parliaments are invited to the meetings of the municipal councils where they can discuss proposals and measures of the municipality, which concern youth.

There are several active local youth parliaments in Slovakia that were founded regardless of the amended law as the youth initiatives of motivated students who want to support the youth participation in their municipalities. Their activities are not exclusively related to the political participation; they often organise various cultural, educational or social activities or events.

Youth councils and/or youth advisory boards

Youth Council of Slovakia

Youth Council of Slovakia ([Rada mládeže Slovenska](#) – RmS) was founded in 1990 as an independent non-profit organisation. The existence of the RmS is not guaranteed by any legislation.

Composition

Youth Council of Slovakia brings together national and transregional youth organisations and represents their interests. It serves as an umbrella organisation to its 25 member youth organisations, which operate on the territory of at least three districts, have a minimum of 100 members and three-quarters of their members are supposed to be younger than 30 years. They all together involve more than 60 000 children and young people.

- The supreme body is General Assembly.
- Board of Directors is the executive body of RmS, which manages the RmS' activities in the period between the sessions of the General Assembly.

- The Board of Directors consists of the Chairman and another four up to six members.
- Members of the Board of Directors are elected for three years, whereas one third of the members of the Board of Directors resign every year.
- Maximally two representatives of each member organisation can be elected in the Board of Directors.
- The age limit of the members of the Board of Directors is not set (given).
- The Board of Directors is summoned/convened according to the need.
- The Board of Directors does not carry out any special activities aimed at higher inclusiveness or accessibility (Articles of Slovak Youth Council/[Stanovy RmS](#)).

Role and responsibilities

The activity of the Youth Council of Slovakia aims to represent its member organisations, defend young people's position in the Slovak Republic and increase the quality of youth work. The Youth Council operates especially in the field of education, participation, social inclusion and volunteering.

The Youth Council of Slovakia is unofficially considered as the supreme representation of the youth. Its representatives are invited to diverse committees and expert groups. They can propose various changes and documents, comment on various acts and measures. Their decisions and conclusions are not formally binding or mandatory for the policymakers.

Funding

The Youth Council is financed from the public sources. Every year it receives a contribution – institutional support from the programmes of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic (MESRS). The Board of Directors is responsible for finances to its members, in case of a financial contribution from official grants from the public sources – to the donors.

Association of the Regional Youth Councils

AKRAM – Association of the Regional Youth Councils ([Asociácia krajských rád mládeže](#)) is another independent umbrella organisation founded in 1992 as a citizens association. Its aim is to associate and represent youth councils with regional competencies at national and international level in order to support and improve their activities, while creating space for mutual exchange of experience.

Composition

The bodies of the association are:

- General Assembly (all members of the association),
- Board of Directors (chairmen of regional youth councils),
- Chairman of the Board,
- Board of Supervisors.

Members:

- Youth Council of Žilina Region ([Rada mládeže Žilinského kraja](#))
- Youth Council of Bratislava Region ([Rada mládeže Bratislavského kraja](#))
- Youth Council of Banská Bystrica Region ([Rada mládeže Banskobystrického kraja](#))
- Youth Council of Trenčín Region ([Rada mládeže Trenčianskeho kraja](#))
- Youth Council of Trnava Region ([Rada mládeže Trnavského kraja](#))
- Youth Council of Košice Region ([Rada mládeže Košického kraja](#))

- Youth Council of Nitra Region ([NiKRAM – Nitrianska krajská rada mládeže](#))
- Youth Council of Prešov Region ([Rada mládeže Prešovského kraja](#))

The General Assembly of the Association decides on admission as a member based on a written application for membership in the Association and a written consent to the [Articles of Association](#).

Role and responsibilities

AKRAM:

- cooperates with state and regional administration in the preparation of legislation and documents related to youth work,
- defends and represents the interests of children and youth in self-governing regions,
- promotes activities of regional youth councils,
- provides services for regional youth councils, especially in the field of education, information and counselling services, publishing activities, etc.,
- conducts research on youth work,
- creates conditions for the exchange of good practices,
- takes part in national and international projects and campaigns with an impact on children and youth.

Funding

AKRAM is financed from the public sources through the programmes of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic and from its member's contributions. The Board of Directors is responsible for finances to their members and to the Ministry or other donors, in case of a financial contribution within official grants from other public sources.

Higher education student union(s)

Student Council for Higher Education of the Slovak Republic (SCHE)

Student Council for Higher Education of the Slovak Republic ([Študentská rada vysokých škôl – ŠRVŠ](#)) is established by the Act on Higher Education ([Zákon o vysokých školách](#) §107) and is the highest representative body of the university students in the Slovak Republic.

- an independent and autonomous body,
- unites representatives of all universities (public, state and private ones) – 35 universities (2020),
- the supreme body is the General Assembly of the Student Council for Higher Education, which convenes at least four times within the academic year,
- the Board of Directors convenes between the sessions of the General Assembly and the head of the Board of Directors is the Chairman,
- there are commissions (for instance the control commission, the legal commission... etc.),
- the elections to the Student Council for Higher Education are held every two years (Statute of SCHE/ [Štatút ŠRVŠ](#)).

Composition

The Board of Directors consists of the Chairman, the vice-chairman and six secretaries. Each secretary sets up a constant working group. The elections to the Board of Directors are held every two years. The Board of Directors' sessions are regular. The Board of Directors does not carry out special activities for higher inclusiveness or accessibility.

Role and responsibilities

SCHE represents their members' opinions and attitudes mostly towards the MESRS on various academic matters (poll of the members of the Accreditation Commission for universities, criteria for granting of accreditations, methodological instructions for preparation of accreditation programmes, commenting of strategic documents and legislation in the field of education etc.),

- its opinions are as binding as those of other members of the commissions and working groups,
- fosters reciprocal cooperation of university students in the Slovak Republic,
- international cooperation,
- enhancement of social conditions of university students (higher education students) such as accommodation for students/boarders, inclusion/integration of disadvantaged students etc. ([Výročná správa 2015](#)/Annual Report 2015).

Funding

Student Council for Higher Education is financed by the appropriate Act from the sources of the MESRS. The Board of Directors is responsible for finances to the aforementioned Ministry and to their members, in case of a financial contribution within official grants from other public sources – to the donors.

School student union(s)

Existing organizations representing school students are led by young people themselves, and they strongly depend on young leaders' initiative. They usually have the regional remit, or they bear a form of a youth initiative representing the interests of a particular group of students.

Slovakia's Secondary School Students Union ([Stredoškolská študentská únia Slovenska](#))

Structure

- a civic association led by young people,
- an independent organisation of superregional significance,
- a membership is open to any secondary school student over 15 years old who fills in the application for the membership,
- the supreme body of the association, the General Assembly, is convened at least once a year,
- the organisation tackles the theme "inclusiveness"; nevertheless, it does not carry out particular activities for its higher inclusivity or accessibility.

Role and responsibilities

- unites Students School Councils and defends their interests,
- organises activities within non-formal education for members of the Students School Councils (media and marketing, citizenship and activism and other),
- can give proposals and comments on measures of the local and regional self-government, as well as the state and public administration concerning mainly the youth policy, however, the organisation currently does not have the status of the official partner for policymakers.

Funding

The organisation is funded only from its member's contributions or public and/or private grants. The Executive Board of the Association is responsible for finances to their

members, in case of a financial contribution within official grants from other public sources – to the donors.

Other bodies

National initiative The Alliance of High School Students ([Aliancia stredoškóľákov](#)) was established in 2015. Most activities were carried out in 2016 – Petition for reflection of needs of secondary school students in [Act on State Administration in Education and School Self-government](#) or Petition for depoliticisation of directors of schools. Since 2020 the organisation has been working on networking of functioning student school councils and connecting them to regional student councils, from which delegates to the congress of the Alliance of High School Students will be elected.

5.4 Young people's participation in policy-making

Formal Mechanisms of Consultation

The Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic has been implementing the [Initiative for Open Governance](#) via The Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government for the Development of the Civil Society since 2011. In 2014 the Government of the Slovak Republic adopted a [manual on the involvement of public into the creation of public policies](#). The manual forms standards and at the same time, it brings methodologies of the public's more effective involvement in the creation of public policies.

According to the [Legislative Rules of the Government of the Slovak Republic](#), the submitter of a legal regulation is required to publish preliminary information on the draft in good time before the start of the drafting of a legal regulation. The report on public participation in the creation of a legal regulation is a mandatory annex to legal regulations, submitted to the inter-ministerial comment procedure (Act on the creation of legal regulations and on the Collection of Laws of the Slovak Republic/[Zákon o tvorbe právnych predpisov a o Zbierke zákonov Slovenskej republiky](#)).

Although there are no specific regulations on youth consultations across all policy areas, young people can participate in these processes as part of the general public.

Levels of consultations

Some youth consultations (designed for young people) have been continuously incorporated into the national youth policy preparation processes since 2001. The majority of consultations involve young people aged 14 up to 25 years.

The consultations on the national youth policy are organised at the national level. There are no specific guidelines from the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic (MESRS) concerning the youth consultations.

The consultations on regional and local youth policy depend on the decision of the respective regional or local governments. Since 2020, the municipalities have the option to help to set up the youth parliament in their municipality to support the youth participation in the decision-making process on the local level (Act on Youth Work Support/[Zákon o podpore práce s mládežou](#)).

Consultation method

Referring to consultations on the national youth policy organised by IUVENTA – Slovak Youth Institute on behalf of the MESRS, the methodology has been continuously developing since 2001.

A general pattern on two-level consultations with youth has been developed and applied:

- Regional meetings with young people - in order to collect young people's needs and expectations as well as their ideas on planned measures and tools followed by meetings with regional youth work and youth policy representatives.

- National working groups – young people and representatives of youth organisations or institutions working with young people are invited together with other stakeholders.

In some cases, online consultations for all involved parties are incorporated into the methodology (including young people). Online consultations are frequently used within the EU Youth Dialogue (formerly known as Structured Dialogue with Youth).

Young people are invited to consult all national-youth-policy-related themes relevant to their knowledge, experiences, age etc. Common themes are education (formal, non-formal and informal), participation, volunteering, entrepreneurship, health, well-being and youth work. Topics, such as employment and social inclusion, are more complex, and the majority of young people participating in the consultations do not have personal experience or their own opinions on possible solutions.

Regularity of consultation

Consultations with young people are not regular; they are always linked to the preparation of essential documents (strategies, evaluation, legislative acts etc.). Youth consultations (consultation with young people) were held within preparation, mid-evaluation and/or final evaluation of relevant youth policy documents:

- in 2000: National Conception on Youth Policy towards Children and Youth till 2007/[Koncepcia mládežníckej politiky do roku 2007](#),
- in 2007: [Key Areas and Action Plans of National Youth Policy 2008 – 2013](#),
- in 2008: [Act on Youth Work Support](#),
- in 2009/2010: [Youth Report 2010](#),
- in 2013/2014: [Youth Report 2014](#),
- in 2013: [Strategy of the Slovak Republic for Youth for the years 2014 – 2020](#),
- in 2012 and 2014: preparation and evaluation of a financial tool to support youth work ([Infokonzult 2012](#), [Infokonzult 2014](#)),
- in 2015: Conception of Youth Work Development 2016 - 2020/[Koncepcia rozvoja práce s mládežou 2016 - 2020](#) .
- in 2018: [Youth Report 2018](#),
- in 2019: Strategy of the Slovak Republic for Youth for the years 2021 – 2028.

Actors

Youth actors

Consultations usually involve two groups:

- Young people from youth organisations
- Young people from communities, youth development groups or school parliaments.

Youth organisations are represented by:

- Youth Council of Slovakia/[Rada mládeže Slovenska](#) - RmS
- Association of Regional Youth Councils/[Asociácia krajských rád mládeže - AKRAM](#)
- Association of Youth Information and Counseling Centers/[Združenie informačných a poradenských centier mladých - ZIPCeM](#)
- Platform of volunteer centres and organizations/[Platforma dobrovoľníckych centier a organizácií](#)

Active young people from community youth development groups or school parliaments are identified and contacted through financial schemes of the MESRS and by the National Agency of the EU Erasmus+ Programme. In the period 2011 – 2015 they were identified

also by the Thematic Youth Centres established in 7 regions (out of 8 Slovakia's regions; the Bratislava region was not involved) within implementation of two National Projects "[KomPrax](#)" and "[PRAKTIK](#)" financed from the European Social Fund. Young people were invited to participate and contribute mainly to regional consultation groups.

Specific target groups

Representatives of the specific target groups are occasionally involved in consultations, as for instance young people from rural areas during the preparation of the youth policy documents. Needs and expectations of young people with fewer opportunities are usually identified by youth workers working with specific target groups and are presented in working groups; e.g. thematic field "Social Inclusion" in Youth Strategy 2014 – 2020. Young people from migrant backgrounds have not been included yet. In 2016, the Office of the Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities started organising of local round tables with Roma youth.

Public authorities

The consultations at the national level usually involve:

- Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic as the main coordinator of youth policy preparation and implementation,
- IUVENTA - Slovak Youth Institute as the Youth Agency,
- various ministries' representatives, policies of which influence young people's lives,
- regional authority offices' representatives (self-governing regions /VUC/) engaged in the departments responsible for youth policy (the departments may vary from region to region).

Additional stakeholders

The consultations at the regional level involve various institutions' representatives, such as regional and local youth centres, regional culture centres, NGOs working (among others) also with young people (e.g. environment, sports NGOs), church groups' representatives active in the youth policy field, active teachers and so on.

Information on the extent of youth participation

Information on young people's participation is collected only by the organisers and is usually mentioned in the final policy document. Special events, at which information on youth and youth policy was presented (including the youth consultations outcomes), were Youth Report 2010, Youth Report 2014, Youth Report 2018, National Youth Conference in 2010 and National Youth Conference in 2014, National Youth Conference in 2018.

Outcomes

Main outcomes

In a relatively short history of the development of youth consultations (with young people) in Slovakia, a general pattern on expected outcomes was created.

Young people are invited to:

- express their views on the actual situation within the discussed topic at two levels: "How is it reflected in their private lives?" and "How is it reflected in communities, in which they live?";
- provide their assessment of tools and measures for youth policy and its effectiveness (concerning their age, background, competencies etc.);
- define their visions of an ideal situation (results, approaches, settings etc.);
- prioritise the goals and proposed actions as the message to the stakeholders at the national level.

Public availability of outcomes

Information on young people's involvement and the summary of consultations' outcomes is recorded in Youth Reports that are published on websites of the MESRS and IUVENTA – Slovak Youth Institute. Feedback is occasionally provided personally via e-mails to the participants (e.g. after consultations on the preparation of the national youth strategies).

Large-scale initiatives for dialogue or debate between public institutions and young people

There are no top-level or large scale initiatives for young people to increase participation in dialogues or debates with the public authorities.

5.5 National strategy to increase youth participation

Existence of a national strategy to increase young people's political and civil society participation

Youth participation is specifically elaborated in the document Proposal of the Strategy for the Support and Development of Participation of Children and Young People in Slovakia/Návrh stratégie na podporu a rozvoj participácie detí a mladých ľudí na Slovensku. The document is an output of the project Creating mechanisms for the participation of children and youth in school decision-making processes and the creation of public youth policies funded through the Operational Program Effective Public Administration and has only a recommendatory character.

The officially recognized document is the [Strategy of the Slovak Republic for Youth for the years 2014 – 2020](#)/Stratégia Slovenskej republiky pre mládež na roky 2014 – 2020, in which youth participation is covered in a separate chapter.

Scope and contents

The [Youth Strategy 2014-2020](#) defines framework objectives for the national, regional and local level.

Key objectives of the thematic field participation:

- support of innovative forms of youth participation,
- encouragement of student participation in the school environment,
- introduction of qualitative standards of youth participation,
- encouragement of youth participation by means of information and counselling,
- e-Democracy and provision of information in a comprehensible language.

The Strategy emphasises the importance of young people with fewer opportunities involvement as a horizontal priority; it does not emphasise any special groups of young people in the chapter about participation.

Responsible authority for the implementation of the strategy

The Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic (MESRS) is responsible for the coordination of the state policy towards youth within the framework of the Youth Strategy.

[Youth participation is an inter-ministerial/cross-sectoral topic.](#)

No institution is legally responsible for the fulfilment of the objectives of the Youth Strategy within the field of participation.

Monitoring and evaluation

MESRS evaluates achievement of the objectives of the Youth Strategy annually. Evaluation results are presented in [Youth Reports](#).

Sources of information for evaluation:

- thematic surveys and researches e.g. "[Self-government and youth](#)",
- opening of the COMMUNITY for Youth state grant programme of MESRS supporting surveys on self-governmental policy for the purposes of the evaluation,
- opening of the EVIDENCE about Young People grant programme of MESRS that is specifically targeted to obtain relevant and reliable information on young people through research,
- an analysis of the measures from other public-and-state institutions as well as non-governmental organisations are a part of the evaluation,
- youth consultations (with young people).

Revisions/Updates

The Youth Strategy 2014 - 2020 was formally evaluated in the middle of its implementation in 2017. Decisions on possible revisions or updates is taken by the [Inter-ministerial Working Group for the State Policy in the Field of Youth](#).

In 2019 the process of preparation of new national Youth Strategy started. Working group consists of umbrella organisations active in youth work and youth policy such as National Youth Council, regional Youth Councils, Association of Leisure-Time Activities Centres etc. Preparation is coordinated by the MESRS

5.6 Supporting youth organisations

Legal/policy framework for the functioning and development of youth organisations

Children's and youth organisations are formed under the same conditions as other civic associations in Slovakia. The citizens may establish associations, societies, unions, movements, clubs and other civic associations as well as trade unions and unite in them. An association shall start its existence upon its incorporation (registration). The conditions are defined and anchored in a special act ([Act on Associations of Citizens/Zákon o združovaní občanov](#)).

Public financial support

Most youth organisations' activities are financed from the diverse public as well as private sources, e.g.:

- public funding from the European Structural Funds, Erasmus+,
- financing from public sources at the level of subsidy mechanisms of individual ministries,
- public funding at the level of local governments,
- 2% of corporate and personal income tax,
- voluntary contributions (donations), public collections, membership fees, revenues from the NGO's own activities etc.

In 2013, the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic (MESRS) adopted Programmes for Youth for 2014 – 2020 (Programy pre mládeže na roky 2014 – 2020), national grant scheme, that provides possible regular funding for youth organisations ([1.7](#)).

List of all youth organizations supported on a yearly basis within particular programmes can be found on the [website of IUVENTA – Slovak Youth Institute](#), organization responsible for administration of the MESRS grant programmes.

The financial contribution is mostly focused on institutional support of the youth organisations, which must fulfil both, formal and quality criteria. Among these criteria you can find for instance Democratic structures and processes of the organization (e.g. members can influence the operation of the organisation etc.) The Programmes do not finance the establishment of youth facilities, where young people can meet and get involved in projects.

Since the Programmes are based on the objectives of the Youth Strategy 2014 – 2020, the new generation of the programmes is planned to be released together with the new Youth Strategy 2021 – 2028.

Initiatives to increase the diversity of participants

Youth organizations are encouraged to involve young people with fewer opportunities both in their regular and project activities through calls within the national grant scheme Programmes for Youth or Erasmus+ programme calls.

There are some non-governmental organisations that aim to empower the minorities or work towards inclusion of various disadvantaged groups. In general, the members of these groups are highly underrepresented in youth organisations ([4.5](#)).

5.7 “Learning to participate” through formal, non-formal and informal learning

Policy Framework

There is no national strategy for the field of "Learning to participate" covering the area of the formal, non-formal education and informal learning.

Formal learning

Social and civic competences are a part of the curriculum throughout the entire period of compulsory school attendance. There are two approaches:

- gaining of the competencies is integrated into diverse school-subjects (a cross-curricular approach),
- an individual educational school-subject.

On the 1st grade of primary schools ([ISCED 1](#)) the children/pupils gain these competences by means of a so-called integrated approach within several school-subjects, mostly, however, in the subjects such as Homeland learning, Ethics, Religious education (but also within other subjects).

The 2nd grade of primary schools ([ISCED 2](#)) encompasses an individual subject Civic education; nevertheless, these competencies are being also gained within the subjects such as History and Geography (but also within other subjects in line with cross-curricular approach).

Secondary schools ([ISCED 3](#)) include an individual subject called Civic education. These themes are being also tackled within subjects such as History and Geography. The other subjects contain some related themes, too.

Time allocation for an individual subject (ISCED 2 and 3A) - 1 lesson a week (approx. 33 lessons in a school year).

Within the formal education, the thematic area "The Man and the Society" (Geography, History and Citizenship education) focuses mainly on the development of the following competencies:

- social and personnel
- societal and civic/citizens' competences
- initiative and entrepreneurship
- the ability to learn to teach (how to teach)
- financial literacy

Civic education combines knowledge from several social sciences: economics, politics, philosophy, law, sociology, psychology. Pupils are to ([ISCED 3A](#)):

- understand the uniqueness of each person in society,
- form an awareness of their own identity and the identity of other people,
- accept their own personality and the personality of other people,
- respect and apply the moral principles and rules of social coexistence and take responsibility for their own opinions, behaviour and consequences of the proceedings,
- get acquainted with social, political and legal facts that form the framework of everyday life,
- be aware of the rights and obligations of a citizen of the Slovak Republic,
- respect the basic principles of democracy and tolerance,
- use appropriate means of communication to express their own thoughts, feelings, opinions and attitudes to defend their attitudes and rights adequately,
- gain respect for the cultural, religious and other differences of people and communities,
- master the basic categorical-conceptual apparatus of philosophy,
- present philosophy as a certain laboratory of human thinking and the performances of philosophers as an inspiring example of how human thinking evolved and changed over time.

One of many outputs of the national project [NP PARTI](#) is the newly created subject Public Policy in Slovakia. The subject is the result of cooperation between the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the Slovak Republic for Civil Society Development and the Faculty of Arts of Comenius University and is taught as part of the study of political science and sociology.

The course provides students with relevant knowledge on currently dominant concepts of governance, such as open governance or participatory public policy making.

Non-formal and informal learning

There are two types of structures enabling young people to participate within the Slovak educational system:

- school council at primary and secondary schools,
- academic senates at universities.

Legislative

The Act on State Administration in Education and School Self-government ([Zákon o štátnej správe v školstve a v školskej samospráve](#), §26) defines school council as an institution representing the pupils of a primary/secondary school through which pupils communicate their interests towards the headmaster and the management of the school.

The academic senate is defined in the [Act on Higher Education](#) (Zákon o vysokých školách, §7). It has at least 15 members, of which at least one third are students.

Programmes to support youth participation within school and local communities

National level

IUVENTA – Slovak Youth Institute:

- provides non-formal education for members of school councils and youth parliaments,
- provides workshops and accredited non-formal education for school councils' coordinators,
- provides accredited non-formal education focused on developing active citizenship,
- issues methodological publications on youth participation.

Youth Delegates

The Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic, together with IUVENTA - Slovak Youth Institute, the Slovak Youth Council and the Association of Regional Youth Councils, regularly announces calls for the positions of youth delegates. Slovakia currently has 3 youth delegates for the European Youth Dialogue, 2 UN youth delegates and 1 WHO youth delegate. The role of the delegates is primarily to represent the interests of Slovak youth at the global level and to raise awareness of the agendas they have chosen as key ones (Agenda 2030, human rights, active citizenship, mental health, etc.). To fulfil these goals, they organize accompanying activities (workshops, discussions, etc.) for young people from all over Slovakia during their mandate.

Regional level

In some regions more than others, [regional youth councils](#), youth centres or youth organisations provide [various activities](#) for members of school councils, youth parliaments or young people in general to encourage youth participation. These activities are mostly financed through grant scheme of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic, [Programmes for Youth](#), especially programme VOICE of youth that aims to increase the level of participation of young people and their awareness of active citizenship.

Apart from Programmes for Youth, organizations often rely on funding from the European Social Fund, the Erasmus + programme, International Visegrad Fund, various foundations or sponsors.

Examples of initiatives focusing on developing social and civic competences

Create & Control

[Create & Control](#) is an international project run by high school students for young people from countries of the Visegrad Group. The project seeks to respond to social phenomena in the region - it reacts to the rising support of extremism among young people and their feeling of not being heard in the society. It consists of competition and strategic activities that address multiple conditions necessary for the creation of a dialogue with the youth. Elements of fictional countries, model sessions of international organisations and methods of group activities are used during the competition.

Model United Nations conferences

Model United Nations is an UN simulation taking place annually in different cities across Slovakia ([Martin Model United Nations](#), [Zilina Model United Nations](#), [Aprogen Model United Nations](#), [Bratislava Model United Nations](#)). During these MUN simulations, participants become the members of the UN committees and represent the interests of the chosen country. MUN conferences provide opportunity to develop and improve the speaking, debating, and writing skills, in addition to [critical thinking](#), teamwork, and [leadership](#) while discussing about issues of global significance.

Model European Parliament and Model European Union conferences

Apart from the United Nations model conferences, young people in Slovakia also take part in the Model European Parliament conferences. Model European Parliament Slovakia is a simulation of the European Parliament for high school students. Working in one of the eight committees and representing the standpoint of their chosen country, delegates strive to agree on solutions within the committee sessions and then present these at the General Assembly. In 2020, first Model European Union conference was organised by Bringing Europeans Together Association Slovakia. MEU Bratislava 2020 was held online with participation of youth from countries of the Visegrad Group.

Open Schools

Open Schools is the programme organized by [The Open Society Foundation in Slovakia](#) since 2017. The aim of this programme is to support the democratic environment in schools and citizenship education through peer education and the work of student school boards. In the programme, the organizers focus on the work with primary-school students from various backgrounds such as the Roma. The project managed to develop quality cooperation with schools and create a model which helps not only towards the development of critical thinking, but especially enhances the interest and efforts of children and young people to participate in their school and local community.

Let's Put Our Heads Together

[Let's Put Our Heads Together](#) is a comprehensive educational program for young people aged 15-25, which aims to support a new generation of young civic activists who care about the place they live in and want to implement their ideas and have a wider impact on the local communities. The program consists of 3 trainings, a summer school, mentoring support, financial support for the implementation of projects up to 500 euros and comes with a network of similarly active young people from all over Slovakia.

Communities Friendly to Children and Young People

Project Communities Friendly to Children and Young People by [Foundation for Children of Slovakia](#) aims at strengthening the position of children and young people as citizens of their local communities, supporting their rights and promoting their participation in local issues that affect their lives. At the same time, it aims at bringing local actors – public authorities, civil society and children and young people themselves to one table to set the cooperation in order to increase the quality of life of children and young people.

Schools that change the world

[Schools that change the world](#) is a two-year training and mentoring program organized by the Institute for Active Citizenship designed primarily for teachers of social sciences at primary and secondary schools in Slovakia. The program focuses on the professional development of teachers and on the development of the competencies of their students, especially critical thinking, thinking in context, media literacy, democratic thinking, moral values, empathy, volunteering, civic engagement and responsibility. During a series of trainings, participants experience innovative forms of education first-hand, which allows them to introduce new elements more naturally in their pedagogical practice.

The Civic Education Initiative

[The Civic Education Initiative](#) was set up in 2018 as a group of 13 NGOs involved in civic education to promote quality and meaningful civic education that leads children and young people to form their own views based on proven facts, to learn in context and to build civic competences needed to maintain democracy. The organizations have joined forces to take concrete steps to better prepare children and young people for civic life. The leader of the working group is the Institute for Active Citizenship.

In 2020, The Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports of the Slovak Republic approved the proposal of the Institute for Active Citizenship for experimental verification of a new form of civic education at primary schools and high schools. For three years, the

institute will work with three schools to ensure that the civic education, as well as other subjects and activities at schools, really educate future responsible and active citizens. The supervisor of the experiment is the Faculty of Education of Comenius University in Bratislava.

Quality assurance/quality guidelines for non-formal learning

There is no universally used system of evaluation of the quality of the non-formal education in Slovakia. In 2018 a special working group was set up to work on quality standards of youth work in general ([10.8](#)). If the educational institutions choose so they can apply for the accreditation of the educational program.

For that purpose, the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports of the Slovak Republic established an Accreditation Committee in the field of youth work ([Act on Youth Work Support](#), § 7). It consists of eleven members from the ranks of experts in the field of youth work. The accreditation committee considers the application form of an educational facility and on the ground of satisfying conditions recommends the ministry to issue a confirmation on accreditation to the educational facility. The aim of accreditation of educational programs is to help the perception of youth work as an important tool for non-formal education.

When evaluating an application for accreditation, the Accreditation Committee proceeds according to the following evaluation criteria:

- educational goals of the program,
- educational plan and curriculum,
- non-formal learning in the program,
- the potential of the program,
- expertise of lecturers.

The Institute for Active Citizenship, the Open Society foundation and Youth Council of Slovakia have developed the Participation Index as one of the outputs of the project Creating mechanisms for the participation of children and youth in school decision-making processes and the public youth policy-making. It is a practical list, a self-assessment tool, that allows teachers, headmasters, youth workers or local politicians to examine the level of participation of children and young people in the [school](#) and [community](#) environments.

Educators' support

Educational programs

Educational institutions provide various accredited and non-accredited educational programs focused on the development of social and civic competences. The list of accredited educational programs is regularly updated and published on the website of [IUVENA - Slovak Youth Institute](#). Information on dates of realisations of educational programs can be found on the websites of educational institutions or on the portal for youth and youth workers www.pracasmiladezou.sk.

An accredited educational institution within the scope of youth work issues a certificate on acquired professional competence to participants after they have passed the preparation for a realisation of special activities within youth work.

Accredited educational programs are e.g:

- REFRESH – education for coordinators of school councils,
- Projekt je zmena - support of active youth participation within the local community,
- The Starter (Štartér) - training course for the ambassadors of the Structured Dialogue,
- Development of life skills/social and personal competences,
- Coordinator of child- and young-friendly communities,

- Lecturer of educational activities for youth participation,
- Leader of school council,
- SAMO - strategic planning in the field of youth work for local governments and more.

Publications

Support of the school councils – methodological materials:

- A Year with a School Council ([Miháliková et al 2011, 2020](#))
- Handbook for School Councils at Primary Schools ([Verešpejová, 2018](#))
- School councils - School of Democracy ([Štefániková, 2018](#))
- The third wave – Professional Support of the School Councils ([Bošňáková et al 2006](#))

Support of participation within self-government:

- To participate? Participate! - Textbook of Participatory Public Policy Making ([Miková et al 2020](#))
- The Reading Book for Self-governments ([Miháliková et al 2019, 2005](#))
- The Power of the Youth ([Mičicová et al 2012](#))

More publications are available at the websites of youth organisations, [IUVENTA – Slovak youth institute](#) and the [Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic](#).

5.8 Raising political awareness among young people

Information providers / counselling structures

The Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic is responsible for civic education at schools. Education on democratic rights and values is supported by several initiatives of non-profit organizations ([5.7](#)). There are organisations and institutions that provide information for young people on various topic (including information on democratic rights).

- IUVENTA – Slovak Youth Institute is the headquarter for the Slovak branch of [Eurodesk](#), which is the main source of information on European policies, mobility information and opportunities for youth;
- ZIPCeM – [Association of Information and Counselling Youth Centres, an umbrella organisation with 11 members - Information Youth Centres \(IYC/"ICM"\)](#) that provide information and counselling to young people in the regions of Slovakia.

The Information Youth Centres and the Association of Information and Counselling Youth Centres are funded from the state budget in the framework of the Programmes for Youth (Programme SERVICES for youth).

Youth-targeted information campaigns about democratic rights and democratic values

[Make decisions \(decide\) on Europe](#)

- the Centre for European Policy in cooperation with partners
- a long-term international activation project since 2016 (funded from the Erasmus+)
- meetings of young people, interactive seminars, simulation of the EU-institutions working/functioning, conference and other activities
- for secondary school students in the Slovak Republic and the Czech Republic
- the aim is to support young people's dialogue with the politicians

By one rope, Participation is not a foreign word

- ZIPCeM - Association of Information and Counselling Youth Centres
- a long-term project since 2015
- information and activation nation-wide campaign
- for pupils/students of the primary and secondary schools in larger communities and towns
- the project is a part of the national activities of the EU Youth Dialogue and supports its vision
- the meetings are aimed at the evaluation of the youth policy status based on young people's opinions and expectations; preparation of proposals/suggestions for the solutions and meeting the key-players/stakeholders
- the participants' personal responsibility for following activities as well as mentoring and assistance from so-called "ambassadors" (i.e. young activists, leaders from other towns) represent an added value

This time I'm voting

- Office of the European Parliament and Representation of the European Commission in Slovakia with partners
- 2019
- campaign to promote participation in European elections
- roadshow – various events across Slovakia
- events organised by Eurodesk multipliers under the topic "Democracy and Me" during the European Youth Week

No hate

- Youth Council of Žilina Region
- 2015 - 2016
- information campaign and non-formal education for young leaders
- aimed at secondary school students within the Žilina region
- the campaign addressed the issue of discrimination and hate speech
- the goal was to broaden young people's knowledge of their rights and their application in the practice
- the campaign later continued as a national project School without Hate/Škola bez nenávisťi (4.5)

Promoting the intercultural dialogue among young people

Living Library

- [EDUMA](#) non-profit organisation
- ongoing awareness-raising actions related to the theme "discrimination and exclusion"
- the aim is to eliminate prejudices against groups endangered by exclusion.
- online living library: personal video-stories (migrants, minorities, disabled, fosterlings/nurslings from foster homes /children's homes/ and others)

Young Roma leaders

- Divé maky non-profit organisation
- a long-term project funded from Erasmus+ and Programmes for Youth

- mentoring and non-formal educational activities for young Roma leaders
- aims to activate and advocate Roma and disadvantaged youth towards public authorities that are responsible for the preparation and implementation of programs and strategies for youth

nehejtuj.sk

- eSlovensko non-profit organisation
- multimedia initiative for elementary and secondary schools
- the aim is education through facts and emotions – encounters with people having experienced discrimination, xenophobia or bullying (minorities, disabled people, LGBT, excluded communities and other)
- [12 movies](#) (each dealing with a different theme of hatred) and a methodological handbook for teachers + DVD

[I am abNORMALLY fair](#)

- EQUITY non-profit organisation
- public campaign in 2016 that involved well-known people from sport, show-business, fashion etc.
- the aim was to point at the importance of equality and equity (equal treatment vs. equal approach) within diverse groups, often endangered by exclusion.
- video-stories of well-known people, students' contributions from the competition

[Fotoroma](#)

- The Faculty of Mass Media Communication, University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius with partners
- an international project (2016) with a Norwegian partner aimed to raise awareness of the cultural diversity of the Roma and building intercultural dialogue through photography
- study visit, workshops with talented Roma youth, public exhibitions
- publication of photographs of selected works by Roma youth and Slovak experts with short texts in Slovak, Norwegian, English and Romani.

Promoting transparent and youth-tailored public communication

The objective to strengthen the legislation or create new mechanisms enabling free access to information, accessibility of information for disabled people, children, young people and seniors,

participation of public in decision-making, as well as various forms of associating of citizens and free and independent functioning of civil society is set out in the [Strategy of Civil Society Development in Slovakia](#).

Guidelines for participation of young people in the policy-making processes and for transparent public communication with young people are part of the outputs of project such as:

- [Participation](#) - Youth Council of Slovakia in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic,
- [Creating mechanisms for the participation of children and youth in school decision-making processes and the creation of public youth policies](#) - Open Society Foundation, Youth Council of Slovakia, Institute for Active Citizenship,
- [Village youth in dialogue](#) - Association of the Regional Youth Councils.

The topic of "communication between policymakers and youth" is partly involved in several publications issued by IUVENTA – Slovak Youth Institute focused on the development of the self-governmental policy such as for instance "[Reading Book for Local Governments](#)" (Mihaliková et al, 2018), "[Power of Youth](#)" (Mičicová et al, 2012). IUVENTA also provides non-formal education for policymakers called SAMO - strategic planning in the field of youth work for local governments. Similar educational programme, Participatory public policy making, is offered by The Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the Slovak Republic for the Development of Civil Society.

5.9 E-participation

From 2017 to 2020, the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the Slovak Republic was implementing a national project Support for Partnership and Dialogue in Participatory Public Policy Making (in short NP PARTI). The project was funded by the Operational Program Effective Public Administration.

On the basis of memoranda of cooperation between the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the Slovak Republic, a public administration entity and a specific non-governmental organization, 12 pilot projects were implemented (including topics on open data and children and youth), which tested various participatory scenarios and tools for public involvement in public policy-making on national, regional, micro-regional and local level.

Selected project outputs:

- Rules of public involvement in the creation of public policies approved by the Resolution of the Government of the Slovak Republic no. 645/2014,
- more than 60 municipalities and 4 self-governing regions enabled their citizens to co-decide on the distribution of public resources through participatory budgets,
- launch of a pilot scheme for the implementation of participatory budgets at 16 secondary schools in the Trenčín Region (2019), continuing in 2020 at 12 primary schools and 95 secondary schools in the Trenčín, Bratislava and Trnava regions in cooperation with the City of Trenčín and the Open Society Foundation.

Information on public policies and opportunities for public involvement in its creation at the regional and local level is provided by local governments individually through their websites, social media or applications, which they developed for this purpose, or used available platforms such as Decidim. At the national level, citizens can comment on draft legislation through the Slov-Lex application.

When creating guidelines on e-participation young people are usually part of the overall target group. There have been, however, several initiatives/projects that enabled young people to voice their opinions such as Online Model European Union conference or UN75 Online Dialogues. Some presidents of self-governing regions/mayors invite young people to contact them directly via e-mails or forms on their websites.

5.10 Current debates and reforms

Youth Strategy and Programmes for Youth 2021 – 2028

Since 2019 the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic, together with key actors have been working on draft of the new national strategy for youth. IUVENTA – Slovak youth institute organized round table discussions in every region with young people and the representatives of the non-governmental organisations and local governments to define the needs of young people in the current context and develop the Youth Strategy 2021 – 2028. The strategy will be published in 2021 and is expected to include the topic of participation.

At the same time, a new generation of the Programmes for Youth grant scheme is being prepared, which should also include the Voice of Youth programme aimed at supporting youth participation.

Support for Partnership and Dialogue in Participatory Public Policy Making

The Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the Slovak Republic for the Development of Civil Society continues with the implementation of the national project Support for Partnership and Dialogue in Participatory Public Policy Making II from June 2020 to June 2023. The project builds on the outputs from part 1, [NP PARTI](#), which was implemented from April 2017 to June 2020. Its main theme is capacity building for public participation and participatory public policy making.

6. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Based on the findings of the survey [“To dá rozum”](#) (*It makes sense*) concluded in 2020, the education system in Slovakia does not sufficiently respond to the diversity of children's educational needs, which has a negative impact especially on some groups of children (children with disabilities or children from excluded Roma communities), who are not able to obtain quality education and are systematically excluded. The high proportion of children in segregated schools and classes for students with the same or similar type of disadvantage is diametrically different than international commitments and trends aimed at promoting the education for all children in their environment. This trend leads to reduction of interaction of these children with the rest of society, which also increases the likelihood of their future exclusion from the labour market or society.

On the other hand, a large group of students, who need additional support for various reasons, do not receive it due to the set criteria.

According to the findings of the study *It makes sense*, the education system preparing future teachers succeeds in fulfilling this goal only to a limited extent. Although the professional development system could to some extent compensate for shortcomings in teacher training, the findings of the project revealed various doubts about the extent to which this system really contributes to acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills for quality teaching and other pedagogical and professional staff in education.

The development of soft skills, critical thinking, creativity, but also cooperation or ethical behavior and civic engagement is not systematic and is a priority for only a small proportion of schools. The focus on the acquisition of isolated knowledge is also supported by the teaching methods used, in which the pupil or student is mostly a passive recipient of information. Insufficient support for the development of skills that will enable pupils and students to adopt strategies that support learning, communicate, and collaborate with other people, be open to change and cope well with change, solve various types of problems, but also be engaged citizens with ethical behavior, can be an obstacle to a full personal, civic and work life. Not only isolated knowledge that one can recall from memory, but also different types of skills or personal prerequisites are a must for creating a vision of one's own life and finding ways to fulfil it. It is for this reason that the content, teaching methods and assessment of acquired knowledge and skills should be changed to support the development of personality comprehensively and with that enable student to live a full life.

It is not possible to think about the problems and change education system without considering demographic trends within the population development of children and pupils at individual levels of education. The trend analysis has shown that the student population will decline rather than increase, and this will also affect school management processes as well as classroom teaching. A smaller number of students does not necessarily lead to reduction in educational institutions but may lead to a more fundamental change. Schools can be more open to vulnerable groups. Different trends in individual regions also refer to

the need to create an educational policy that will be sufficiently sensitive to the needs of individual regions.

Young people in Slovakia do not like the fact that their schools does not prepare them for a practical life, they **lack the support of critical thinking and civic activism**, education in the field of financial literacy or presentation skills. 59% of young people from marginalized Roma communities **end their education without achieving lower secondary education** ([6.1](#)). This is despite the fact that there are many tools and measures to support children and youth from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, children with learning disabilities etc. ([6.3](#), [6.6](#)). According to the study *It makes sense*, 59% of young Roma students leaved education system before the age 16.

Since the adoption of Strategy for Lifelong Learning 2011, several key actions have been implemented **to recognize the outcomes of non-formal learning** at national level - National System of Qualifications, National Qualifications Framework ([6.4](#)). Significant initiatives were implemented also in the field of **non-formal learning in youth work** ([6.9](#)). Youth work was also the most effective platform for the development of innovation and entrepreneurship, particularly through the activities of the ESF National Project **KOMPRAX – Competences for Practice** ([6.7](#), [4.7](#)).

Media Literacy education has become more prominent in the education system since 2009. International Centre for Media Literacy was created at the University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, which integrates various independent projects and serves as a knowledge and education centre for schools, non-governmental organizations and general public ([6.8](#)).

6.1 General context

Main trends in young people's participation in education and training

Young people in Slovakia regularly express their dissatisfaction with the quality of education and training. These shortages were identified in the framework of [the Structured Dialogue with Youth](#) in 2016:

- the methodology and way of functioning of the education system do not correspond to the current time and needs of young people,
- there is no support for the development of key skills such as critical thinking and active commitment to their surroundings and community,
- the education system does not provide enough practical skills as for example financial literacy, presentation skills and similar,
- foreign mobility is only opened for "privileged" students.

The problem of early drop-out in education and training in Slovakia is present mainly among children and young people from marginalized Roma communities. As many as 18% of Roma finish the compulsory education period without obtaining lower secondary education, e.g. without proper completion of elementary school. About a tenth of the population of the 16-26 year-old [Roma is going to end their education pathway early](#), without diploma. According to the study *It makes sense*, 59% of young Roma students leaved education system before the age 16.

Foreign mobility of young people is mainly supported through the [EU Erasmus + program](#).

Since March 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, schools in Slovak Republic had to adapt to the distance learning. According to the results of the [survey](#) on the state of **distance learning** in school year 2019/2020 conducted by MESRS (the Institute of Education Policy), the schools started the transition to distance learning most often within one week and were generally able to provide at least a partial replacement for regular teaching for most of their students - for example, it was estimated that almost 565,000 students had

access to distance learning (81.5% of the pupil population). According to recalculations based on principal estimates and the estimates of class teachers 52,000 primary and secondary school students were not involved in distance learning.

According to the latest [EU Youth Dialogue](#) (2019-2020), 44% of young people does not agree with the statement that all young people have the same opportunities for developing their skills and gaining the experience they need to enter the labour market. 75% of young respondents consider access to quality education as one of the important elements for quality of life in the rural areas.

Organisation of the education and training system

Compulsory school attendance in Slovakia is ten years long, starting at the age of 6 and lasting up to end of the school year in which the pupil reaches the age of 16 ([the "Educational Act"](#)).

Information on formal education levels in Slovakia is available on [the Eurydice website](#).

Main concepts

Non-formal education is defined in Slovakia only within the framework of [the Act on Youth Work Support](#):

- non-formal education in the field of youth work is the further education of young people, young leaders, youth leaders and youth workers organized by educational entities in order to acquire new knowledge, practical experience and skills necessary for working with youth, enabling its participants to complement, expand and deepen their education.

The Educational Act defines concepts related to education

Of disadvantaged groups of children and young people:

- *a special educational need* is the requirement to modify the conditions, content, forms, methods and approaches in education and training for the child or pupil that arise from his or her health disadvantage or talent or its growth in a socially disadvantaged environment. These adjustments are necessary to develop the abilities or personality of a child or pupil and to achieve an adequate level of education and adequate inclusion in society,
- *pupil with special educational needs* is an individual who has diagnosed special educational needs. These needs are diagnosed by institution for educational counselling and prevention.

6.2 Administration and governance

Cross-sectorial cooperation

The Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport is the co-ordinator of creation and implementation of policies towards young people.

[Inter-ministerial working group for state policy in the field of youth](#) serves as a platform for coordination of youth policies. ([1.5](#)).

[Committee for Children and Youth](#) is another mechanism of cross-sectorial cooperation, but it is coordinated by MLSAF.

Representatives of MESRS act as members of different working groups in relation to policies in [the field of culture](#), [health](#) and others.

Governance

Governance of education and training system in Slovakia is managed at the state and self-government level (local and regional).

1. National level

[Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic](#) (MESRS) is responsible for creation and implementation of the state policy for:

- kindergartens,
- elementary schools,
- secondary schools,
- universities and institutions for higher education,
- school facilities,
- life-long learning,
- science and technology,
- state care for youth and sport.

[The Inspectorate of Education of the Slovak Republic](#) fulfils the function of the state control.

Institutions of the MESRS, responsible for individual areas of state policy in the field of education:

- State Institute for Vocational Training (Štátny inštitút odborného vzdelávania - [ŠIOV](#)): management of secondary vocational schools, creation of educational projects, provision of professional and pedagogical and educational activities and others.
- National Institute for Life-long Learning (Národný ústav celoživotného vzdelávania - [NÚCŽV](#)): monitoring and forecasting of training needs, the creation of tools, networks of advisory services and a network for the recognition of further education and others.
- Institution for Teachers' Education and Training ([Metodicko-pedagogické centrum - MPC](#)): methodological activities and further education of pedagogues and professional staff.
- [National Institute for Education](#) (Štátny pedagogický inštitút - ŠPÚ): development of curricula, provide the methodological and professional service for schools, promote innovative practices into the education system.
- [IUVENTA – Slovak Youth Institute](#) (IUVENTA - Slovenský inštitút mládeže): youth work outside of formal education system and a family and youth policies.
- [National Institute for Certified Educational Measurements](#) (Národný ústav certifikovaných meraní vzdelávania - NÚCEM): content and organisation of secondary school graduation, implementation of certified educational measurements at national level, preparation of international measurements in accordance with programmes where the Slovak Republic participates and others.
- [The list of the other institutions of MESRS](#).

Other important stakeholders are also involved in making of the education policy:

- legitimate representatives of various expert and professional groups are members of working groups and advisory structures:

- [Slovak Teachers' Chamber](#): professional voluntary association of teachers.
- Association of Centres of leisure time activities ([Asociácia centier voľného času SR](#) - ACVC SR): associates the employees of Centres of leisure time activities (youth work).
- Civic Association New Schooling/[Nové školstvo](#): reform of the education system in Slovakia.
- [Youth Council of Slovakia](#): represents the interests of NGOs that work with children and youth;

- [Student Council for Higher Education of the Slovak Republic](#) represents the interests [of students from universities](#);
- [Association of the Information and Counselling Youth Centres in the Slovak Republic](#): information and advisory services for young people.
- [Platform of Volunteer Centres and Organisations](#): support for volunteering in extracurricular activities, education and [volunteer education within the curriculum](#) and others.

2. Regional and local level

Municipalities have the competence to set up and cancel schools and schools facilities([Act on State Administration in Education and School Self-government](#)):

- elementary schools
- elementary art schools,
- kindergartens,
- school clubs for children,
- youth centres/centres of leisure time activities,
- school canteens,
- language schools as a part of elementary schools,
- centres for school services,
- school dormitories.

The Offices of Self-governing Regions have the competence to set up and cancel

- secondary schools,
- elementary art schools,
- language schools except those at elementary schools,
- school dormitories,
- school canteens,
- centres for school services,
- schools in nature,
- youth centers/centres of leisure time activities with the territorial jurisdiction of the self-governing region

Self-governance at the school level is managed by:

- Council of the school or council of the school facility - initiative and advisory bodies to promote the interests of pupils, parents, teachers and others.
- Municipality school council – in municipalities where there are at least three school districts
- Territorial school council – at the level of self-governing region.
- Student school council - authority to represent pupils and their interests in relation to school management.

6.3 Preventing early leaving from education and training (ELET)

National strategy

There is no ELET-related strategy at national level. This is due to the low [number of early school leavers in Slovakia \(6.9%\) compared to the EU average \(12.7%\)](#).

Partly, the ELET topic is dealt within the [Strategy of the Slovak Republic for Roma Inclusion 2020](#) as well as in the [Updated Action Plans of the Slovak Republic's Strategy for Roma Integration for period 2019-2020](#) which states: Increase the share of pupils from Roma communities who will receive lower secondary education during compulsory schooling attendance, in the event of early termination of compulsory schooling, increase the availability of effective second chance programs.

Within the age range of 20-64, 75% of the majority population achieved the secondary education as the highest level of education. Among Roma population, this share is only 18%.

Action plans were prepared by [the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the Slovak Republic for Roma Communities](#).

The implementation of measures in the field of education is managed by MESRS, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family and other institutions.

Monitoring of the implementation of the strategy is ensured by the Office of the Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities.

Global goal for the field of Education:

- reduce differences in educational attainment among Roma compared to the average of the population by improving access to education for children from marginalised Roma communities /pupils from a socially disadvantaged environment to quality education at all levels of education.

Selected planned measures:

- increasing the participation of Roma children in pre-primary education,
- support for variable early childcare programmes,
- support for a full-day education and training system,
- second chance schools (termination of education by alternative forms),
- increasing financial support to schools where there is a higher proportion of pupils from a socially disadvantaged environment - in particular support for pedagogues and pedagogical assistants,
- to promote the smooth transition of pupils to secondary education,
- providing scholarships,
- education in the Romani language,
- qualified and sensitive diagnostics of Roma pupils atc.

Slovakia is one of 17 European countries in which the ELET in the population aged 18 to 24 is below 10%. The fulfillment of the EU 2020 strategic goal seems to be under control. However, the upward trend in 2009-2017 is worrying. Although there was a slight decline in 2018, according to forecasts, Slovakia may not reach the target in the end. The problem of early school leaving affects some regions more and some less. This is a phenomenon linked to poverty and social exclusion. The highest incidence of such cases can be expected where there is the highest rate of poverty and unemployment. Therefore, the worst situation is in the Košice, Prešov and Banská Bystrica regions, where the largest number of Roma live. As confirmed by the statements of the respondents in the interviews within

the study It makes sense, the problem of ELET is largely related to Roma pupils from excluded Roma localities.

According to the study It makes sense, the most effective strategy and prevention of ELET is the opportunity to start the educational process on the same starting line as one's peers. An important step is the creation of accessible and high-quality early childhood education and care programs. It has been shown that children's participation in these programs increases their chances of school success and increases the likelihood of graduating from high school. Unfortunately, this prevention is not effective enough in Slovakia. Proof of this is the absence of early care programs for children under 3 years, which come from socially excluded localities. The training of these children in kindergartens is also alarmingly low. In the school year 2017/2018, only 31.7% of Roma children aged 3 - 5, living in socially excluded localities attended kindergartens.

Formal education: main policy measures on ELET

No measures are created specifically aimed at the issues related to ELET.

Addressing ELET through non-formal and informal learning and quality youth work

There are no specific measures in Slovakia to address ELET issues through non-formal education and informal learning and quality youth work.

Cross-sector coordination and monitoring of ELET interventions

There is no cross-sectoral cooperation in the respective field in Slovakia.

6.4 Validation of non-formal and informal learning

Arrangements for the validation of non-formal and informal learning

An overview of the system for evaluating the results of non-formal education in Slovakia is available on the [Eurydice website](#).

Academic validation in the context of non-formal education and informal learning.

[National Qualification Framework in the Slovak Republic](#) and [the Slovak Qualifications Framework](#) are one of the outputs of the project „[Creation of National qualifications system](#)“ (ESF, 2013 – 2015).

[National Qualifications System](#) contains 1,000 qualifications that have a defined qualification standard (knowledge, skills, competencies), evaluation standard and methodological guidelines.

[Strategy for Lifelong Learning 2011](#) and [Action Plan for Lifelong Learning 2011](#) are the basic frameworks for validating the results of non-formal education in Slovakia. The Strategy is being updated in 2021.

MESRS has established [Information system for Further Education](#).

- eligible institutions for verifying professional competences in the framework of individual qualifications
- currently there are 29 qualifications.

Validation of the results of non-formal education in youth work

Competencies acquired in the youth work are confirmed in the framework of [the Act on Youth Work Support](#).

The responsible institution is the MESRS through the Accreditation Committee for Youth Work ([Akreditačná komisia pre špecializované činnosti v práci s mládežou](#)).

Accredited educational establishments issue a certificate of acquired professional competence for the participants in the educational programs, upon successful completion of the examination.

Professional competence to perform specialized activities in the field of youth work is a set of expert knowledge, skills and habits obtained by study at an educational establishment or by a professional practice

The target groups of non-formal education programs include youth workers, youth leaders and young leaders.

Information and guidance

There are various networks in Slovakia that provide information and advice on lifelong learning (including validation of non-formal education and informal learning):

- a network of advisors at the Information and Counselling Centres at the Offices of Labour, Social Affairs and Family
- career counsellors at secondary vocational schools trained under the National ESF project "Vocational Education Development")
- tutors at the Counselling Centres for Adults ([Poradenské centrá pre dospelých](#)) set up by the [National Institute of Lifelong Learning in the Slovak Republic](#) (Národný ústav celoživotného vzdelávania).
- employees of Information Centers for Youth e.g. [in Banská Bystrica](#).

Quality assurance

[National Qualifications System](#) is the basis for assessing the quality of competences acquired in the process of non-formal education and informal learning.

- a public register of 1000 qualifying cards with a description of qualification and evaluation standards,
- qualification and evaluation standards will allow comparison of learning outcomes achieved through different learning pathways,
- facilitate comparisons of qualification levels in the Slovak Republic with other EU countries,
- the links between formal and non-formal education,
- qualifications in the system are described in a form of standardized learning outcomes.

More information on quality assurance can be found on [Eurydice portal](#).

6.5 Cross-border learning mobility

Policy framework

The [Strategy of the Slovak Republic for Youth 2014 – 2020](#) underlines importance of youth mobility.

Strategic goal 2 in Youth and the World section: "Recognizing the benefits of mobility"

- promote and recognize the benefits of youth mobility and mobility of youth workers and develop international cooperation to promote the transfer of know-how from other countries, increase the quality of youth work, become aware of the link between local action and its global impact

Comprehensive information on the possibilities of Slovak students to study abroad (including scholarships provided by the MESRS or the Ministry of Education of the other partner country) is provided by the [Slovak Academic Information Agency](#) SAIA.

More information about the support of international mobility in Slovakia:

- [Eurydice](#)
- [Mobility Scoreboard platform for both higher education and initial vocational education and training](#)
- [Cedefop platform for IVET indicators](#)

Main cross-border mobility programmes for students in formal education

[Erasmus+ programme](#) is the most important tool to promote learning mobility in Slovakia.

- the part of the program dedicated to Education and Training is administered by the [Slovak Academic Association for International Cooperation](#) (SAAIC).

Within the framework of Vocational Education and Training:

- Internship for pupils 2 weeks to 12 months
- in a business compaby or other workplace (e.g., in a public or non-governmental organization)
- in a vocational school with practical training in the partner company

The grant covers all costs, including language support, special needs and extra costs.

Within the framework of University studies:

- Studying abroad
- study at a university abroad over a period of 3-12 months,
- full Master's degree study abroad,
- Internships for students - a practice for students in a company abroad in the length of 2-12 months

The grant covers life and travel expenses.

[National Scholarship program of the Slovak Republic](#)

- students 3-10 months at university abroad
- PhD students from 1-10 months at a university or research institute abroad
- Post PhD studies 3-6 months at a college or research establishment abroad

The programme is open to students from Slovakia as well as from abroad.

The grant covers life and travel expenses.

[Visegrad Scholarship Programme](#)

- support for Master and Doctoral Studies in the V4 countries (Czech Republic, Poland, Slovak Republic and Hungary), the Western Balkans and the Eastern Partnership

The grant covers the student's cost of living, the possibility of requesting reimbursement of travel costs.

[Central European exchange programme for university studies \(CEEPUS\)](#)

- supports academic mobility in Central, Eastern and South-eastern Europe.
- short-term stays for students and doctoral students including the elaboration of bachelor, diploma, or dissertation work (1 - 2 months),

- lecture and research stays for university teachers (1 month).

The programme is intended for candidates from Slovakia as well as foreigners.

The grant covers the student's cost of living, the possibility of reimbursement of travel costs on the request.

Action Austria – Slovakia ([Akcia Rakúsko- Slovensko](#)) cooperation in science and education:

- bilateral program to promote cooperation in the field of higher education, science and research
- joint financing of the MESRS and the Federal Ministry for Science, Research and Economy of the Republic of Austria

Scholarships:

- for students working on diploma theses 1 - 3 months,
- PhD students 3 - 6 months,
- Post-PhD students 3 - 6 months,
- Short-term stays max. 3 days,
- Summer language course

The grant usually covers subsistence and living costs. In some cases, for language courses, participants pay travel expenses themselves.

Promoting mobility in the context of non-formal learning, and of youth work

At national level, there is no mobility promotion program in the given area.

The most important tool for promoting mobility in the context of non-formal education and youth work is the [EU Erasmus + Youth and Sports](#).

- administration is managed by [IUVENTA - Slovak Youth Institute](#).

Quality assurance

At national level, there is no quality assurance system for learning mobility outside the Erasmus + regulations.

6.6 Social inclusion through education and training

Educational support

Target groups

The "Educational Act" defines the following categories of children with [so called special educational needs](#):

- children / pupils with health disabilities
- children / pupils with disabilities
- children / pupils sick or physically weakened
- children / pupils with developmental disorders
- children / pupils with behavioural disorder
- children / pupils from a socially disadvantaged environment
- talented children / pupils

Measures to strengthen social inclusion by type of special educational needs:*Education of children / pupils with health disabilities takes place:*

- in special schools
- in special classes
- in classes or educational groups along with other children / pupils

Education of children / pupils with health disabilities is done through:

- special educational programs
- individual education programs that respect special educational needs.

Special measures taken during the educational process:

- involvement of teachers 'assistants,
- special learning and compensatory aids,
- textbooks and specially adapted texts,
- the school provides services free of charge.

Education of talented children / pupils is taking place:

- in schools with a focus on the development of intellectual talent,
- in schools focusing on the development of artistic talent,
- in schools with a focus on the development of sport talent.

Education of children / pupils from socially disadvantaged environment:

Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport offers financial contribution for:

- wage or salary of teacher's assistants
- equipment - didactic techniques and teaching aids
- participation of pupils in activities such as trips, excursions, language courses, sports training, schools in nature and other activities
- education and training of pupils in specialized classes
- prevention the transmission of contagious diseases
- an extra charge for working with pupils from a socially disadvantaged environment

School facilities for educational counselling and prevention carry out:

- psychological services,
- pedagogical services,
- special pedagogical activities, including speech therapy and medical-pedagogical activities
- social activity aimed at optimizing the educational, educational, psychological, social and career development of children from birth to completion of vocational training

Advisory services are also provided to legal guardians of children and pedagogical staff.

All measures are funded from the state budget through the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic.

It is important to state that the "Educational Act" will be amended in 2021 (as well as the Act on pedagogical and professional staff).

MESRS is preparing the [Strategy](#) on inclusive approach in education. For this purpose, for the first time in Slovak history, a separate department of inclusive education was established at the MESRS.

More information [Eurydice](#): Special Education Needs Provision within Mainstream Education in Slovak Republic.

Education of school staff is provided by [the Institution for Teachers' Education and Training](#) through educational programs aimed at promoting inclusive education such as:

- Creation of individual educational programs
- Development of competences of a pedagogical employee for work with pupils with special educational needs in vocational training
- Components of systematic school development planning in the context of the creation of an inclusive environment
- Innovative education in the field of inclusive education for children from marginalized Roma communities.

The largest financial instrument to support non-formal education with the priority of supporting disadvantaged groups is the [Programmes for Youth for the years 2014 – 2020 by MESRS](#).

Subsidies are primarily allocated to activities that support young people with fewer opportunities, e.g. young people who are disadvantaged by educational, social, physical, psychological, economic, cultural reasons or because they live in remote areas.

[The Centre for Inclusive Education](#) was authorized by the MESRS to provide innovative education to pedagogical and professional schools staff in the field of inclusion.

Social cohesion and equal opportunities

The topic of social cohesion in formal education

Education in the field of social cohesion and equal opportunities is part of the Citizenship education curriculum (ISCED 3A) and Ethics (ISCED [1](#), 2 and 3).

Integrated theme Multicultural education is an obligatory part of higher secondary education.

Its aim is to promote respect for cultural diversity within formal education.

Multicultural education can take place in form of:

- an integrated part of suitable subjects
- separate subject
- project,
- course.

The choice of how and when to implement integrated themes is the responsibility of each school.

An indispensable condition for efficiency and informal implementation of the topic is the use of activating, interactive learning methods.

Preparation of teachers and youth workers

[Institution for Teachers' Education and Training](#) prepares teachers through special trainings such as:

- Development of competences of the teaching staff in the field of prevention of extremism
- Using multicultural education against prejudice and racism

[National Institute for Education](#) prepares training programmes for teachers to promote inclusive education:

- [*Intercultural education in elementary school with pupils from Roma communities implemented in 2017*](#). Training is continuation of project co-financed by the Financial Mechanism of the European Economic Area and the State Budget of the Slovak Republic *Innovative education for primary school teachers in order to increase their intercultural competences in the educational process of Roma pupils (2013-2016)*.

Erasmus+ [Educating teachers in the area of inclusion of children of foreigners](#) (2016 - 2018). The main objective of the project is the creation of a methodological framework supporting teachers in the educational process and the inclusion of children of foreigners in schools and school facilities in the Slovak Republic, the Czech Republic, Italy and Greece.

Open call: [Regional and multicultural education for pupils belonging to national minorities 2017](#). Call of MESRS to support multicultural education and global development projects. [12 supported projects in 2017](#) amounting to 20 790 €

National project financed from [ESF "Praktik" \(2013 -2015\)](#) has prepared the Thematic Education Program "The World Is Diversified - Supporting and Developing Education for Citizenship and Multiculturalism through the Experience", which supported the development of competences of youth workers and youth leaders in multicultural education.

The development of the competencies of youth leaders and youth workers in this area was also supported by [ESF project "KomPrax"](#) through advanced training:

- Methods and techniques of work with disadvantaged youth groups
- Mediation skills, self-advocacy and protection against discrimination

IUVENTA - The Slovak Youth Institute also provides [some of these trainings in 2017](#) for new youth workers.

Other examples of activities to promote social cohesion of NGO also in part [4.5 Initiatives Promoting Social Inclusion and Raising Awareness](#) and [4.7 Youth work to foster social inclusion](#).

6.7 Skills for innovation

Innovation in formal education

This area is not fully covered in Slovakia by any specific subject in formal education.

The integrated theme Project creation and presentation skills is a compulsory part of the [State educational programme for higher secondary education ISCED 3A](#) develops some competencies supporting innovation skills.

The goal of this integrated theme:

- learn about self-management, team management, creating the work schedule,
- get the necessary information, process them,
- look for problems that need to be addressed, name them appropriately,
- hypothesis creation, verification, and others.

Fostering innovation through non-formal and informal learning and youth work

[National ESF project Komprax](#) by IUVENTA - Slovak Youth Institute in 2011-2015, was the largest national initiative to support non-formal education in youth work.

Most of the children and youth organizations supported by the [Programmes for Youth](#) of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic support innovation skills in their work.

However, there is no formal monitoring of the impact of these organizations' activities on the development of individual competencies. Activities of the [Slovak Debate Association](#) are an example how to support critical thinking, problem solving, argumentation, etc. Association organizes discussion clubs at primary, secondary and higher education institutions and other activities, as for example [Summer Academy](#).

6.8 Media literacy and safe use of new media

National strategy

Conception of Media Literacy Education in the Context of Lifelong Learning ([Konceptcia mediálnej výchovy v kontexte celoživotného vzdelávania](#))

- approved by the Government of the Slovak Republic in 2009 without time restriction.

The goals of Conception of Media Literacy Education:

- increasing the media literacy of all age groups of the population,
- updating media literacy competences, responsible and critical access to media,
- efficient use of media and new communication technologies,
- teach individuals "learning to learn" to use the media and new means of communication in favour of their personal and professional growth,
- protecting children and adolescents from the threats posed by media and new communication technologies in the content offer or the way of communication,
- the protection of specific groups (specific groups of adult population, seniors) from content and services that might pose a threat and those who can't evaluate the threat due the inadequacy of media literacy,
- to prevent forms of generational "communication and information lag" (parents, teachers, specific population groups, seniors, etc.),
- to prevent any form of official exclusion due to a lack of media literacy.

Target groups: children, pupils and adults.

Competencies within the state administration in the field of media literacy education are reallocated between the resorts of culture and education.

Important subjects of media literacy education and their competencies:

- Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic - control of fulfilment of tasks and effectiveness of media literacy education,
- International Centre for Media Literacy ([Centrum mediálnej gramotnosti](#)) established by the [Faculty of Mass Media Communication](#) of University of Cyril and Methodius in Trnava
- Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports of the Slovak Republic - media literacy education in the field of formal education, accreditation of programs, education of pedagogues and others.
- colleges, universities - teacher education, conceptual activities, research,
- regulatory authorities - evaluation of the development and regulation systems in the media field with a focus on the protection of minors from specific media content,
- [Slovak Audiovisual Fund](#) - supporting activities,
- public media - production of programs, media education projects and others,
- church, civic associations, independent experts - project creation and implementation, education, research and others,

- wide public, target groups, parents - participatory activities such as declaring needs, suggestions, reporting illegal content and services and others,.

The media education assessment in practice is realized by the International Centre for Media Literacy, for example [Media and Information Literacy Policies in Slovakia](#).

Media literacy and online safety through formal education

Media literacy education

- is an integrated theme within the State Educational Program for Primary and Secondary Schools, including vocational education,
- can be taught in various learning areas such as language and communication, art and culture, mathematics and work with information, man and values, man and society,
- according to the decision and the possibilities of the school, media literacy education can also be a separate subject, course or other school activity (e.g. short-term school campaign).

[Topics of integrated media literacy education in ISCED 1](#) (examples)

- computer and Internet – understanding of risks, etc.,
- the reliability of advertising, etc.

[Topics of integrated media literacy education in ISCED 2](#) (examples)

- media reality and its effects on the personality
- Boulevard (yellow press) and serious media
- Manipulation in media, etc.

[Topics of integrated media literacy education in ISCED 3](#) (examples)

- critical and active use of media and their products
- specifics of current media
- media impact on the life of the individual and society, public opinion, media and their relations to politics (linking media content with politics)
- the use of new media, the danger of abuse and effective protection, and others.

Goals of media literacy education ISCED 3 for vocational training schools are visible in the defined key competences of the graduate such as the ability to interactively use the knowledge, information and communication technologies, communicate in the state and mother tongue.

Vocational education graduate should know:

- to identify, search, sort and process various information and information resources,
- to assess the credibility of various information sources,
- to critically evaluate the information obtained,
- to formulate, observe, sort and measure hypotheses,
- to verify and interpret the data obtained, etc.

Training of teachers in media literacy education:

- Institution for Teachers' Education and Training e.g.
- Faculty of Mass Media Communication of University of Cyril and Methodius in Trnava

Promoting media literacy and online safety through non formal and informal learning

- Programmes for Youth of Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport (MESRS)

- Public and opinion-forming media
- Activities of NGOs, non-profit organizations, foundations and others

Public and opinion-forming media

Radio and television of Slovakia (RTVS) 2010:

Media spies ([Mediálni špióni](#)) - 40 parts cycle focused on media literacy education for young people with their direct participation.

Activities of NGOs, non-profit organizations, foundations and others

NGO ŽABKY

- accredited educational programs for pupils, pedagogues,
- educational materials What I know about the media (for pupils) ([Čo všetko viem o médiách - žiak](#)), Media Literacy Education through Game for Teachers ([Mediálna výchova hrou pre učiteľov](#)), Media Education through Game for parents ([Mediálna výchova hrou pre rodičov](#)).

Salesian Media School

- accredited educational program.

Portal detinane.sk (Children on Internet)

- Orange Slovakia
- a project focusing on children's safety when using the Internet
- various educational and advisory materials for children and adolescents, parents and teachers.

Portal Family and media

- Catholic University in Ružomberok.
- The issue of parental media education.

Raising awareness about the risks posed by new media

eSlovensko (http://www.eslovensko.sk/start_en.htm)

- the leading non-profit organization in Slovakia with the aim to raise awareness of the risks of new media,
- in partnership with the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic,
- awareness raising, counselling and educational activities,
- target groups: children and youth, parents and educators,
- products: websites, publications, flyers, campaigns, and more,
- seminars and workshops at elementary and secondary schools,
- free phone line for cyberbullying, reporting illegal and dangerous content on the Internet,
- [Children in the Net](#) - A Guide for parents, teachers and youth workers about the main threats of children and young people in virtual space and how to protect them.
- [SHEEPLIVE](#) series of animated fairy tales at spreading the awareness about risks of the internet, mobile phones and new technologies.

Thematic websites:

- [zodpovedne.sk](#) - Slovak Safer Internet Centre.

- pomoc.sk website providing advice for responsible use of the Internet, mobile communications and new technologies.
- <http://nehejtuj.sk/> - website on prevention of hate, xenophobic and racist behaviour on the Internet, but also in everyday life of children and youth.
- kybersikanovanie.sk - website created for interactive programme for schools on cyberbullying prevention. <https://www.kybersikanovanie.sk/>
- DigiQ (Digital Intelligence) - <https://digiq.sk/category/kniznica/>
- CeNef (Centre for the support of non-formal education): <http://cenef.sk/aktualne-ponuky/>
- IUVENTA: Accredited [programme](#) for young people aged 15-30 *Použi hlavu! Kritické myslenie v každodennom živote (Use your head! Critical thinking in everyday life)*
- Zvoľ si info: <https://zvolsi.info/>

[Survey on Youth and the Media](#), Youth Council of Slovakia, 2019. The survey took place in October 2018, involving young people aged 15 to 24. The results of the survey point to the need of guiding young people to validate information from a variety of sources and to be able to identify unverified and misleading information.

[Just think about it. Findings of the Media Literacy Index 2019](#). Open Society Foundation, Sofia. 2019. The index assesses the resilience potential of 35 countries in Europe to false information and conspiracy theories. Compared to 2017 and 2018, the score of the Slovak Republic is deteriorating (decreased by 4 points compared to 2018). It is therefore necessary to develop the ability of pupils to assess the credibility and quality of information at school age.

6.9 Awareness-raising about non-formal and informal learning and quality youth work

Information providers / counselling structures

1. IUVENTA – Slovak Youth Institute
2. Association of the Information and Counselling Youth Centres in the Slovak Republic
3. Youth Council of Slovakia (RMS) and Association of regional youth councils (AKRAM)

[IUVENTA – Slovak Youth Institute](#)

- support and information activities on the possibilities of educational opportunities, e.g. through own web page, [Slovak language section of European Youth Portal](#) and others,
- organizes [own training and trainings supporting non-formal learning](#) (notably within Erasmus + but also within national resources),
- provides advice and consultations on [the accreditation of non-formal education programs in the field of youth work](#).

Association of the Information and Counselling Youth Centres in the Slovak Republic ([ZIPCeM](#))

- provides a wide range of information services from various areas (part-time jobs, counselling, education, leisure, etc.)
- an overview of active youth organizations providing opportunities for non-formal learning as part of the project ["In Good Hands - Learning Non-Formally"](#).
- network of [Information Youth Centres](#) provides information on current opportunities for non-formal education at national as well as regional level, as for example Information centre for youth [in Topolčany](#) or [in Martin](#).

Youth Council of Slovakia (RMS) and Association of Regional Youth Councils (AKRAM)

- [RMS](#) and [AKRAM](#) promote the activities of its member organizations, including education activities.

Awareness raising initiatives

1. Declaration on the Recognition of Non-Formal Education
2. Activities resulting from strategic documents
3. Other initiatives

Declaration on the Recognition of Non-Formal Education

- Within the framework of ESF National Project “Komprax - Competence for Practice”
- Initiative towards employers and formal education representatives on recognizing the importance and benefits of youth work to develop competences for the labour market and the overall personal and social life,
- [Signature of the Declaration in 2013](#),
- Separate [publication on the issue of recognition of non-formal education in youth work](#).

Project “[Komprax - Competence for Practice](#)”:

- It has defined quality standards for youth work.
- 8,000 graduates of non-formal education in the field of quality youth work,
- administration IUVENTA – Slovak Youth Institute.

Activities resulting from strategic documents

National Youth Conference 2014 ([Národná konferencia o mládeži 2014](#)):

- Mid-term evaluation of the Implementation of the Strategy of the Slovak Republic for Youth for the Years 2014 – 2020 halfway through its existence;
- Special attention paid to the discussion, in particular, to support flexibility, accessibility of systems and partnerships of all providers of education, including youth work.

Conception of Youth Work Development for years 2016 – 2021

- The strategic goal is to include the youth worker profession in the [National Qualifications Framework](#),
- Qualification standard for a youth worker was developed in 2015 and was included into [National qualification System](#)

Other initiatives

2017 Event: “Non-formally to the Success of Young People” ([Neformálne k úspechu mladých ľudí](#))

- Week of Life-long Learning ([Týždeň celoživotného učenia](#)),
- initiative of the [Association of Adult Education Institutions in the Slovak Republic](#),
- IUVENTA promotes educational opportunities within the framework of the European Union Erasmus + programme part Youth and Sports.

6.10 Current debates and reforms

Learning Slovakia

In 2017, a major nationwide debate was held on the [National Education and Training Program "Learning Slovakia"](#)

- 70 aims for the next 10 years of development of educational system in the Slovak Republic.

Main proposed changes:

- To extend compulsory education to 11 years and establish its beginning at the age of 5 years
- To adapt education to the needs of the child, its talents and abilities
- To incorporate soft skills into educational programs
- To create teaching situations where pupils learn from each other within the framework of curricula
- To allow adaptation of the curriculum at the level of individual classes or teachers.
- To liberalize the market with teaching books and retain the choice of textbooks, teaching materials and teaching aids for schools

Current debates in 2021:

- The expected impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the education system and the future of the youth, especially on the youth who could not take part in distance learning,
- The Slovak Recovery plan for the education system,
- Updates of the strategies on youth, on inclusive and global education and on lifelong learning,
- Amendment of the School law and the Law on pedagogical and professional school staff.

7. HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Slovak young people are affected by health threats such as the **lack of physical movement, overweight, smoking** etc. Especially endangered are young people with poverty background ([7.1](#)).

Several strategic documents have been adopted to coordinate **the fight against alcoholism, drugs, obesity and promotion of healthy lifestyle**. Regional Public Health Authorities as network of public institutions play an important role in promoting public health in the regions ([7.2](#)).

Slovak schools participate in international projects as **Healthy School, School Fruit and Vegetables programme and School Milk programme** ([7.4](#)). The topic of mental health is no longer taboo. A tradition of regular campaigns and collections to promote mental health has been established thanks to the **League for Mental Health of the Slovak Republic** ([7.5](#)).

General practitioners, social workers, teachers as well as every citizen in the city and municipality are obliged **to report situation where the child's health is endangered**. Offices of Labour, Social Affairs and Family investigate individual cases and take appropriate measures to protect the child ([7.6](#)).

The development of sport, youth fitness and physical activity is in agenda of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic. **Sport and work with talented youth is supported by a separate law and strategic documents**. The school facilities - youth clubs (CVČ) devote 80% of their activities to sports. **Physical education is a compulsory subject in Slovak schools** ([7.2](#)).

Organization and promotion of healthy lifestyle projects comes from active non-governmental organizations and some well-known personalities, as for example Peter Sagan ([7.3](#)).

7.1 General context

Main trends in the health conditions of young people

In Slovak Republic, there are no complex health studies specifically targeting the youth.

Partial information is provided by:

- population health surveys that include youth age groups but without specific outcomes exclusively for youth,
- few partial research studies on children and youth (e.g. physical development studies).

"Health Behaviour in School Aged Children" (HBCS - Slovakia) - research conducted on 11, 13 and 15 years old school pupils in school years 2005/2006, 2009/2010, 2014/2015 and [2017/2018](#).

Some findings (2017/2018):

- Approx. one in three 15-year-old-boys has experienced two or more health problems more than once a week. An even higher incidence was reported in girls: almost 40% of 11-year-olds and approximately half of 13- and 15-year-old girls reported such an incidence of health problems. The most common health problems among youth are nervousness, irritability and sleep problems.
- 70% of schoolchildren do not exercise (physical activity) a single hour a day. At the age of 11, 28% of boys and 26% of girls were physically active every day, at the age of 13 it was still 29% of boys but only 17% of girls, and at the age of 15, 24% of boys and 12% of girls.
- Only about a third of 15-year-olds (31-36%) about two-fifths of boys (37-43%) and half of girls (48-52%) aged 11 and 13 consumed fruit once or more times a day.
- On average, 30% of schoolchildren aged 15 consumed vegetables several times a day.
- The incidence of overweight and obesity in schoolchildren ranged from 3% in 11-year-old girls to 17% in 15-year-old boys.
- Less than a third of pupils reported consumption of vegetables on a daily basis, the least consumption was at the group of 15-year-old boys.
- Approximately 40% of 15-year-olds, a fifth of 13-year-olds, and less than 7% of 11-year-old students reported their personal experience with smoking cigarettes.
- Almost six out of ten 15-year-olds and about a third of 13-year-old schoolchildren reported personal experiences with drinking alcohol. Among 11-year-olds, 15% of boys and 9% of girls reported experience with drinking alcohol.
- During the school week, only half of 15-year-old schoolchildren slept the recommended 8 hours a day.
- 11% of girls and 17% of boys aged 15-year-old boys admitted experience with sexual intercourse.

Childhood obesity:

Over the last decade, the incidence of [childhood obesity](#) has doubled and currently reaches 10% in 10-12 year old boys and 8.5% in 7-12 year old girls. The share of overweight, including obesity, increased depending on age groups and gender to 13% (16-18 years, girls) to 25% (10-12 years, boys)

Several surveys show that the [number of overweight children and young people is increasing](#).

Physically inactive leisure time:

- 19% of 11-year-old boys and 43% of 11-year old girls, 35% of 13-years-old boys and 65% of girls, and 44% of 15-year-old boys and 75% of girls spend two or more hours doing computer work or using social media through electronic devices (e.g. smartphones, tablets).
- Only one in three schoolchildren report regularly organized physical activity.

Smoking:

- nearly every third young person aged [14-19 is a daily smoker](#).

High accident rate of young people:

- 15-20 years old young people belong to the group with the highest death rate during the accidents.

Poverty threat = the highest risk group.

- the highest risk group is the population of marginalized Roma communities.
- this population group has worse health indicators than the general population (including life-expectancy).

Suicides and depression.

In Slovakia, the [number of suicides](#) and depressive episodes in the period before adolescence and in adolescence is growing, but this topic is among the least surveyed.

Main concepts

The Slovak Republic's health policy is based on concepts and outlines of "Health 2020: European policy framework supporting action across government and society for health and well-being".

Three important concepts:

- public health
- health influencing factors (health determinants)
- living conditions.

All three terms are defined by [Act on Protection, Promotion and Development of Public Health](#) (§2, No. 1, letter b, c.).

Public health is "the level of society's health that corresponds to the level of provided healthcare, to the protection and promotion of health and to the economic level of society."

Health influencing factors (health determinants):

- world environment,
- work environment,
- genetic factors,
- health care,
- protection and promotion of health
- life-style.

Living conditions:

- physical, chemical and biological factors of the environment in relation to public health,
- conditions of housing, rest, physical culture, recreation, culture and other interests,
- transport,

- providing health care and other services, nutrition and diet, state and mode of use of items in contact with foods and subjects of common use,
- conditions for the healthy development, education, mental and physical development of children, youth and adults.

7.2 Administration and governance

Governance

The main institution responsible for the state health policy is [the Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic](#) (further MHSR), managed by the Minister.

The Ministry of Health provides state administration in the following areas:

- Health care,
- Health protection,
- Public health insurance
- Further education of health workers,
- Natural healing spas, natural healing resources, natural mineral waters,
- Price policy on product prices, services and acts in healthcare and others ([Statute of the ministry](#))

Activities of the Ministry of Health:

- setting-up of various expert committees as appropriate,
- law establishment for the health area,
- creation of strategic documents related to public health, health care and other areas within its sphere of influence, including documents focused on health of children and youth (e.g. [the National Children and Adolescents Care Programme in the Slovak Republic for 2008 – 2015](#), [the National Mental Health Program](#)). [National Action Plan for Obesity Prevention 2015-2020](#) .

In the organisational structure of the Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic, there is no department focusing exclusively on the health of children and youth. This topic is partially covered by the Public Health Authority of the Slovak Republic.

Public Health Authority of the Slovak Republic (further PHASR) manages 36 regional offices.

The Department of Public Health and Hygiene of PHASR is dedicated to the groups of children and youth.

PHASR's Activities and operations related to the health of children and youth:

- control of the level of hygiene in child and youth facilities (e.g. school meals),
- monitoring of the quality of drinking water,
- monitoring of the epidemiological situation,
- research and projects realization (cross reference 7.4) to promote good health of children and youth
- organisation of campaigns to protect and promote health and well-being of children and young people,
- running of [36 regional public health offices](#) focusing on reduction of life-style risk factors.

The National Health Information Center (NHIC) monitors the health status of the population and its determinants.

The Statistical Office of the SR annually processes and publishes the statistics carried out by the MZ SR and the NHIC as well as the statistics on the environment.

The Relationship of National and Regional Health Policy in the Slovak Republic

- some competencies in Health policy transferred from the state administration.
- The Office of the Self-Governing Region has its own Department of Health in their structure.
- Responsible for healthcare organization in the region such as operating times of pharmacies, region coverage of specialized medical care, healthcare facilities, etc. (e.g. [Office of Žilina Self-Governing Region](#)),
- health policy at the level of the self-governing region does not deal with children and youth as a separate target group.

Cross-sectorial cooperation

Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic cooperates with other ministries and central institutions in these areas of Health policy:

- Health education, promotion of healthy lifestyle and protection of life and health of children and youth – cooperation with the [Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports of the Slovak Republic](#).
- Health and social policy, health protection at work, in identifying diseases requiring special care - cooperation with the [Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family of the Slovak Republic](#).
- National anti-drugs policy is the result of cooperation among the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic, the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of the Slovak Republic and other ministries involved in the implementation of preventive and repressive measures ([Government Council of Anti-drugs Policy](#)).
- protection of the health of the marginalized Roma communities - cooperation with the [Government Plenipotentiary for Roma Communities of the Slovak Republic](#). The Office of the Plenipotentiary for Roma communities implements several programs and projects that are also focused on health protection, strategic documents preparation and action plans to promote the health and well-being of residents of marginalized Roma communities, it proposes concrete measures to promote good health of Roma youth.

Mechanisms of cooperation:

- Inter-ministerial amendment procedures, in which individual ministries comment on all draft laws and strategic documents to be adopted by the Government of the Slovak Republic.
- Working groups and advisory bodies of the Ministries and the Government of the Slovak Republic are another form of cooperation between various sectors that create and comment on some strategic documents, such as the [Interdepartmental Working Group for State Policy in Youth](#) and [the Committee for Children and Youth](#), (more information in 1.5). working commission for "Scientific and technical services - Modernization of physical education and sport" - project of rehabilitation of the population with emphasis on children, youth and family.

7.3 Sport, youth fitness and physical activity

National strategy(ies)

The topic of development and support of sport is within the competence of the [Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic](#).

- The Council of the Minister on Sports ([Rada ministra pre šport](#)) is an advisory, initiative and expert body of the Minister of Education, Science, Research and Sports of the Slovak Republic in the field of sport. Mr. Ján Krišanda, chairman of the Judo Union, was appointed vice president.
- The National Sport Center ([Národné športové centrum](#)) is the organization of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic and it is aimed at talented youth and athletes in general.
- As of 2012, the Government of the Slovak Republic has been appointing a Plenipotentiary for Youth and Sport ([Splnomocnenec pre mládež a šport](#)). This position is currently held by Mr. Dušan Galis. The function of the Plenipotentiary is defined by the Statute of the Plenipotentiary ([Štatút SVMŠ](#)). The Plenipotentiary administers a separate [grant program for promotion and development of sport](#).

The Slovak Republic has three main documents covering the development of sport and state policy in the field of sport:

- [The Act No. 440/2015 Coll. on Sports](#)
- [The Conception of State Policy in the Field of Sport - Slovak Sport 2020](#),
- [The Conception of Work with Sport- talented Youth for the period 2015 - 2020](#).

#The [Act on Sports](#) is aimed to promotion and development of:

- professional sport,
- amateur sport,
- organization of sport at national, regional and local level.

The Act on Sports deals with areas related to the sports organizations, national sport federations, sport representation, the responsibilities of various bodies and institutions, the information system in sport, financing in sport and others.

The Act on Sports requires regional and local authorities to develop their own Conceptions of Sports Development on their territory (e.g. the [Conception of Sport Development in Košice Self-governing Region](#), the [Conception of Sports Development in town Martin](#)).

Local and regional conceptions of sports development are dealing with measures for:

- development of sports at schools,
- sports opportunities for general public,
- support of elite sport,
- financing of sport clubs and sport organisations,
- sport opportunities for citizens with disabilities (e.g. mobility problems, etc.)
- sport infrastructure and sport facilities in the territory,
- information system on sports,
- public award on sport, etc.

The [Conception of State Policy in the Field of Sport - Slovak Sport 2020](#) (2012 - 2020) (hereinafter as "The Conception of Sport") is the basic document that deals with the topic of promoting sport and healthy lifestyle of children and youth in Slovakia in general (Sport and Health part).

The Conception of Sport deals with other topics such as:

- elite sport support,
- sport for people with disabilities
- sport funding and legislation,
- international cooperation,
- education in the field of sport, science and research.

The Conception of Sport has two strategic objectives:

1. Healthy and active society
2. Successful representation of Slovakia

Specific objectives and priorities include:

- Sport promotion as a recommended mode of active leisure time for the general public, especially for children and young people
- Improvement of the quality of sport representation and the preparation of sportsman like youth
- Revitalization and building of a sport infrastructure and building of a National Football Stadium
- Sport promotion for people with disabilities

The Conception of Sport provides:

- an analysis of situation in individual areas connected to priorities (sport promotion, sport representations, sport infrastructure, sport for people with disabilities etc.),
- defines responsible bodies, strategic objectives,
- proposes actions to achieve them.

Key elements of Sport and Health part and its proposed actions:

- Sport for all - health-oriented physical activities, e.g. construction and development of sports infrastructure for recreational sport activities of the population, organization of events and edification, support of local sport organizations in engaging the public in sports activities and others.
- Physical and sport education at elementary and secondary schools, e.g. to increase of the number of physical education hours at schools, more attractive content of physical education lessons, educating teachers in Physical Education innovations, national competitions and projects for school sport promotion and others.
- Leisure time Sports Activities for children and youth, e.g. support for sport clubs at schools, youth clubs, low-threshold and community centers, publishing of good practice examples, teachers and youth coaches appreciation, and others.
- Sport competitions for children and pupils of kindergartens, elementary schools and secondary schools, information for public about the offered sports activities through the portal www.skolskysport.sk, organization of sport competitions as motivation for pupils to be more physically active and others.
- Sports activities for university students, e.g. improvement of sport infrastructure at universities, creation of sport centres, promotion of collective sports and others.

Target groups are:

- public
- children, pupils and students
- athletic youth

- top athletes and representatives
- citizens with disabilities

The Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic is responsible for the Conception of Sports' coordination and implementation.

Strategic Partners are:

- governmental and state organizations e.g. various ministries in the area of their competence,
- non-governmental field: the Slovak Olympic Committee, the Slovak Paralympic Committee, sport unions and associations, sport clubs and physical education unions, foundations,
- local self- governments (municipalities) and self-governing regions,
- schools, physical and sport education teachers,
- families,
- private sector – sponsors/donors.

The implementation period for the Conception of Sport was set for the period 2013 to 2020.

#The [Conception of Work with Sport-talented Youth](#) for the period 2015 - 2020 is another document of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic that presents:

- system of care for talented athletic youth
- key changes in the system of care identification
- further actions drafting.

The Conception of Work with Sport-talented Youth does not specify the implementation methods.

Implementation and evaluation of the Conception of Work with Sport-talented Youth being taken into action is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic. There are no documents on its monitoring and evaluation available yet.

Promoting and supporting sport and physical activity among young people

1. Youth centres, established by the local government, offer various activities (including sports) within the hobby clubs. In 2018 youth centres organized 11 695 regular clubs, with more than [40% that concerned physical training and sports](#). As many as 11,695 interest groups were attended by 176,727 members.

2. Promoting and supporting sport in the towns and villages of Slovakia is generally ensured through:

- sport clubs and organizations at the local level
- support for civic associations in the form of grants from local authorities budgets,
- organization of towns sports events such as Sports Games, Challenge Day, Town Olympiads, etc.

Each town/village has its own conception of sport development in its territory (see 8.2)

There is no comprehensive statistics, monitoring, or evaluation of the current situation on the topic of promoting and supporting sport in towns and villages.

Examples of national initiatives and projects:

To school on a bicycle ([Do školy na bicykli](#)): a national cycling coordinator's campaign under the auspices of the Minister of Transport and Construction of the Slovak Republic and in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport from 2015 supporting the use of bicycles by children and youth. In 2020, 238 schools and more than 49 888 pupils joined with regular bicycle rides to school.

Grab a Ball, not Drugs ([Zober loptu, nie drogy](#)): The project is being implemented since 2012 by the non-governmental organization [Zober loptu nie drogy](#) and its goal is to involve children and young people into collective ball sports. The project cooperates with more than 12 sports clubs in Slovakia, organizes informational and educational campaigns, competitions and other sporting events, it also supports young sportsmen and sportswomen. In 2018, almost 17,000 active participants from more than 600 primary schools throughout Slovakia joined.

[European Sports Week](#): an international initiative by the European Commission promoting the importance of exercise and its impact on physical and mental health. The national coordinator of European Sports Week is the [National Sports Center](#).

Show yourself to the whole of Slovakia! ([Ukáž sa celému Slovensku!](#)) : grant program of the Slovak Olympic and Sports Committee Foundation. The aim of the program is to support young talented athletes, taking into account their sports results and the elimination of social differences.

Coaches at school ([Tréneri v škole](#)): is a program aimed at improving and making physical education lessons an experiential way of teaching, building a positive attitude towards sports and deepening children's interest in sports, as well as developing their comprehensive physical literacy in the first stage of primary schools. The program involves qualified, trained coaches together with the corresponding teachers in the teaching process of physical education classes in the 1st and 2nd year of primary school.

Physical education in schools

In addition to special departments of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic, three other organizations intervene in the development of physical education in schools:

- [National Institute for Education](#) - creation of a state educational programme,
- Institution for Teachers' Education and Training ([Metodicko-pedagogické centrum](#))- training of physical education teachers and creation of methodologies for individual subjects,
- The National Sport Centre ([Národné športové centrum](#))- administration of the school sport information portal.

Steering documents for physical education in schools:

- State educational programme
- School educational programme

[The State educational programme](#) for ISCED 0, 1, 2 and 3 is issued by the The Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic.

The State Educational Programme determines:

- main compulsory content of education and its layout,
- conditions for education,
- objectives,
- key competencies,
- educational standards,

- profile of a graduate,
- framework for education plan and curriculum,
- principles for the creation of school educational programmes.

State Educational Programmes for ISCED 1 and 2 were innovated in 2015 by National Institute for Education.

The State Educational Programme for [ISCED 1](#) includes 7 training areas, including "Health and Movement". In schools it is implemented within compulsory physical and sport education.

The State Educational Programme for [ISCED 2](#) includes 8 training areas, including "Health and Movement". In schools it is implemented within compulsory physical and sport education.

The State Educational Programme for [ISCED 3](#) includes 7 training areas, including "Health and Movement". In schools it is implemented within compulsory physical and sport education but also biology subject.

The time subsidies for subjects of physical and sports education are determined by the framework curricula that are part of the State Educational Programme. The school decides to divide the classes into school years.

- ISCED 1 - 8 lessons (45 minutes) of physical education within 4 years
- ISCED 2 - 10 lessons (45 minutes) of physical education within 5 years
- ISCED 3 - 8 hours within 4 years.

The increase of the number of hours of physical and sports education for all three levels of education is currently being discussed to 3 lessons per week.

The School Educational Programme is issued by school, it is in line with the State Educational programme. It also sets out a framework education plan and curriculum for individual subjects (including physical and sports education), hourly subsidies, educational and performance standards, methods, teaching forms and strategies, individual thematic units, evaluation methods, learning resources and others.

In school educational programmes, schools determine distribution of compulsory hours to the years set by the State Educational Programme.

Primary schools can set classes with more hours of physical and sports education - 12 hours of so-called Sports classes focused on the development of some sports.

There are no sports classes at high schools, talented students can have an individual plan and they are sporting at clubs outside of schools.

Methods and learning resources for ISCED 1 and 2 are illustrated on [the example of school](#).

Learning resources:

- gyms and utensils,
- video projection,
- multimedia,
- professional literature, journals, encyclopedias
- basic swimming training
- ski training.

Methods:

- games, individual kinetic exercises,

- exercises with equipment,
- collective sports,
- exercise in nature,
- sports training (swimming, skiing),
- relaxation exercises,
- competitions and matches,
- performance testing, and others.

Physical activities outside the curriculum but within the school day

Schools can organize physical activities outside compulsory school lessons, during sport days, club activities, engaging in competitions at regional or national level. Schools can provide facilities (playgrounds, gyms) for an unorganized children and youth sports.

For the activities, including sports, *education vouchers* (*vzdelávacie poukazy*) for elementary and secondary school pupils can be used. [The education voucher is worth 32 €](#) (for 2020), which is the annual state contribution to the pupil's interests in education financed by the MESRS. Vouchers are used to pay trainers, buy material, transport to competitions, and others.

The Conception of State Policy in the Field of Sport - [Slovak sport 2020](#) includes a part devoted to sport outside of school: the starting point (weak infrastructure) and goals and measures (financial support for sports clubs, analysis of children's and youth's involvement in extracurricular sports activities, support for the development of sport in primary and secondary schools).

In 2020 Parliament approved an amendment to the [Labour Code](#), which regulates a new contribution to the child's sports activities.

Sports competitions and activities of the Slovak Association of Sports in Schools

The Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic annually announces program of sports competitions for schools. Sports competitions are coordinated by the Slovak Association of Sports in Schools ([Slovenská asociácia športu na školách](#)).

Competitions have district, regional and county rounds. In school year 2019/2020, 44 sports competitions for elementary schools and 27 competitions for secondary schools (3298 schools and 20 598 participants) were organized. The results and information are published at a special information portal [Sport in schools](#).

Slovak Association of Sports in Schools also organizes Sports Days ([Školské dni športu](#)). Unconventional competitions are aiming to attract pupils of primary and secondary schools that were not reached yet by simple physical activities as endurance relays, jumping rope, juggling with ball, kicking penalties.

Education and methodical guidance of physical education teachers:

Training of trainers and teachers of physical and sports education takes place at sports secondary schools and universities in the relevant higher education departments.

Further education and methodical guidance of physical education and sports teachers is provided by the Institution for Teachers' Education and Training (organizing courses, publishing papers and methodologies).

Sports activity at universities

[The Conception of the State Policy in the Field of Sport - Slovak Sport 2020](#) is also devoted to sports at universities - it contains a description of the starting point and problems, objectives and specific measures, financial support for sport at universities, building of sports infrastructure and support of college sports clubs.

Collaboration and partnerships

Information on promoting cooperation and partnerships between schools and other sports organizations at national level is not available.

7.4 Healthy lifestyles and healthy nutrition

National strategy(ies)

A single conceptual document focusing exclusively on healthy lifestyle, diet and nutrition, sexual health and the fight against risky behaviour of youth does not exist in Slovakia yet.

These themes are parts of various legislative documents - acts, strategies and/or action plans.

National Action Plan for Children for 2013 - 2017 (closed in June 2019)

- a joint document of key parties involved describing agreed measures focusing on implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in Slovakia, including health and health care.
- the measures enlisted in the document are often part of other strategic documents and are included in the agenda of various institutions.

Some of the selected objectives of basic health care, disability and social services are:

- a) Improving children's and young people's awareness of health and promoting health lifestyles
- b) Support for the prevention of congenital disabilities in children

Goals and aims of National Action plan for Children were transferred to strategical document on development of Slovakia up to 2030 ([Vízia a stratégia rozvoja Slovenska do roku 2030](#)).

There are some **strategic documents** including the theme of healthy lifestyle and healthy nutrition (targeting children and youth among various other groups):

- [Strategic Framework for Health for period 2014 -2030](#)
- [National Health Promotion Program in the Slovak Republic, 2005](#)
- [Updated National Health Promotion Programme, 2014](#)
- [National Action Plan on the Prevention of Obesity for period 2015-2025](#)
- [National Anti-drug Strategy of the Slovak Republic for the period 2013 -2020](#)
- [National Action Plan for Problems with Alcohol for period 2013-2020](#)

#Strategic Framework for Health for period 2014 -2030

- defines the strategy of the Slovak health policy,
- approved by the Government of the Slovak Republic in 2013;
- its implementation is the responsibility of the Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic,
- some measures are also addressed to other partners,
- The Monitoring Committee submits reports on implementation (various actors) once a year
- The Steering Committee meets once in 6 months (representatives of the Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic).

The Strategic Framework focuses on health care services, it does not mention specific target groups.

The document focuses on:

- performance analysis of the Slovak health care system,
- demographic development,
- strategic goals (integrated outpatient health care, inpatient health care, public health)
- key health sector areas of concern and tools for transformation,
- monitoring system
- source of finance and others

The objectives and measures were further elaborated into separate strategies, projects and programmes as for example [Implementation strategy - Integrated health care system](#).

[#National Health Promotion Programme in the Slovak Republic](#)

- prepared by the Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic and the Public Health Authority of the Slovak Republic.
- approved by the Government of the Slovak Republic
- it has been regularly updated since 1991
- the monitoring is set for a 5-year interval and is evaluated by the expert commission
- the programme focuses on selected health determinants.

[Updated National Health Promotion Programme \(2014\)](#)

The document focuses on:

A. Prevention and reduction of the incidence of infectious diseases.

I. Increase in the level of public awareness of selected health determinants:

1. Nutrition and Dietary habits
2. Physical activity
3. Tobacco, alcohol and drug addiction
4. Healthy work and lifestyle determinants:
 - a) working environment,
 - b) living environment.

II. Specific measures in relation to the most prevalent chronic non-infectious conditions:

1. Cardiovascular diseases
2. Diabetes mellitus
3. Selected cancerous diseases

B. Prevention and reduction of the incidence of non-infectious diseases

The objectives and activities outlined in the document are aimed at all age categories of the population; the youth is explicitly listed in the section Alcohol, drugs and tobacco products and in the part of Cardiovascular diseases (Healthy lifestyle promotion).

[National Obesity Prevention Programme for period 2015-2025,](#)

- the document was prepared by Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic
- it was adopted by the Government of the Slovak Republic in 2014

The document focuses on:

- Promotion of healthy start in life
- Promotion of healthier environment at schools
- Healthier decision-making process

- Marketing and commercial advertisements' reduction for the children and youth
- Informed families
- Promotion of physical activities

Monitoring and evaluation is planned for two periods in 2020 and 2025 via reports from individual ministries on the assigned tasks and measures.

[#National Anti-Drug Strategy of the Slovak Republic for 2013-2020](#)

- coordinating body is the Government Council for Anti-drug Policy
- document was adopted by the Government of the Slovak Republic in 2013

The main strategic objectives are:

- contribution to measurable decrease in drug demand and drug addiction
- contribution to the suppression of drug crime rate, the reduction of the availability of illicit drugs and new psychoactive substances,

Three cross-section themes:

- coordination,
- international cooperation,
- research, information, monitoring and evaluation

Action plans result from the National Strategy containing specific measures (2013, 2017)

The strategy is monitored by the Department of Drug Strategy Coordination and Monitoring of Drugs, which is part of the Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic ([Odbor koordinácie protidrogovoej stratégie a monitorovania drog](#)).

[National Action Plan on the problems with alcohol use for 2013 – 2020](#)

- prepared by the Public Health Authority of the Slovak Republic and the Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic
- adopted by the Slovak Government in 2013.

It consists of three basic parts:

1. Alcohol consumption in the Slovak Republic and its harmful effects on health;
2. Alcohol Control in the Slovak Republic;
3. Tasks of the National Action Plan on the problems with alcohol use for 2013-2020 by sectors.

The document contains specific tasks (including the timeframe) for 9 ministries, most of them are assigned to the Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic.

Selection of tasks and objectives targeted at youth:

- Development of a cross-sectional study on the impact of health education in the prevention of alcohol addiction among young people aged 15-29.
- Improvement of school measurements, for example school equipment to prevent problems with early or excessive alcohol use and tools to promote a healthy lifestyle for pupils.
- Expert advice aimed specifically at the prevention of harmful alcohol use. Providing of individual or group professional care to young people at risk of alcohol dependence.
- Increase the effectiveness of prevention among young people in school education.

Encouraging healthy lifestyles and healthy nutrition for young people

Activities and projects at national level are based on the [National Health Promotion Programme of the Slovak Republic](#) (2014). It includes mainly measures focused on education and active promotion of healthy lifestyle.

Apart from the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic, the Public Health Authority of the Slovak Republic and its [36 Regional Public Health Authorities Offices](#) are the main promotion bodies.

Regional Public Health Authorities cooperate with schools, Association of municipalities and cities and other partners through specific projects and programs (e.g. projects of Regional Public Health Office [in Banská Bystrica](#)).

International projects and initiatives with the participation of Slovakia

Healthy School

- the programme for primary and secondary schools,
- the objective: prevention and disease control based on health protection strategies, health promotion and health enhancement,
- over 10 years of existence,
- various activities in schools: discussions, all-day thematic activities, pupils' exhibitions, counselling, club activities, etc.
- Themes of activities: obesity prevention, mental health, dental prevention, education for marriage and parenthood (sexual education) and environmental education,
- financing of basic activities - each schools' own resources.

Calls from the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic for financing of development projects focused [on health and safety in schools since 2015](#).

2017 objectives and priorities of the Call:

- forming the pupils' relationship to a healthy lifestyle,
- protecting the physical and mental health of pupils,
- improving the psychosocial environment in schools,
- prevention of risk behaviours: violence, bullying, truancy, aggression, manifests of extremism and radicalization of pupils, delinquency, drug addictions, abuses, HIV/AIDS, human trafficking).

CINDI Slovakia:

- international programme - WHO Countrywide Integrated Non-communicable Disease Intervention Programme,
- implemented by Public Health Authority of Slovak Republic for the whole Slovakia and in regions by Regional Public Health Authorities via their [Health Promotion and Education Counselling Centres](#)
- objective: reduction of total mortality of the population to cardiovascular and tumour diseases.

School Fruit and Vegetables programme ([Školské ovocie](#))

- part of School Fruit Scheme,
- implemented since 2008,
- regular supply of fruit and vegetables to schools,

- based on the National Strategy for Fruit and Vegetable Consumption Programme for Children and Students in Schools,
- activities: discussions, lectures, open days in orchards and others,
- financing: [Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic](#) and European Union funds,
- monitoring and evaluation within the [Agricultural Paying Agency of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic](#) (Annual Reports/[Výročné správy](#)).

School Milk programme

- implementation in Slovakia since 2004 (the accession to European Union),
- objective: to contribute to the healthy nutrition and to create healthy eating habits of children and youth by increasing consumption of milk and dairy products,
- milk machines and dairy products (cheese, yoghurts...) are delivered to schools and children and young people are provided with dairy products with discount,
- financing: Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic and the European Union funds,
- monitoring and evaluation within the Agricultural Paying Agency of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic (Annual Reports/[Výročné správy](#)).
- in school year 2015/2016 - 7 suppliers, 2 303 schools, almost 300 000 children and young people participated,
- vendors provide the programme promotion through their own sites, e.g. [TAMI](#), RAJO etc.

In 2017, the School Milk and the School Fruit and Vegetables programmes are funded under one financial scheme ([Nariadenie Vlády SR č. 189/2017](#)).

[The Joint Action on Nutrition and Physical Activity](#) - JANPA - European joint action to stop overweight and obesity in children and adolescents by 2020. The project involves 26 countries (25 EU Member States and Norway) which will allow:

- estimate and predict the economic costs of overweight and obesity
- improve the implementation of integrated interventions to promote healthy nutrition and physical activity activities for pregnant women and families with small children
- Contribute to healthier environments in kindergartens and schools
- improve the use of food nutrition information by public health authorities, stakeholders and families.

Other selected projects and programmes implemented in Slovakia

New recipes for school canteens

- Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic publishes updated recipes for school meals,
- objective: to make school meals more attractive, trendy and still based on the principles of healthy nutrition.

#Week LET'S TALK ABOUT FOOD ([Týždeň: HOVORME O JEDLE](#))

- organized by the [Centrum rozvoja znalostí o potravinách n.o.](#) (Centre for Food Knowledge Development – non profit),
- nation-wide activities, competitions, artwork, literary contests,

- the aim: to increase the level awareness about food and good eating habits as part of a healthy lifestyle,
- with the support of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic.

Health on the Table 2019

- call for proposals of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic
- [support for 28 projects](#) aimed at obesity prevention in order to motivate children and young people to change dietary habits.

Health education and healthy lifestyles education in schools

- Health education is included in the curriculum for ISCED 1, 2 and 3 in the theme "Health and Movement".
- Objective is to recognize the need for lifelong health care that includes movement.
- Focus is on basic information on healthy lifestyle.

The theme "Health and Movement" reflects in particular the topic of physical and sports education but health and healthy lifestyle topics are also found in other school subjects at all three levels of education.

In cross-disciplinary themes (not having specific school subject but being incorporated into other individual subjects) at all three levels (ISCED 1, 2, 3) there is the Environmental Education - oriented on life-threatening situations (for example in nature).

In the first stage of primary education (ISCED 1), health education is incorporated:

1. in the school subject Natural Sciences in topics:

- obesity,
- vitamins,
- good nutrition,
- drugs.

1. In the mandatory school subject Ethics in topic health care.

In the lower secondary education (ISCED 2), health education is incorporated in the mandatory subject Biology in topics:

- man and his body (body care),
- human health and life (health and illness, external health effects, internal health effects, addictive substances and their impact on health, lifestyle, healthy lifestyle).

At the third level of secondary education (ISCED 3), health education is included in a compulsory subject Biology in topics:

- basic prerequisites for health,
- reproductive health,
- civilization diseases,
- social pathologies,
- first aid basics.

The most common methods and learning resources used in health education are:

- *methods:* explanation, observation, projects, instructions, manipulation of subjects.

- *resources*: methodological materials, textbooks, didactic equipment, professional magazines, websites, videos.

Methodological materials on these topics are created by the Institutions for Teachers' Education and Training (organization of the MESRS), non-governmental organizations or various project initiatives.

Counselling and implementation of educational activities in schools in the field of prevention against social pathology (for example drug addiction) are also carried out by the 71 state Centres of Pedagogic and Psychological Counselling and Prevention (institutions of the MESRS) in each of the Slovak regions. Centres are founded by the "School Act" as the part of the counselling and prevention system in formal education. Centres employ psychologists, social and special pedagogues as well as social workers (List of Centres/[Adresár CPPPaP](#)).

Sex Education and Personal Relationship Education

Sex education is included in the curriculum for ISCED 1,2 and3 in the theme Education for Marriage and Parenthood

This topic is based on [the curriculum](#) approved by the MESRS.

The curriculum is conceived as horizontal and interdisciplinary to be incorporated into several subjects curriculum - ethics, biology, religious education and others.

The curriculum recommends schools to create the position of a coordinator for education for marriage and parenthood, who elaborates annual plan.

For ISCED 1, the areas of education are as follows:

1. Family education
2. The principles of healthy life
3. Negative consequences of smoking and other drugs on human health and behaviour
4. Gender Equality
5. The origin and development of a human individual
6. Changes in the body of a child during puberty

For ISCED 2, the areas of education are as follows:

1. Friendship
2. Cultivated adolescence and developmental roles of this period,
3. Anatomy and physiology of reproductive organs
4. Responsible approach to sexuality, self-esteem and respect for others
5. Negative influence of alcohol, drugs and relationship dependency on sexual and reproductive health of a man
6. Safe behaviour principles

For ISCED 3, the areas of education are as follows:

1. Marriage and family
2. Parenthood
3. Intimate relationships (sexual education)

Methods of sexual education

- age-appropriate: interpretation, interview, discussion, dramatization, problem method, brainstorming, teaching equipment, discussions with doctors, fairy tales, role plays, conceptual maps creation, didactic methods (for example Sunflower, Tree of Knowledge and others).
- in the area of sexual education, schools cooperate with Centres of Pedagogic and Psychological Counselling and Prevention (institutions of MESRS) established in each of the Slovak regions.

Peer-to-peer education approaches

In Slovakia peer-to-peer activities are used primarily as a prevention of drug addiction.

They are mainly organized by non-governmental organizations or by the Centres of Pedagogic and Psychological Counselling and Prevention (institutions of MESRS).

Slovakia without Drugs, NGO ([Slovensko bez drog](#)) gives lectures at primary and secondary schools where discuss about drugs, their use and the dilemmas that young people might have such as smoking and consumption of alcohol with their parents etc. The lectures have been held since 2010 with the participation of 207,305 pupils. Pupils can opt to take on themselves the anti-drugs sheriff's oath ([Sľub protidrogového šerifa](#)). They are committed not to take drugs, talk about the danger of drug addiction, help others to make such decision etc.

Collaboration and partnerships

The legal framework for cooperation in the field of health policy is established in each strategic document (see 7.2). Specific policy initiatives and, in particular, stable financial support for cooperation and partnership building are absent.

Cooperation with schools is the precondition of several activities of the [Public Health Authority of the Slovak Republic](#).

Current example of building the cooperation between pediatricians, schools and families, especially from marginalized Roma communities with help of Health Assistants is supported by the "[Healthy Regions](#)" national project and initiative (Operational Programme Human Resources).

Raising awareness on healthy lifestyles and on factors affecting the health and well-being of young people

The prevention through counselling and information campaigns is part of most of the [national strategy documents](#). Some of the specific measures are also targeted at children and youth. There are initiatives covering all age groups - including youth.

In the health-care sector, the dissemination of information, education and healthy lifestyle promotion is handled especially by the [Public Health Authority of the Slovak Republic](#).

The Public Health Authority of the Slovak Republic implements its activities aimed at children and youth through [the Department of Children and Youth Hygiene](#).

However, there is no dedicated to youth-only contact point.

[The Health Counselling Offices](#) are operated by The Public Health Authority of the Slovak Republic.

- being established from 1993 in 36 districts of Slovakia at the Regional Public Health Authorities within the Countrywide Integrated Non-communicable Disease Intervention Programme (CINDI) project.
- the objective is prevention and reduction of lifestyle risk factors
- clients are mostly younger and middle-aged people.
- counselling is based on examination of the main risk factors (body height and weight, waistline and hipline, biochemical blood tests and others).

Further specialised counselling centre can be also a part of Health Counselling Offices (e.g. counselling on healthy nutrition, optimization of physical activity, support of mental health and others).

Some of the Regional Public Health Authorities establish and run [Counselling Centres for Children and Youth](#).

Their focus is on children and adolescents whose blood cholesterol levels were detected high during preventive medical examinations. These counselling centres provide advice on dietary and lifestyle habits. Medical examination results and analysis are later the basis for professional counselling focused on a specific problem area of the family.

In the area of healthy nutrition, obesity prevention and treatment, there also exist specialized **Dietary Counselling Centres** (operating under the health-care sector) that employ mainly doctors.

Nutrition Counselling Centres

Nutrition Counselling Centres may be a part of the health-care services provided within health insurance package or by a private health-care provider. Dietary counselling centres and nutrition centres are also available online, mostly as [individual private initiatives](#) or via media initiatives that cooperate with experts.

Paediatricians and general practitioners are also advising their patients on healthy lifestyle.

Information campaigns include several projects as "To school on a bike" (see 7.3), "[Healthy cities](#)", "[Healthy Schools](#)" others.

The campaign aimed on healthy nutrition is for example "[Let's talk about food](#)".

7.5 Mental health

National strategy(ies)

There is no national strategy in Slovakia to address the mental health of young people yet. The document [Vision and development strategy of Slovakia up to 2030 - a long-term strategy for sustainable development of the Slovak Republic - Slovakia 2030](#) contains this goals concerning mental health:

- to establish a system of systematic prevention, early diagnosis and intervention, including education system concerning healthy lifestyle and mental health, including the fight against addictions;
- to increase the availability of mental health care in the health-disorder continuum.

Mental health care is one of the top priorities of [Slovakia's recovery plan](#) is health for all.

Improving the mental health of young people

There is currently no national document aimed at improving exclusively the mental health of youth.

By 2015, the [National Mental Health Program](#) was implemented in Slovakia, that partially addressed the theme of mental health of children and youth. Currently, the program is no longer in continuation.

In the [National Action Plan for Children for period 2013 – 2017](#) one of the objective is to support children's health: "to strengthen the mental health of adolescents by informing and removing barriers in relation to pupils with behavioral disorders" The responsible body is the Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic.

In Slovakia there is only one [Clinic of Pediatric Psychiatry](#) in Bratislava.

- [The League for Mental Health Slovakia](#) is a non-governmental organization whose projects are partially supported by state funds (through grant schemes), focusing on the mental health of children and youth as well. The League for Mental Health Slovakia implements their **own projects** or in cooperation with other organizations:
- [Online Counseling Centre of League for Mental Health Nezábudka/Forget-me-no](#) - Anonymous and free Internet Advisory service where experts offer consultations. Young people often write to get advice on their psychological problems (in schools, families)

- [Information campaigns on mental health – Days of Forget-me-not](#) - Information campaign Mental Health Days is held on occasion of World Mental Health Day. The campaign is linked to a fundraising public collection. From the yield of the collection, the organization supports the improvement of care for people with mental disorders across all of the Slovak regions.
- [Project How to cope with crises and conflicts \(2017\)](#) organized in cooperation with the Faculty of Psychology of the Pan-European University for 600 secondary school students from 20 secondary schools – providing lectures and discussions for different student groups.
- [Zippy's Friends](#) (2014-2015) is a program of the British organization Partnership for Children organized and [held in Slovakia](#).
- [Youth delegate to the WHO](#) - Since the fifth of May the Slovak Republic has established the first youth delegate to the WHO for the period 2020/2021, whose task is to represent Slovak youth at the WHO and at the same time to raise awareness on mental and global health issues among young people in Slovakia through peer activities.
- [Open day in psychiatric clinics](#) - On the occasion of World Mental Health Day (October 10th) in cooperation with the [Slovak Psychiatric Society](#) and Servier, it is implementing the Open Day event in psychiatric outpatient clinics, which lasts throughout October. Participants will learn that the psychiatric examination does not hurt, they will learn about the symptoms of depression and the possibilities of its treatment.
- [Mental health app for big employers](#) - A simple tool for employers to be able to provide their employees with basic information, but also tools that can help mental health
- [IPčko](#) is a civic association created by volunteers - psychologists and social workers, who created an online counseling for young people. Ipčko service for youth includes:
 1. [Good line \(Dobrá linka\)](#) - A psychological internet counseling for young people with disabilities.
 2. [Crisis helpline \(Krizová linka pomoci\)](#) - Provides anonymous, non-stop and free psychological help and support to people or their loved ones who have found themselves in a crisis related to COVID-19.
 3. [It happened \(stalosato.sk\)](#) - A site aimed at providing information and assistance in sexual violence against children and young people in the online space.
 4. [I want to kill myself \(Chcem sa zabiť .sk\)](#) - A portal aimed at helping young people who find themselves at the crossroads of life and do not want or can not go further.

7.6 Mechanisms of early detection and signposting of young people facing health risks

Policy framework

In Slovakia, the detection of children and young people at risk of health is incorporated into the legislative documents of various ministries.

Health-care sector

Act no. 577/2004 Coll. the Extent of Healthcare Reimbursed on the Basis of Public Health Insurance and on Reimbursements for Healthcare Services ([Zákon o rozsahu zdravotnej starostlivosti atď.](#))

The aim of the measures is early detection and intervention on children and youth's health protection.

- Preventive examinations by paediatricians (general practitioners) and specialists covered by health insurance and state contributions by age (§2)
- Responsible Institution: Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic.

Social and legal protection of children and youth:

Act no. 305/2005 Coll. on Social and Legal Protection of Children and on Social Curatorship ([Zákon o sociálno právnej ochrane a kuratele](#)).

The aim of the measures is to prevent, detect and protect children and youth at risk of harassment, neglect, abuse, addictions etc.

- protection measures are e.g. family notifications, the obligation to participate in professional diagnostics, participation at treatment, educational programs etc. (§12)
- responsible institution: Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic.

Education:

The Act no. 245/2008 Coll. on Education (The School Act/[Školský zákon](#))

The aim of the measures is to provide comprehensive care for children and youth: psychological, diagnostic, special-pedagogy and educational counselling and care in the form of various measures such as:

- establishment of the Centres of Pedagogic and Psychological Counselling and Prevention (§132),
- establishment of the Special Pedagogic and Psychological Counselling Centres for children and youth with developmental disorders (§133),
- creation of special job positions in schools: educational counsellor, school psychologist, special needs school educator, curative care pedagogue, social pedagogue, prevention coordinator and others. These employees are in charge of early detection and provide their services in cooperation with the Centres (§132, 133).
- establishment and operation of special educational facilities for the diagnosis and treatment of pupils with disturbed or threatened psycho-social development such as diagnostic centre; re-educational centre, curative-educational sanatorium.
- responsible institution: Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports of the Slovak Republic

Stakeholders

Any resident who discovers that a child is at risk for any reason is obliged to report it to an employee in a municipal or district authority or at the section of social and legal protection and curatorship in the Offices of Labor, Social Affairs and Family.

Paediatricians and general practitioners who notice children and youth-threatening warnings at preventive examinations are to contact the Offices of Labour, Social Affairs and Family's staff.

The same procedure applies to social workers (city and municipal staff) and **teachers**.

At the local self-governing authorities offices the **departments of social affairs** are established, where cases can also be reported. Offices' employees contact the local Offices of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (branches in each district city and in detached workplaces)

Police, when being involved contacts the Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family.

Employees of **the Offices of Labour, Social Affairs and Family** (social-legal protection and curatorship sections) shall carry out case-by-case investigations and propose a

procedure within the framework of Act no. 305/2005 Coll. On Social-Legal Protection and Social Curatorship.

Guidance to stakeholders

The Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic - [Department of Drug Strategy Coordination and Monitoring of Drugs, the Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic](#)

- Website INFODROGY.SK,
- created for teachers, parents, teenagers and drug prevention co-ordinators in schools Institution for Teachers' Education and Training (The Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic)
- services to teachers and employees of schools and school facilities
- accredited teachers training for example for the Prevention Coordinators - [List of trainings and educational activities in school year 2017/2018](#) (for example health and movement, bullying, pedagogical diagnostics, coordinator of prevention of social-pathological behaviour, current problems in prevention of social-pathological behaviour, etc.

Target groups

- Adolescents / teenagers
- Children and young people from poor families,
- Children and young people from marginalized Roma communities
- Children and young people with behavioural disorders

Funding

- From EU sources (structural funds - grant schemes and project support, national projects)
- From the state budget resources, the budgets of individual resorts (for example the Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic, the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic)
- From the state budget assigned for Self-governing Authorities (for example for social services)
- From the resources in the non-governmental sector (for example international resources, private resources)

7.7 Making health facilities more youth friendly

There are no initiatives on health care and health facilities improvement for the target group youth at present time.

7.8 Current debates and reforms

1. Drugs Decriminalization

The Ministry of Health submitted a new Act on Narcotic Substances, Psychotropic Substances and Preparations ([Act No. 139/1998 Coll.](#)) To the inter-ministerial comment procedure, within which it proposes to allow the use of preparations containing cannabidiol.

The Ministry of Justice of the Slovak Republic has set up an [expert group](#) to prepare the document on the drug quantity for personal use as a basis for later legislative measures (holding small amount for personal use as a penal offense not a criminal act).

2. Increase of Physical Education hours in schools

There is a longstanding debate on strengthening the Physical Education hours from two to three hours per week.

3. The impact of COVID-19 pandemic on mental health

Poor mental health of young people is also associated with an increased risk of injuries and substance abuse, which affects quality and length of life. Particularly vulnerable groups of young people at risk of mental health include young people with disabilities, chronic diseases, as well as young people who are stigmatized and marginalized because of their sexual orientation, gender identity or ethnic origin. Furthermore, young people exposed to violence, living in poverty or in undesirable and unstable living conditions.

The psychosocial effects of the COVID-19 pandemic also affect young people. Social isolation, changes in the provision of support services, changes at school and at work significantly affect their lives. UNESCO states that up to 73% of young people felt the need to seek help with associated with physical and mental health during the pandemic; however, 40% did not request assistance.

These are statistics on contacts in 2020 presented by the [ipčko.sk](https://ipcko.sk), Internet Counseling for Young People:

- Main topic: Feeling lonely and scared - 11 171 contacts;
- Main topic: Suicidal thoughts - 8 060 contacts;
- Main topic: COVID-19 - 6 903 contacts;
- Main topic: Suicide attempt - 3 422 contacts.

It is therefore essential that the policy makers address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of young people and to ensure that effective aid is available.

8. CREATIVITY AND CULTURE

Cultural policy in Slovakia is created in cooperation of **several ministries and sectors**. For the development of youth cultural policy, the most crucial is the cooperation of education and culture administrative bodies. An important role is being held out also by the **local and regional authorities**. They are responsible for the establishment of cultural and youth centers and their strategies and supportive approach are playing an important role in youth cultural participation ([8.2](#)).

In Slovakia, **art schooling has a long-standing tradition** - especially basic schools of arts that are platforms for development of cultural and creative interest, as well as place for discovering talents and their enhancement. A special role for finding talents have **competitions and exhibitions** under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic and Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic ([8.5](#)).

Cultural vouchers are measures to support the development of cultural competences of primary and secondary school pupils. Vouchers can be used to pay for cultural events, courses etc. Part of the state funding is allocated to the support of the **cultural activities of disadvantaged groups** and to support **culture of ethnic minorities** ([8.3](#), [8.9](#)).

In 2012 -2016, the most significant **digitization of cultural heritage works of art** was carried out within the projects run by the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic and its institutions ([8.7](#)). The Supreme Audit Office of the Slovak Republic considers this to be an example of good practice of the use of Eurofunds. By 2021, the Ministry of Culture must allocate almost 65 000 000 € from its own resources for the maintenance of projects, the

implementation of services associated with their operation, but also the modernization of software or expansion of data storage. After this period, the Ministry of Culture will be obligated to annually allocate 13 000 000 € for the building and maintaining of technical infrastructure. The Supreme Audit Office of the Slovak Republic therefore recommended that the Ministry of Culture develops a medium-term strategy, in which measures will be defined to ensure sustainable financing of digitization projects as well as to expand the number of digitized objects.

8.1 General context

Main trends in young people's creativity and cultural participation

There is no national research, survey or statistical analysis available in Slovakia to exclusively map the participation of young people on cultural life/events.

[The State Statistical Report on Culture - 2019](#) offers some partial information on the visit rates and the production of its institutions also for the group of children and youth:

- Number of events for children and youth in theaters, at music events and in astronomical facilities is stable. Number of events for young people in museums and libraries is constantly growing. The number of events in galleries increased after a long period and in 2019 was the highest in the last five years.
- Approx. 4,730 visitors of specialized design events were children and young people under 18 years.
- Culture of national minorities: These include folklore festivals, competitions in the recitation of national poetry and prose, literary days, cultural and educational summer camps for children and young people, creative workshops with traditional craftsmanship and other cultural events that have gained great popularity at the regional and national level of Slovak Republic, but they have also been popular abroad. In the territory of the Slovak Republic in 2019, 1,907 collectives developing the culture of national minorities performed their activities. Most groups of interest were active in the field of national folklore (590).

[Flash Eurobarometer European Youth 2018](#) shows that young people in Slovakia do not perceive culture and creativity as one of the areas where they think the EU should take action to encourage young people to express solidarity (only 26% of respondents).

Main concepts

Cultural and educational activities

- Mediation of cultural knowledge,
- Securing the access for the population to culture in its broadest sense,
- Enabling to discover individual talents and predispositions,
- Cultivates, forms and educates individuals, interest groups, communities.

Cultural heritage:

An achieved compendium of cultural values (of material and spiritual culture), knowledge of science and technology, general education and culture, philosophical views, ideals and moral norms, as well as the level of interpersonal relationships.

Special-interest artistic activities:

- Voluntary, non-professional activity of an artistic character,
- Arises from natural cultural need, out of one's own interest and within one's own free time,
- Can be of an individual or collective form,

- Helps to actualize and cultivates innate or acquired skills,
- The aim is regeneration, creation of artistic values and social actualization.

Interest-based education - various educational activities outside of school education as is informal and non-institutional education of youth and adults including seniors (Source: National Culture Centre).

8.2 Administration and governance

Governance

The [Ministry of Culture](#) of the Slovak Republic is the highest authority in the formation, creation and support of the culture and art field in Slovakia.

It manages following areas:

- official state language,
- the monument fund protection,
- cultural heritage and libraries,
- copyright law,
- cultural and educational activities and folk art production,
- presentation of Slovak culture abroad,
- relations with churches and religious communities,
- support of culture in specific regions and ethnic minorities' culture,
- media and audiovisual.

No department of the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic is specifically addressing the issue of youth culture.

BIBIANA (The [International House of Art for Children](#)) is an independent organization of the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic that focuses on art work designed for all age categories of children and youth:

- art by non-traditional, experimental forms of work,
- interactive exhibitions supplemented by theater performances, creative workshops, music programs,
- in collaboration with students of the Academy of Fine Arts and the Academy of Performing Arts.

In 2017, BIBIANA become the seat of [the national section of IBBY](#) - International Board on Books for Young People of non-governmental organisation UNESCO.

The [National Culture Centre](#) (NOC) is a state organization of the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic.

- professional-methodical workplace for cultural and educational activities,
- promotes the development of cultural, educational and artistic activities in local and regional conditions, particularly in the following areas:
- artistic interests activities,
- education in culture,
- editing and publishing activities,
- research and monitoring in culture,
- exhibition and presentation activities.

Towns and municipalities are responsible for institutions related to culture and cultural heritage in terms of:

- operation of [cultural facilities and maintenance of cultural monuments](#),
- operation of [professional theatres and support for the theatre activities](#),
- [establishment of libraries](#) (scientific, academic, public, educational or special ones),
- [establishment of museums or galleries](#).

Towns and municipalities also ensure:

- cultural activities organization,
- preservation of local cultural values and heritage, traditional folk culture and others,
- training of volunteers and professionals in the field of culture,
- art work promotion (for example, local artists support) or support of creative workers and others.

Important actors of culture, artistic interests activities for children and youth at local level are:

- 444 [Youth Centres](#) (CVC) - [facilities in schools network](#) where various interest and hobby clubs are organized; 24% of hobby clubs focused on culture and art (2013),
- 374 [Primary Art Schools](#), where children and youth can develop their talent in playing musical instruments, singing, dancing, fine arts and many others. In the school year 2020/2021, 170 455 students are attending Primary Art Schools (public, private and church).

Self-governing regions provide:

- creation, presentation and development of cultural values and [cultural activities at a regional level](#),
- creation and implementation of the program of social, economic and cultural development of the region's territory,
- cooperation with youth centres, community centres, local cultural institutions, educational centres in the region,
- more complex projects in the field of culture on the region's territory,
- training of cultural workers,
- coordination of various cultural competitions, shows and events,
- monitoring and evaluation of culture,
- statistical data gathering from the field of culture and others.

The main non-public actors

- profit and non-profit organizations,
- active individuals involved in the development of culture.

For example:

1. [ANTENA](#) - network of cultural centres and organisations, which operates in the field of independent arts and culture of Slovakia.
2. [Institute for Cultural Policies](#) (hereinafter ICP) is the first non-governmental initiative that critically analyses the current state of cultural and educational policy of the Slovak Republic, as well as the activities of governmental and independent cultural organisations and initiatives in the Slovak Republic.

Cross-sectorial cooperation

The Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic (or its institutions and organizations) are permanent members of [cross-sectorial mechanisms in youth policy decision-making](#).

- [Inter-ministerial Working Group on the Youth State Policy](#) ,
- The Committee for Children and Youth, which prepares the [National Action Plan for Children](#).

In these structures Ministry of Culture is responsible for youth policy in the field of culture and various implementation measures.

Long-term co-operation of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic and the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic is also in the process of creation of the [State educational programme of the Slovak Republic](#), where Ministry of Culture gives expert views and guidelines.

8.3 National strategy on creativity and culture for young people

Existence of a national strategy

There is no comprehensive strategy in Slovakia in the area of culture and creativity focused on youth.

The area of development of youth culture and creativity is partially covered by several legislative documents:

- [Strategy of the Development of Culture of the Slovak Republic for 2014-2020](#) (further Strategy of the Development of Culture).
- [Strategy of the Slovak Republic for Youth for the Years 2014 – 2020](#) (see section 1.4),
- [Vision and Strategy of Development of Slovakia up to 2030](#) (A long-term strategy for sustainable development of Slovak Republic)

Scope and contents

1. The Strategy of the Development of Culture has 7 strategic areas of concern:

- education and training for the formation of cultural needs,
- preservation and accessibility of the cultural heritage,
- supporting original art works,
- financing of culture,
- the use of creativity and culture in the economic development of Slovakia,
- research in the field of culture,
- presentations of the national culture abroad.

For young people, the most relevant area is education and training for the formation of cultural needs:

- it maintains the cooperation between cultural institutions and educational institutions in cultural education in accordance with the State Educational Programme.
- the priority is to improve the support for Primary Art Schools,
- the support for out-of-school activities focused on culture,
- the support of a system of interest activities focused on arts and culture.

The aim is to increase the demand for valuable culture by strengthening the cultural needs of children and youth.

2. Vision and Strategy of Development of Slovakia up to 2030 reflects the need for building the cultural literacy, which corresponds with the competence of the cultural awareness and expression, which is necessary for active citizenship, cooperation and for respecting one's own cultural identity and other cultures. The potential of the Slovak Republic is represented by a dense network of small cultural institutions, the involvement of individuals and communities and the extraordinary richness and diversity of cultural heritage.

Responsible authority for the implementation of the strategy

- The Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic and its organizations and institutions
- Authorities of self-governing regions,
- Churches and religious communities,
- The Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports of the Slovak Republic.

Revisions/updates

The Strategy of the Development of Culture did not undergo revisions/updates since its first introduction.

8.4 Promoting culture and cultural participation

Reducing obstacles to young people's access to culture

1. **The Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic** (hereinafter MK SR) contributes to better access of young people to culture through several systematic support-measures:

a) Cultural vouchers

- an annual contribution to support visiting cultural events and activities, can be used to cover entry fee in theaters, galleries, museums, cultural centers or library, cultural courses and others.

Objectives:

- support of the relationship of youth to cultural values,
- creating conditions for the wider participation of cultural institutions in the education youth,
- review of the children and youth's interests in culture and monitoring of cultural institutions' visit rates for this age category and others.

Target groups:

- primary and secondary school pupils
- primary and secondary school teachers

In 2020, 2826 schools received cultural vouchers.

b) Subsidies on culture of disadvantaged groups (including youth)

In 2020, MK SR granted the applications for funding in the field of non-formal education and research in the amount of 239 100 €.

In 2021, MK SR offers grant aimed at reduction of the consequences of extraordinary events in the field of culture - COVID-19. Eligible applicants are non-governmental organizations.

Some of the [supported projects](#) aimed at youth are:

1. **Veselý posunok (Happy Sign)** - a cultural experience for deaf children in the Slovak sign language - 8 000 €,
2. **NOMANTINELS** - Bringing queer culture closer to young people and adults - 7 000 €,
3. **IPčko** - Contact Club - a safe place for young people with mental health problems - 8 000 €,
4. **Košice-Džungľa district** - Colors of life: art creative workshops for Roma children and youth - 2 300 €.

c) [Free entry to cultural institutions](#) also for marginalized groups (including youth, families with children and others)

- by the Directive of the Minister of Culture,
- the first [Sunday](#) of each month,
- for example [Slovak National Museum - Červený Hrad Castle](#).

2. **[KULT MINOR](#) - Fund for the support of the culture of national minorities (including youth from minority background).**

The Fund for the Support of the Culture of National Minorities (hereinafter the "Fund") is established by Act no. 138/2017 Coll. on the Fund for the Support of the Culture of National Minorities.

The Fund:

- supports the development of cultural and educational activities in the field of intercultural dialogue and national minorities,
- supports theatrical, musical, dance, visual and audiovisual arts,
- supports the development of literary and publishing activities,
- preserves and protects the development of the identity and cultural values of national minorities,
- supports the education and training in the field of the rights of national minorities,
- creates conditions for the development of intercultural dialogue and for better understanding between Slovak citizens and citizens belonging to national minorities and ethnic groups,
- supports scientific activities in the field according to § 1 par. 1 of the Fund Act.

In 2021, The Culture Fund provides [grants or scholarships](#) aimed at financing these activities:

- hobby artistic activity and leisure activities,
- non-professional art,
- educational projects,
- support for the upbringing and education of children and young people in the field of the rights of national minorities,
- support of adult education and training in the field of national minority rights,
- analytical, expert and publishing activities in the field of the rights of national minorities,
- research on the culture, way of life, history, language and identity of persons belonging to minorities
- foreign cultural activities and international cultural activities.

Regions and municipalities

- ensure the development of culture and art in the region according to the relevant laws (on the general establishment, on the self-government of Upper-Tier territorial units) for all groups of the population, including the group of children and youth,
- regional conceptions of cultural development reflect the objectives of the The Strategy of the Development of Culture of Slovak Republic, for example [Nitra Region](#).
- the topic promoting youth creativity and entrepreneurship is also included in the Conception of the Development of Youth Work in individual self-governing regions, for example [Prešov Region](#), cities and municipalities have their own strategy of development of culture, for example [Košice city](#), the group of children and youth is explicitly included in various strategic objectives and measures

Disseminating information on cultural opportunities

There are no programs, policies, projects, or initiatives at national level in Slovakia that inform young people specifically about the possibilities of cultural activities.

Young people can use national information portals for youth providing a variety of information:

- www.eurodesk.sk
- www.icm.sk

These are funded from the State budget of the Slovak Republic and EU funds.

ICP ([8.2.](#)) offers information on culture and creativity.

[Knowledge of cultural heritage amongst young people](#)

In 1993 Slovakia joined the “[European Heritage Days](#)” initiative of the Council of Europe and the European Commission. In 2010, the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic entrusted the role of coordinators to the [Association of Historic Towns and Municipalities of Slovakia](#). In 2017, this commission was extended to the civic association [ICOMOS Slovakia](#) - National Committee of the International Council on Monuments and Sites. The theme of the 2021 event is 2021 “Inclusive Heritage” (“Heritage for Everyone”).

ICP ([8.2.](#)) project [MemoGym: Strengthening the European Memory](#) - An educational project to strengthen historical memory in the spirit of European values, focusing in particular on the attractiveness of the way of communication with young audiences. An interactive exhibition of life-size puppets, representing six Slovak personalities who, by their lifelong attitude and work, have preserved and cultivated democratic European values and orientation of (Czecho)slovakia towards advanced democratic European states.

8.5 Developing cultural and creative competences

Acquiring cultural and creative competences through education and training

Formal Education

Cultural and creative competencies can young people in Slovakia acquire through:

General Education

- Art Education

General Education

The content of teaching for preschool, primary and secondary education is defined in the framework curricula in [State educational programmes](#) (provided by the National Institute for Education):

- art and culture is one of the seven compulsory education themes,
- the acquisition of competences in the fields of art and culture is also guaranteed in integrated themes for example in media and multicultural education.

Curriculum in Primary Schools ([Grades 1-4](#)): compulsory subjects Music education - 4 hours, Fine arts education - 4 hours.

Curriculum in Primary Schools ([Grades 5-9](#)): compulsory subjects: Music education - 3 hours, Fine arts education - 3 hours, Education by art - 1 hour.

Curriculum in Gymnasiums 4-5 Years ([1st - 4th year](#)): compulsory subjects: Art and culture - 4 hours.

Curriculum in Gymnasiums ([1st - 8th year](#)) compulsory subjects: Music education - 2 hours, Fine Arts education - 2 hours, Education by art - 1 hour.

The content of teaching for secondary schools is defined in the framework curricula of the [State Institute for Vocational Training](#),

- there is no compulsory subject in the field of culture and art,
- exceptions are schools of artistic interests/specialisation,
- each school can decide to include a subject, for example with a focus on art and culture in the school educational programme.

List of [State educational programmes and educational programmes for formal education](#) (kindergartens, primary schools, gymnasiums, conservatories, basic schools of arts, language schools, program for pupils with general intellectual talent, program for pupils with special educational needs, program for handicapped pupils).

Vocational secondary schools:

Schools with aim on utility art (graphic designer, photographer, blacksmith, restaurateur, etc.), they are both state and private ones, for example in [Bratislava](#), [Kežmarok](#), [Košice](#), [Nitra](#) etc.

List of [State Educational Programmes for Vocational Education and Training](#).

Art Education/schooling

- Basic Schools of arts
- Conservatoires
- Higher education institutions with focus on art and culture

Basic School of Arts:

- departments: musical, dancing, literary-dramatic, visual, audiovisual and multimedia production,
- the studies last 8 years,
- they are governed by independent [State educational programme](#).

Conservatoires

- the studies last 6-8 years,
- they are governed by independent [State Educational Programmes for Conservatories](#) (ISCED 5B)

Higher Education and Universities:

- [Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Bratislava](#): Fine arts, Design, Architectural creation and restoration.
- Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava ([VŠMU](#)): Acting, Puppeteering, Drama direction, Dramaturgy, Film, Music and Dance.

- [Academy of Arts Banská Bystrica](#): Musical, Art, Theater and Film and Multimedia studies.
- [Technical University of Kosice](#): Architecture, Design and Art.
- [Technical University of Zvolen](#) :Design of furniture, Interior design and housing

Non-formal education in the field of culture and art - youth work (extra-curricular activities)

- [Educational events of cultural and artistic institutions](#)
- [Activities of the Youth Clubs network](#)
- [Activities of children and youth organizations in the field of culture and arts](#)

Educational events of cultural and artistic institutions:

- based on the principles of museum and gallery pedagogy.

Slovak National Gallery (SNG)

- programs for kindergartens, primary and secondary schools,
- following the curriculum of subjects such as History, Fine Arts, Slovak language, Creative drama and others.

Slovak National Gallery - [Bratislava](#)

- Themes of [programs for schools](#), for example "About torture no words!" - symbol, visualization, cycle, art context etc.

Slovak National Gallery - [Zvolen](#)

- Themes of [programs for schools](#), for example "Old Hero, New Story" on icons in Slovakia etc.

Slovak National Gallery- [Ružomberok](#)

- [Programs for schools](#), for example Ľudovít Fulla's activities / Games

Slovak National Gallery - [Pezinok](#)

- [Programs for schools](#), for example "Why do we have galleries and museums?" - the importance of cultural and artistic institutions.

Bratislava City Gallery

- [Themes of programs for schools](#), for example "Artists and Bookers", Books a Little Different, Mozart Comes to Me.

[Kunsthalle Bratislava](#)

- Themes of [programs for schools](#), for example "From behind the gallery" - methods of gallery pedagogy and possibilities of interpretation of contemporary art.

[Eastern-Slovak Gallery Košice](#)

- Themes of [programs for schools](#), for example "Object", "Man", "Scene" - Human Figure motif, [children's art camp](#) etc.

[Institute of Folk Art Creativity](#)

- School of Crafts - Informal Education for Children, Youth and Adults in Folk Crafts in [Bratislava](#), [Banská Bystrica](#) and in [Košice](#) (pottery, carving, basketry, carpentry, bobbin lace work or weaving).

[LUDUS](#) Theater

- theater connected to the [primary private school of art](#),
- provides education in the literature and dramatic area,

- group teaching,
- drama training, essentials of drama creation, the basics of acting, rhythm, production, speech, work in the ensemble and role study
- summer theater studios, [youth festivals](#) such as “Pubertiak”

Funding: state budget, private resources/sponsors and participants' contributions.

Activities of the Youth Clubs network (CVČ):

Youth Clubs (CVČ) belong to the network of school facilities (Educational Act).

Employees of the state youth clubs are associated in professional organization [Asociácia CVC SR](#).

Youth Clubs are governed by the State Educational Programme, which has several thematic areas focused on:

- education
- social - science
- labor and technical
- natural science - environment
- aesthetic-cultural area (art, musical, literary-dramatic)
- physical and sports.

The aim of aesthetic and cultural area of the [educational programme](#) is:

- to strengthen the respect for cultural values,
- to develop the basics of relationship to classic art,
- to develop talent, creativity and specific skills,
- to show positive relation to the simple aesthetic adjustment of the environment,
- to participate in the preparation of cultural events,
- to discover beauty in everyday life.

Youth Clubs organize:

- regular year-round clubs and groups, approximately 23% of them are focused on culture and art,
- irregular activities such as tours, cultural academies, balls, competitions, short courses.

Target group - children and adolescents from 3 to 24 years of age.

Funding:

- State budget via system of parity taxes through municipalities and towns
- Member fees of club and groups according to legislation given by the local government.

Activities of children and youth organizations in the field of culture and art

There are no official statistics mapping activities of youth organizations in the field of culture and art. Internal statistics Erasmus+ (chapter Youth and Sport) showed that the Creativity and Culture is the second most frequently chosen topics of projects supported by the programme.

Specialised training for professionals in the education, culture and youth fields

- [Education of art and culture teachers](#)
- [Further training/education of art and culture teachers](#)

- [Education for youth workers](#)
- [Education provided by National Culture Centre](#)

Training of art and culture teachers

- at universities and colleges especially at Faculties of Education for example in [Nitra](#), [Prešov](#), [Bratislava](#) and others.

Further training/education of art and culture teachers

- provided both by public and non-governmental organizations and institutions:
- The [Institution for Teachers 'Education and Training, /](#)
- Universities within the Centers of Lifelong Learning, for example [in Nitra](#),
- Non-governmental organizations and various companies.

Programs and their providers are accredited by Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic ([Act on Educational and Professional Staff](#)).

From 1255 accredited programs, there are 45 programs focusing on the subject of culture and art for school teachers. List of providers of accredited programs for art and culture teachers([2016](#)).

Examples of programs for art and culture teachers in 2017.

- Art techniques for the development of creativity
- Drama education
- Use of elements of folk art in art education etc.

Education for youth workers

Programs and their providers are accredited by Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic ([Act on Youth Work Support](#)).

From 88 [accredited providers](#), there are 2 programs focused on work with talented youth (IUVENTA, AISEC).

The largest provider of accredited education in youth work is IUVENTA - Slovak Youth Institute.

Education provided by the National Culture Centre

The National Culture Centre [provides education](#) for cultural animator, dancer, cultural worker, hobby clubs manager etc.

Funding:

- The State budget of the Slovak Republic,
- EU resources within the National ESF projects,
- Own resources of educational providers (donors, participants).

Providing quality access to creative environments

Measures to facilitate young people's access to the creative environment:

- [National contests and exhibitions under the auspices of National Culture Center](#)
- [Funding of competitions under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, Science Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic.](#)

#National contests and exhibitions under the auspices of the National Culture Centre

Objectives: promotion of interests in artistic activities through competitions and exhibitions.

Areas where [competitions and exhibitions](#) are organized:

- folklore
- music
- drama
- artistic performances
- photography, film, fine arts

Exhibitions and [competitions for children and youth](#) only:

- Pod Likavským hradom (Under the Likava Castle) – exhibition of children's folklore ensembles
- FEDIM - youth amateur drama
- Zlatá priadka (Golden Yarn) – exhibition of childrens' theatre ensembles,
- Hviezdoslavov Kubín – recitation of poetry and prose (children, youth and adults).
- Mládež spieva (Singing Youth) – singing choirs of children and youth

Exhibitions and competitions are funded by the Slovak Arts Council

[Slovak Arts Council](#):

- [public body](#) independent from the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic
- provides support for artistic activities, culture and creative industries
- [open calls for projects](#).

#Funding of [competitions](#) under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic

- state administration bodies, local authorities, NGOs, guilds and other legal entities may submit a proposal for the organization of a competition (proposition preparation, competition statute and others),
- the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic takes the auspices of the chosen competition and provides funding for the national round (national level),

Target groups:

- children and pupils of pre-school, primary, secondary and higher education institutions,
- pupils of basic school of arts.

Funding:

- the State budget of the Slovak Republic,
- 52 contestants in the field of culture and creativity in 2020,
- 400 000 €
- funding covers accommodation, food and organization of the competitions.

8.6 Developing entrepreneurial skills through culture

Developing entrepreneurial skills through cultural activities

The creative industry is taken into account in the document [Vision and Strategy of Development of Slovakia up to 2030](#) (a long-term strategy for sustainable development of Slovak Republic). It is stated that the potential of the value of culture and creative industry

is insufficiently used in Slovakia. Employment in culture and creative industry in 2016 accounted for only 2.5% of total employment, with the EU average at 3.7%.

The National Cultural Centre conducts competitions for children and young people:

- [AMFO](#) - a nationwide progressive competition and exhibition of amateur photographic work. The main goal of the competition is to acquire knowledge, develop skills, visual literacy and artistic growth of individuals through knowledge, implementation and presentation of photographic work.
- [CINEAMA](#) - a nationwide progressive competition and screening of amateur filmmaking. The target group are children, young people and adults who compete in three age groups and in several genre categories: documentary, reportage, feature film, animated film, experiment, video clip, minute film. CINEAMA helps to develop talent, artistic creativity, talent and also technical skills in the field of amateur filmmaking. It creates a space for the artistic representation of reality, for the author's expression of opinions, attitudes, experiences of filmmakers. The best awarded works are nominated for a selection, from which the jury will create a non-competitive collection presented at the Czech national competition Czech Video Salon and a collection for the world competition of amateur films UNICA.

Support young entrepreneurs in the cultural and creative sectors

In 2019, The Ministry of Culture of Slovak Republic announced a [call](#) for creating Cultural-creative centers.

Funds from IROP, priority 3 *Mobilization of creative potential in the regions*, which is under the responsibility of the Ministry of Culture, will be obtained for the construction of creative centers by the city of Trenčín, Trnava and Košice self-governing regions and Radio and television of Slovakia branch in Banská Bystrica. The common goal of the planned Cultural-creative centers is to increase employment in the cultural and creative industry. They will be created after reconstruction and modernization in existing buildings. Their goal will be to develop the creative potential of students and graduates of the arts and creatives, creative workers, artists, the liberal professions, as well as entrepreneurs and other persons in the cultural and creative industry. In addition to building infrastructure, they will also invest in the development of non-profit organizations, public and academic sector organizations and services based on the requirements of their region.

These are complex projects that combine investments such as construction and innovative technologies with so-called soft expenses, such as training and counseling. Therefore, steady drawing of funds is expected until 2023, when the projects must be implemented.

Approved projects:

1. [Centrum kultúrno-kreatívneho potenciálu Hviezda](#) (the Star Centre of cultural and creative potential)

- the city of Trenčín,
- approved amount of non-refundable financial contribution: 7,598,279.20 €
- the Star Centre for Cultural and Creative Potential will provide studios and art incubators. It will house activities from various areas of the cultural and creative industry, from cultural heritage, through architecture, design, to fine arts, theater, folklore, film and music.

2. [Kreatívne centrum Trnava](#) (the Trnava Creative Centre)

- approved amount of non-refundable financial contribution: 7 672 664,85 €
- the Trnava Creative Center will create conditions for the development of various areas of the cultural and creative industry. The planned FabLab, Dielňa and Media Lab, for

example, will offer machines for fashion design and textile production, or a graphic workplace with professional technology for virtual reality and other services.

3. **Kreatívne centrum Košického kraja** (the Creative center of the Košice region)

- approved amount of non-refundable financial contribution: 17 992 625,22 €
- the creative center of the Košice region will focus mainly on new media (media art) and design. It will also provide space for development in projects in the fields of crafts, performing arts, visual arts and cultural heritage. It will support new and existing business plans in the cultural and creative industries.

4. **Kreatívne centrum RTVS Banská Bystrica** (Creative center RTVS Banská Bystrica)

- approved amount of non-refundable financial contribution: 10 185 653,54 €
- the RTVS Banská Bystrica Creative Center wants to develop the cultural and creative industry in the audiovisual field in Banská Bystrica region. In addition to the audiovisual industry, it will also focus on related creative activities, such as graphic work, video game development, software applications and more.

NGO Anténa

Since 2011, Anténa has been developing educational activities in the field of working with light and lighting design under the heading School of Lighting Design. Since 2017, Anténa has been organizing educational workshops called Anténa WORKS! As part of building the capacity of employees of independent cultural centers and following the example of the Trans Europe Halles network, a project of exchanges of employees in culture between individual cultural centers was launched (Staff Exchange). In 2020, for the first time, Anténa organized a professional conference on the topics of independent culture management under the heading Antenna CONFERENCE.

8.7 Fostering the creative use of new technologies

New technologies in support of creativity and innovation

Slovakia [declared](#) its commitments in the field of digital innovation at the prestigious [Digital Day 2021](#) event. During the event, Slovakia signed three documents - the Declaration on European Data Gateways, the Declaration on Green and Digital Transformation of the EU and the Declaration on Standards for Startups.

Slovenská inovačná a energetická agentúra (the Slovak Innovation and Energy Agency) supports small and medium entrepreneurs via creative vouchers. The support in the form of creative vouchers is provided from the European Regional Development Fund and the state budget through the Operational Program *Integrated Infrastructure 2014 - 2020*. The national project [Support for the Development of the Creative Industry](#) in Slovakia enables small and medium-sized enterprises to access the professional services of the creative industry, thanks to which they can increase their competitiveness and innovation potential.

Support for the new media usage in art and culture in Slovakia as well as educational and training activities are the domain of different groups of active individuals and [civic associations](#) but partially also of some [university colleges and departments](#).

PROGRESSBAR / coworking

- promoting the development of knowledge and skills in the fields of technology, science, art and culture,

#ATELIER Digital Media, Academy of Arts in Banská Bystrica

- utilization of new technologies and media and their creative use in artistic practice.

NGO TRAKT

- projects focusing on artistic activity using media and film for children and young people e.g. Children's Festival: [Open Studio in Trenčín](#), [Creative competition of photography and film](#) and others.

Facilitating access to culture through new technologies

The most significant digitization of the cultural heritage took place in 2012-2016 through activities of the institutions of the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic:

- [Documentation and Information Center of Roma Culture](#), State Scientific Library in Prešov,
- Digital Information System of Culture of the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic - [SLOVAKIANA](#),
- [Digital Library and Digital Archive](#) of the Slovak National Library.

Target groups:

- General public (including pupils and school students);

Funding:

- [projects](#) were funded by the European Regional Development Fund under the Operational Program Information Society.

Other opportunities for youth to access culture provided by NGOs:

[MONOSKOP](#) - Database of collaborative studies and works in the field of art, media and humanities. / wiki for collaborative studies of arts, media and humanities,

[MULTIPLACE](#) network - organization of the New media art and culture festival.

Target groups:

- Beginning artists, students of arts etc.

Funding:

- Donors, private sources, participation fees.

8.8 Synergies and partnerships

Synergies between public policies and programmes

The collaboration of institutions and organizations is generally linked to strategic and conceptual documents or laws and coordination structures are designed to put these strategies/conceptions into practice.

In the field of culture and art:

- [Inter-ministerial working group](#) for the monitoring and implementation of the Strategy of Creative Industry Development in Slovak Republic,
- there are representatives from 9 ministries, the Industrial Property Office of the Slovak Republic and the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic.

On 22 July 2020, the Government of the Slovak Republic, as the Administrator of the Program "*Business in the Field of Culture, Cultural Heritage and Cultural Cooperation*", implemented within the EEA Financial Mechanism for 2014-2021, decided to award a grant in the grant scheme [CLT02](#). The call was launched on 26 July 2019 and was aimed at supporting projects related to capacity building of cultural actors, audience building and development in the field of contemporary art and culture, as well as to support bilateral exchanges in the field of contemporary art. The CLT02 small grant scheme call was closed on 31 December 2019 and a total of 35 project applications were submitted for a total of

€ 6,074,596. Nine projects will be supported under the € 1,500,000 call and all nine projects will be implemented in partnership with a donor project partner from Norway and / or Iceland.

Partnerships between the culture and creative sectors, youth organisations and youth workers

There are no programs, policies or initiatives of national authorities fostering partnership among culture and creative sectors, youth organizations and youth workers.

ICP [\(8.2.\) Kolaboratórium](#) project: Despite open borders and reduced language barriers, the Slovak culture remains isolated and unrecognised in the European area. The project is an attempt to specify cooperation with more successful partners. The project is focused on the essential conditions for promotion of personalities and cultural fields in the European cultural area.

8.9 Enhancing social inclusion through culture

Fostering equality and young people involvement through cultural activities

At present, there are no top-level programs with this focus in Slovakia.

Milan Šimeček Foundation with the support of the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic carried out the research on the "[Access of young people at risk of poverty and social exclusion to culture](#)"

Combating discrimination and poverty through cultural activities

The Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic is engaged in supporting the culture of disadvantaged groups of the population - including youth groups, through the grant program "[Culture of the disadvantaged groups](#)".

Examples of supported projects in 2019:

1. **Slovenská komora tlmočníkov posunkového jazyka** (Slovak Chamber of Sign Language Interpreters) - Support and development of artistic interpretation in Slovak sign language as a tool for sharing the culture of hearing and deaf - 5 500 €,
2. **Asociácia Divadelná Nitra** (Theater Nitra Association) - I GIVE YOU TULIP 2019 - integration creative activities for visually impaired children and children of Iraqi asylum seekers - 5 900 €,
3. **Karpatský euroregión Slovensko** (Carpathian Euroregion Slovakia) - "By touch to the monuments of Spiš - III." Creative workshops for children and young people from orphanages and groups of children from socially disadvantaged families and children with visual impairments - 7 000 €,
4. **Zemplínske osvetové stredisko v Michalovciach** (Zemplín Education Center in Michalovce) - Inclusion without limits - a chance at life - 2 600 €.

Activities of non-governmental organizations:

Milan Šimeček Foundation - [Festival \[fjúžn\]](#) - cultural and social festival focused on intercultural exchange between the majority and the communities of foreigners.

8.10 Current debates and reforms

The Strategy of Slovak Republic for youth for the years 2021-2028 is currently being prepared and should reflect the importance of culture and creativity in the lives of young people.

The COVID-19 affected the cultural and creative sectors. The venue-based sectors (such as museums, performing arts, live music, festivals, cinema, etc.) are the hardest hit by

social distancing measures. Artists across Europe are facing the consequences of canceled events.

Expected negative impacts on culture and creativity (in relation to youth):

- According to [OECD](#), the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic may be the loss of skills of those creative professionals who would have to abandon their creative activities and seek other jobs to make a living.
- A possible reduction in public funding for cultural and creative sectors, which may affect the ability and willingness of young people to start businesses in this industry.

Expected positive impacts:

- **The co-operation between the cultural and the educational sector.** For example, in Slovakia, non-profit organizations in the field of culture and creative industry can also contribute content to the EDUTV portal. [EDUTV](#) is a database of short video lessons for primary school students.
- **Innovations** that have emerged to keep culture and the creative industry alive, can be beneficial and useful even after the pandemic.
- **Online cultural events** allow cultural experiences to those members of society who cannot attend physical events. This is also a case for educational activities.

On September 29th 2020, Radio and television of Slovakia (RTVS) premiered a documentary called "[More hudby](#)" (The sea of music). The documentary captures current events in the Slovak music industry against the background of the COVID-19 pandemic.

9. YOUTH AND THE WORLD

In Slovakia, the **governance of the global issues is widely spread** among various ministries and public institutions, having in agenda development aid, sustainable development and green consumption, global development education, human rights issues and overall management of Agenda 2030. Nevertheless, **only global development education field is clearly oriented on young people** as the main target ([9.2](#)).

In global issues, the **driving force are activities and initiatives of non-governmental organisations**. [Ambrela](#) is the platform for non-governmental development organisations in Slovakia, influencing policy making in the area of development cooperation and raising public awareness about global issues. The members of the Platform started tradition of campaign and annual activities e.g. **Global Education Week in Slovakia** ([9.4](#)).

Practice to exchange views between young people and policy makers is short, but global issues are discussed in broader extent in the [Strategy of the Slovak Republic for Youth for 2021 – 2028](#). The Strategy reflects the importance of climate crisis and global environmental issues, carbon neutrality and also global education.

9.1 General context

Main concepts

The world of today is as connected as never before. At the same time, our society is also fragmented into different movements with their own agendas and worldviews. On one hand, there is number of negative trends brought on by structural injustices, like poverty, climate change, extremism, polarization and alienation. On the other hand, there are rising movements countering these issues, where the youth plays an important and in some of these movements even key role in shaping their agenda and political demands and messaging. The key global movements shaped by youth today are Climate Justice

Movement and Fridays for Future, Extinction rebellion and the Black Lives Matter Movement.

We can also approach today's position of youth in the global context through more formalized agendas and frameworks such youth work and education. Here, the concept of [Global Citizenship Education](#) by UNESCO has become key, emerging as an umbrella term for different types of transformative and value-based educations and approaches to youth work.

Global Citizenship Education, definition according to UNESCO

Global Citizenship Education (GCED) aims to empower learners of all ages to assume active roles, both locally and globally, in building more peaceful, tolerant, inclusive and secure societies. GCED is based on the three domains of learning - cognitive, socio-emotional and behavioural.

- Cognitive: knowledge and thinking skills necessary to better understand the world and its complexities.
- Socio-emotional: values, attitudes and social skills that enable learners to develop affectively, psychosocially, and physically and to enable them to live together with others respectfully and peacefully.
- Behavioural: conduct, performance, practical application and engagement.

The key learning outcomes, key learner attributes, topics and learning objectives suggested in GCED are based on the three domains of learning mentioned above. They are interlinked and integrated into the learning process.

Beyond the above definition, Global Citizenship Education has become the umbrella term for many different types of value based educations. The goal of this conceptual merger is to raise the relevance as well as impact of these fundamentally transformative types of education approaches, in relation to achieving the [Sustainable Development Goals](#), especially [Goal 4](#). Target 7.

At national level there are several legislative documents which to some extent regulate and set up framework for Slovak involvement in global issues, including the involvement of youth. The legislative documents in question are the following:

1. Foreign Affairs Strategy of the Slovak Republic
2. Medium-term Strategy of the Slovak Republic for Official Development Assistance 2019 – 2023
3. National Strategy for Sustainable Development Goals of Agenda 2030

Successful Slovakia in a Safe World – the Strategy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic

- Is an annual strategic document for Slovak involvement and active participation in the international arena, also in relation to multitude of institutional agendas related to global issues. Foreign Affairs Strategy also reiterates and shapes Slovak positioning towards key partners in the multilateral area of foreign affairs, such as the European Union and its member states, United Nations, Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, North Atlantic Alliance, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development or Council of Europe.

Medium-term Strategy of the Slovak Republic for Official Development Assistance 2019 – 2023

- adopted as a 5-year strategy by the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic
- the main instrument of development cooperation planning and implementation in Slovakia as well as Slovak interaction and involvement with international organizations including United Nations, OECD DAC

- defines the vision, objectives, principles, territorial and sectorial priorities,
- is implemented through annual bilateral development cooperation action plans,
- 10 priority countries: 3 program countries (Kenya, Moldova, Georgia), 5 partner regions and countries (West Balkans, Eastern Partnership, Eastern Sub-Saharan Africa, Middle East, Afghanistan)
- One of the key areas through which the Mid-term strategy regulates youth engagement in global issues is the chapter on Development Education and Awareness Raising, which is the building block for the one and only dedicated funding stream support for global and development education in the country.

The National Implementation Plan for Agenda 2030

- Agenda 2030 is one of the most complex policy documents aiming for sustainable development globally and is more or less a direct follow up of the previous agenda of this kind, The Millenium Development Goals.
- In Slovakia, the Agenda 2030 and progress towards reaching its universally applicable 17 Sustainable Development Goals is coordinated by the Ministry of Investment, Regional Development and Informatization of the Slovak Republic.
- In the Slovak context, Agenda 2030 has been viewed as an opportunity to frame the vision for future development and transformation of the country. The 17 original Sustainable Development Goals have been in the consultation process roofed by the government broken down into 6 national priority areas:
 - Education for dignified life,
 - Knowledge-based and environmentally sustainable economy reacting to demographic trends in the changing global environment,
 - Poverty reduction and social inclusion
 - Sustainable cities, regions and country in the context of climate change
 - Good governance, democracy and security,
 - Good health.

Since Slovakia is a member state of the European Union, one of the most important angles from which to approach the involvement of youth in the global environment, is through policies and programmes of the European institutions. Here, the key policy frameworks and programmes are:

- European Education Area
- European Green Deal
- European Union's Rights and Values Programme
- Erasmus+ programme
- Development Education and Awareness Raising Programme
- Conference on the Future of Europe
- Europe for Citizens Programme
- Creative Europe Programme

Another important EU wide process framing the future of youth involvement in global issues has been the [Envision 4.7 Roadmap](#), co-created by transformative education and youth work experts across sectors, ranging from government officials, members of the European Parliament, CSO representatives, academics as well as representatives of international institutions like the United Nations, UNESCO and the Council of Europe.

9.2 Administration and governance

Governance

Main actors

Global Issues in Slovakia are governed across sectors and through different levels of governance. Following is the list of most relevant actors governing, and in some extent also creating space for Slovak youth engagement in the arena of global issues.

Main actors in youth involvement in global issues

One of the key actors is the **President of the Slovak Republic**, who does frame the overall position of the Slovak republic towards global agendas and initiatives, also influencing and encouraging youth involvement and interest in these. Current president of Slovakia Zuzana Čaputová, has been quite active most of all in global issues such as climate change, good governance, extremism and polarization and has been a spark in the Slovak society of dialogue and involvement in solving these issues also for the youth.

Another important governance body in relation to youth and public involvement in global issues is [The Office of the Plenipotentiary for the Development of the Civil Society](#). The office is a key partner for building nation-wide partnerships between different ministries and government bodies and civil society organizations, creating the links between the public, CSOs which represent the public and the ministries which draft, consult, and implement policies.

The official governance of the global issues is thus also spread among the various ministries in Slovakia:

1. **[The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic](#)**
 - responsible for overall Slovak involvement in the international environment as wells in the sector of development aid and development education and awareness raising which includes broader opportunities for youth involvement, through volunteering as well as through global citizenship education.
 - In this, the ministry is overseeing the implementation of Agenda 2030 in relation to SDG 17.
2. **[The Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic](#)**
 - which ensures youth's contribution to global processes of policymaking,
 - coordination of the implementation of the [Strategy of the Slovak Republic for Youth for 2021 – 2028](#).
 - According to [The National programme for development of Education for 2018 – 2027](#) it is an owner of the agenda of global citizenship education in the formal and non-formal education sectors, also through its agencies which are [The National Institute for Education](#) and [The Methodology and Pedagogy Centre](#).
3. **[The Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic](#)**
 - Which is the owner of the agenda of sustainable development, green consumption and dealing with impact of climate crisis.
4. **[The Ministry of Justice of the Slovak Republic](#)**
 - Which oversees human rights issues.
5. **[The Ministry of Investment, Regional Development and Informatization of the Slovak Republic](#)**
 - Which oversees the overall management of Agenda 2030 in Slovakia.
6. **[IUVENTA – Slovak Youth Institute](#)**

- The main public actor in the development of policies, programmes or actions related to youth's contribution to global processes of policy-making
- Part of the legislation creation in Slovakia
- Have direct contact to youth workers, youth leaders and your organizations
- Is the national agency for [Erasmus+ youth and sport](#), which is one of the key governance and funding programmes creating space for youth involvement in global issues
- Provides [Subject Olympiads and Progressive Competitions](#) for primary and secondary school students also on international level
- Implementing specific projects related to the global issues, such as:
 - [UN Youth Delegate Programme](#)
 - Representative of the Slovak Republic at the [Youth Forum](#) within the meeting of the [Commission for Narcotic Substances](#) of the [UN Office on Drugs and Crime](#)
 - IUVENTA is part of the [Slovak Commission for UNESCO](#)
 - Since 2019 IUVENTA is the national correspondent for [Youth Wiki](#), an online platform presenting information on the youth policy of European countries. It is a project of the [European Education and Culture Executive Agency](#)
 - IUVENTA is a member of the [National Working Group](#) for [EU Youth Dialogue](#)
 - IUVENTA is a full member of [ERYICA](#) – the European Youth Information and Counselling Agency
 - Model European Parliament

7. SlovakAid

- Is an agency working under the auspices of Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs and oversees the granting opportunities as well as project implementation in the area of global citizenship education and development education and awareness raising about global issues.
- **Civil society actors** – many non-governmental organisations are active in global issues, although they are not exclusively targeted at young people and their involvement in global topics.
- [Ambrela](#) is a platform for development organizations, which is an umbrella organization for CSOs working in the fields of development cooperation, humanitarian aid and global citizenship education,
- [eRko – Christian Children Communities´ Movement](#), which is active in the field of development cooperation and volunteering as well as raising awareness about global issues among the youth.
- [Živica](#), which is one of the leading organizations in Slovakia working in the field of global citizenship education and value-based education,
- [Pontis Foundation](#), which is one of the most innovation-oriented organizations in Slovakia in the field of education and more specifically value-based education,
- [People in Need Slovakia](#), which is an organization with one of the longest traditions of implementing a global citizenship education programmes in Slovakia,
- [Impact Games](#), which is one of the most innovative organizations working on the intersection of the fields of digital and game-based education and global citizenship and value-based education,

- [Milan Šimečka Foundation](#), as one of the most active organizations in value-based education,
- [Institute for Active Citizenship](#), as key CSO actor in the field of active citizenship education,
- [Initiative for Citizenship Education](#), as a platform bringing together organization working towards the implementation of citizenship education in Slovakia,
- [Partners for Democratic Change Slovakia](#), which is one of the most professional organizations in the field of value-based and peace education,
- [UNICEF in Slovakia](#), which is one of the leaders in development education and global youth work in Slovakia and beyond.

Less structured and formalized youth movements like [Fridays for Future](#) and [Extinction Rebellion](#) also create spaces for youth to engage global issues in a non-formal environment of a broader movement interconnected globally.

Much of the agenda governing and administrating Slovak youth involvement in global issues comes from the European level, where the following actors are key:

Directorate General for Education and Culture of the European Commission

- Responsible namely for the agenda of European Education area.
- Key actor on the level of EU institutions governing the Erasmus+ programme as well as the Creative Europe programme.

Directorate General for International Partnerships of the European Commission

- Responsible for implementation of Agenda 2030 and especially SDG 17 through instruments of development cooperation and humanitarian aid
- Responsible for support of civil society organizations active in the field of development cooperation and humanitarian aid.
- Responsible for the implementation of Development Education and Awareness Raising programme, which is the most direct and straightforward funding programme for civil society organizations promoting global citizenship, value-based educations and campaigns related to global issues.

There are also several policy and advocacy oriented civil society platforms working on the level of the EU:

- [Bridge 47 Network](#)
- [CONCORD Europe](#)
- [Global Education Network Europe](#)
- [Platforma](#)
- [Solidar Foundation](#)

At the top of multilevel global governance structure, what follows are the key actors on Global Level relevant for youth involvement in global issues:

United Nations

- through overseeing the [Agenda 2030](#), as well as for facilitating youth representation at the UN through the [UN Youth Delegate Programme](#)

UNESCO

- through its ownership of the [Global Citizenship Education](#) agenda on the level of United Nations institutions

OECD

- through its ownership and implementation of global competences [Programme for International Student Assessment](#)

Cross-sectorial cooperation

There is [the Inter-ministerial Working Group for State Policy in the Field of Youth](#), coordinated by [Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports](#). More information in section [1.5 Cross-sectorial approach with other Ministries](#).

9.3 Exchanges between young people and policy-makers on global issues

Global issues exchanges with policy-makers at the domestic level

One of the key opportunities for exchange of views and participation of young people in policymaking process is possible through the drafting of the strategic goals when conceptual and legal documents are being prepared on the level of parliament as well as on the level of ministries in Slovakia.

This tends to be a rather technical process which demands high level of organizational structure for youth and citizens in general to be able to relevantly contribute to the drafting of the policies. All the legislative processes do have space for contributions and statements by the public, including youth, to be voiced. Therefore, in the liberal democratic setting, the most efficient way for the youth and the public to engage in these processes, is in partnership and through direct involvement with **civil society organizations** and their advocacy and policy teams as well as with **political parties** themselves, namely through the framework of direct membership in these parties.

As for influencing policy and being active in policy dialogue connected to global issues it is highly relevant for young people to be active, volunteer or in any other way contribute to the work of organizations grouped in **Ambrela – Platform for Development Organizations**.

The link of young people having the ability to influence global policy issues through CSOs has been in the past years strengthened by the **Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government for the Development of the Civil Society**, which has through its participation oriented project created the partnerships infrastructure giving CSOs more or less direct access to policy processes taking place at various ministries, thus also creating more space for young people active in these CSOs to have their say in policy making processes in Slovakia, taking into account also global issues.

Global issues exchanges with policy-makers at the international level

On the European level, the most important framework, which will in the upcoming years (as part of [Von der Leyen Presidency](#)) host active dialogue and participation of youth on global issue policymaking, will be the [Conference on the Future of Europe](#) process. The Conference has been approved by both the European Commission and Parliament in the summer of 2020. It has taken the format of Pan-European, national and local discussions with EU citizens as well as take the form of extensive polling and surveys online.

The goal of the Conference has been to gather public input for the preparation of strategic plan for EU development in the upcoming decades and beyond. This is a clear reason why the involvement of youth is important, since the issues dealt with, will impact its life in the European Union in great extent.

The conducted debates and consultations has been focussing discussions on a set of topics, broad enough to provide sufficient scope for all participants to provide input. The

conference would also address cross-cutting issues related to the way the EU delivers on its policy objectives.

On a global level, the most important framework for the involvement of youth is the **United Nations Youth Delegate Programme**, which ensures youth voice is heard on the high-level political forum such as the UN.

Participation in decision-making is one of the key priority areas of the United Nations agenda on youth. One form of youth participation at the United Nations is through the **inclusion of youth delegates in a country's official delegation to the United Nations General Assembly and various functional [Commissions of the Economic and Social Council](#)**.

The roles of a youth delegate vary from country to country, but normally includes providing input to their delegation on issues related to youth and participation in their delegation's work, such as through attending meetings and informal negotiations.

Youth delegates usually participate in several intergovernmental meetings at the United Nations. Most official youth delegates participate in the General Assembly, but some also attend functional [Commissions of the Economic and Social Council](#).

IUVENTA is the coordinator of the [United Nations Youth Delegate Programme](#) in Slovakia. The delegates for Slovakia **are being decided** by joint decision making of the [Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport](#), the [Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs](#), IUVENTA and the [United Nations Information Service in Vienna](#). In 2020, there were, for the first time, chosen two delegates, one female and one male.

9.4 Raising awareness about global issues

Formal, non-formal and informal learning

Formal education

Main target groups:

- Pupils and pedagogical staff in kindergartens, primary and secondary schools
- Students and academic staff at Universities

The [State educational program for ISCED 3A](#) formulates the following goals related to Global education objectives:

- to acquire the basis of general education provided by the school
- to have the interest and the need to learn outside schools
- to acquire and use effective learning strategies
- to acquire an adequate level of communication skills and cooperation
- respect for the others and responsible relationship to each other and to their health.

School subjects where global issues are integrated: History, Geography and Citizenship education.

Only few secondary schools have opened separate subject in the framework of their autonomy.

There are several obligatory cross-curricular themes integrated in all school subjects, some of them reflecting topics of global education e.g. Multicultural education, Media Literacy education, Environmental education and Protection Life and Health.

The [State educational programmes for vocational education](#) sets out even more challenging objectives similar to those of the global education:

- to acquire social and civic competences, to gain and strengthen respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and principles laid down in the [Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms](#),
- encourage pupils to better understand the world in which they live and the necessity of sustainable development,
- develop free, critical and independent thinking of pupils, their judgment and decision-making, leading to the assumption of responsibility of pupils for their thinking, decision-making, behaviour and feeling,
- creating respect for the living and non-living nature, protecting the environment and understanding the global problems of humanity,
- lead pupils to actively participate in civic life and cooperate in the development of democracy.

Non-formal learning

Thanks to the financial support of the [SlovakAID Program](#), many NGOs received grants for projects in which they carried out educational activities directly at schools.

As an example, Centre for environmental and ethical education [Živica](#) (Centrum pre environmentálnu a etickú výchovu Živica) implements a project called Global Education in cooperation with Slovak branch of [People in Need](#) NGO, [PDCS](#), and [Faculty of Education of Matej Bel University](#).

[IUVENTA – Slovak Youth Institute](#) implements an accredited programme called Global Education. The aim of the programme is to deepen the understanding of global topics in graduates through the development of key competencies such as the ability to think critically, express one's own opinion, work in a team or resolve conflicts.

Target groups:

- youth workers
- youth leaders
- youth volunteers
- representatives of local governments
- workers with marginalized and disadvantaged youth groups.

[IUVENTA](#), as one of the actors in the field of education, strengthens the implementation of these key topics in non-formal education, for example by conducting workshops on [Agenda 2030](#): sustainable development, environmental issues, human rights, inclusion and participation. IUVENTA and several key actors in the field of formal and non-formal education, participated in a [study visit](#) to the [Camões – Institute for Cooperation and Language](#) in Portugal in March 2019, to exchange best practices and information in the field of global education and to establish deeper cooperation that would enable better implementation of Global Education in Slovakia. The meeting was organized and financed by the [SlovakAID](#) in cooperation with the [Global Education Network Europe](#).

Youth-targeted information campaigns on global issues

Raising awareness about global issues today, takes place on many levels and on different platforms and is carried out by large number of actors in Slovakia.

The overarching framework for raising awareness about global issues is the [Agenda 2030 and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals](#). These have been created under the auspices of United Nations in a wide and global participatory process from the public, including youth. The process in itself has been one wide and impactful awareness raising campaign, which continues and will remain active throughout the implementation period of the SDGs, until year 2030.

EU level campaigns and awareness raising activities about global issues have been taking place most of all as part of [Development Education and Awareness Raising programme](#) of the European Commission.

The programme has produced some quite significant and impactful campaigns, as for instance:

I am European

The first social media campaign “Shared Journeys” opens the migration stories of five young people. Active young Youtuber Evert Poom and social media marketer Kristjaana Mere share their emigration experience and reveal why they returned to Estonia. The stories of coming to live in Estonia are shared by three young Estonian-speaking people from different backgrounds – a professional footballer Zakaria Beglarišvili, Maria Angelina Lasprilla, who has lived in Estonia for 12 years and works in the technology company Pipedrive, and Narong Lasuai from Thailand, who runs a restaurant in Estonia.

Faces of Migration

The Faces of Migration campaign challenges the existing views on migration. Hearing and understanding people’s stories allow for more complex perspectives on people’s lives and why they migrate. The aim of the campaign is to change public dialogue and policies from “us vs them” to the human beings affected by inequalities that are structural and pervasive and how the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are an answer to create a better world for all.

Trade Fair Live Fair

Trade Fair Live Fair has been a 3-year long campaign organized by a number of national Fair Trade parent organizations in Europe. The campaign has achieved increase in awareness of the Agenda 2030 and Sustainable Development Goals, mostly in terms of SDG 12 which frames the need for sustainable production and consumption practices to be implemented and undertaken globally.

CULPEER for Change

For more than twenty years the KinderKulturKarararawane has been offering the world's youth a stage in theatres, cultural centres, festivals and city festivals - and above all in schools. Young artists from the Global South show scenes from their everyday lives, from the lives of their families, peers and neighbourhoods with theatre, dance, circus, acrobatics and music.

These (young) people get face and voice here. In the creative dialogue from peer to peer between the young people from the Global South and the young people in Europe, the foundation stone is laid for a joint commitment to global justice, to move from diverse knowledge to action and thus to become real global citizens.

Start the Change!

Start the change! is a project co-funded by the European Commission. It aims to raise European citizens’ awareness of the importance of a joint effort to contribute to ending poverty, protecting the planet and ensuring peace and prosperity for all, as stated in the Sustainable Development Goals by the United Nations.

With the collaboration of teachers and educators, Start the Change! proposes a replicable educational model to increase the engagement of students and young people within their communities. At the same time the project aims to strengthen networks among schools, organisations and local authorities.

The proposed “citizenship paths” invite young people aged 15 to 24 to explore the reality in which they live to reflect on the relationship between migration and global inequality as well as to actively participate in starting the change and supporting sustainable development.

Walk the Global Walk

Walk the Global Walk, through Global Citizenship Education (GCE), mobilizes young people as catalysts for transformational change, localizes the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and produces an innovative educational model addressing complexities of the current global agenda. The transferrable and pioneering model, capable of integrating a new understanding of global issues related to migration, climate change and gender equality, will be adapted to the formal education curricula of secondary schools.

Other organizations active in awareness raising work on the European level are [CONCORD Europe](#), [Solidar Foundation](#), [Platforma](#), [OXFAM International](#), [Amnesty International Slovakia](#), [Greenpeace Slovakia](#), [Action Aid](#), [Global Education Network Europe](#), [Plan International](#), [World Wildlife Fund Slovakia](#) and [Save the Children](#).

In terms of Slovak actors active in awareness raising on global issues, the most active ones are members of [Ambrela – Platform for Development Organizations](#).

Some notable awareness raising campaigns which have taken place in the last years, are the following:

Yet don't buy it! (No nekúp to!)

No nekúp to! Was a campaign implemented by Ambrela and which pointed out how unsustainable consumer habits in the areas of fashion, food waste and in general sustainable consumption and production. The campaign invited young people as well as the general public, to try and live without either buying new clothes or throwing food away for 30 days.

Let's choose (Vyber si)

Vyber si was also a campaign implemented by Ambrela and yet again concentrating on themes of sustainable production and consumption, mostly in the context of the SDGs and the Slovak Presidency to the European Union.

Some other notable campaigns which have taken place in the past years and created space for youth to encounter or become active in global issues have been Fjuzn Festival, Vyzva k ludskosti, Fridays for Future and Extinction Rebellion, among others.

There is also several annual fundraising campaigns which connect their fundraising with development cooperation, humanitarian aid and youth volunteering in these sectors. Annual fundraising campaigns are implemented by number of organizations which are members of Ambrela, namely UNICEF, People in Peril, eRko - Dobrá novina, Integra Foundation, ADRA Slovakia, among others.

Much of the campaigning and awareness raising about global issues in Slovakia, has been institutionally encouraged and supported namely by SlovakAid and IUVENTA.

Information providers

The only public authority responsible for disseminating information on global issues among young people is the [Slovak Agency for International Development Cooperation](#). The agency provides information mainly about the funding opportunities for development projects. There is no specific contact point which young people can access to receive information.

General information can be found on different websites, as for example the website of [Ambrela](#) – the Slovak Non-Governmental Development Organisations Platform. The platform performs also advocacy work in favour of global topics. It seeks to increase the interest of policymakers, decision-makers, the media and the wider public about development aid. Platform issues a regular Bulletin Development Assistance, information and analytical materials, cooperates with journalists.

The platform also publishes information, booklets and other materials about the different topics which may be of good use also for young people, such as [Slovak Guide for Development Volunteering](#).

Very complex information is provided via the website [Global Education](#) run by NGO [People in Need Slovakia](#).

[Milan Šimečka Foundation](#) website.

[Global Education in the Future Teacher Education](#) is a study on the level of implementation of global education in study programs of pedagogical directions at universities in Slovakia. The authors of the publication found out whether and to what extent aspects of global education are present in study programs of pedagogical directions at universities in Slovakia, and where there could be room for improvement in the given situation at present. The study was conducted by the [People in Need Slovakia](#) in cooperation with [University of Prešov](#), [Matej Bel University](#), [Trnava University](#), [Comenius University](#) and [Pavol Jozef Šafárik University](#).

[Long-term training for teachers of ethics and Slovak language](#). Within the framework of the project "Learning in the Global Contexts 2", new training was conducted. The training is using the form of so-called blended learning, combination of e-learning and face-to-face training for teachers and teachers of primary and secondary schools as well as future teachers and teachers. The objective of the project is to systematically integrate Global Learning into individual subjects so that individual themes such as climate change, migration or gender equality are easily integrated into the lessons while fully compliant with the State Education Programme. [The National Institute for Education](#) is one of the key partners in the implementation of the International Program for the Support of Global Education called [Increase and Innovation](#), funded by the European Commission.

One of the first outputs of the consortium of three non-governmental organizations called Increase and Innovation is to analyze what already exists in Slovakia in this area of education, to deepen the cooperation of relevant institutions, and ultimately to introduce innovative global education methods in Slovak conditions. Several European Union countries, including Latvia, Malta, Cyprus and Greece, should be involved in the international program Increase and Innovation.

Key initiatives

Currently, there are two main NGO's offering the volunteering programmes for young people specifically targeted at young people.

- [AIESEC](#) offers volunteering programmes in development countries. The development internships are part of the [Global Community Development Programme](#), which is designed for students and fresh graduates. The aim of the internship is to have a positive impact on society and to help solve the global problems of the world.
- the [GLEN programme](#) where young people can apply for the volunteering in development countries.

The financial support of the actors

[SlovakAID Program](#) is the main source of the financial support for non-governmental organisations that is available from public funding. The programme is managed by [The Slovak Agency for International Development Cooperation](#). There are no specific regular calls that would be directly targeted at young people.

The Slovak NGOs in cooperation with foreign partners use also funds of the European Commission under the [Development Cooperation Instrument](#). European projects have higher financial allocations and give the opportunity to work on multi-annual projects with greater impact on target groups.

9.5 Green volunteering, production and consumption

Green volunteering

There is no official strategy or agency that would cover topic green volunteering specifically targeted at young generation, but the current [Strategy of the Slovak Republic for Youth for 2021 – 2028](#) includes the topics of climate crisis and global environmental issues, green volunteering and carbon neutrality.

The financial support from state budget through the Environmental Fund ([Act on the Environmental Fund](#)) is limited and usually not directly open to youth organisations or young people themselves.

As we live in a globalized world, which is far too complex to give us all opportunities to be active members of global movements, many young people as well as adults, are actively engaging in their communities - either place, or interest-based. Many of these communities give opportunities for their members to be proactive in green volunteering. Globally, such activities are roofed by [Transition Network](#).

Locally, in Slovakia, one can find them almost everywhere - from local community gardens, to revitalised public spaces in our cities. Usually, no big movement or organization stand behind such movements and are solely based on.

As for more formal and centralized organizations relevant in the field of green activism and volunteering, the most active in Slovakia are the following:

- [Centre for Environmental and Ethical Education Živica](#) (literally *Resin*), which is an organization based in Zaježová and Bratislava hosts number of programmes for active young people, who are interested in green volunteering. Sokratov inštitút is one such programme, where a cohort of 20 young people from 18 - 32 years of age take on year-long studies of global education related topics and issues, while also starting-up their own socially impactful or green project. Živica also has a prominent green programme Zelená škola, which targets young people through schools.
- [Friends of the Earth Europe](#) in Slovakia does mostly policy related work, but provides resources for young people to be active in green policy making, as well as gives young people and broader public opportunities to be active parts of different petitions.
- [Greenpeace Slovakia](#) is one of very few organizations in the country which systematically works with green campaigns and with green volunteering and activism, providing training and workshops for their volunteers, while giving them space to engage in different direct actions.

Green production and consumption

The transition to circular economy is defined as one of the strategic priorities of [the Strategy of the Environmental Policy up to 2030](#). In the area of legislation, [the Ministry of the Environment of the Slovak Republic](#) is currently setting important aspects of the functioning of waste management. It is also striving to change consumption and production patterns by using economic instruments, including strengthening green public procurement.

[The Slovak Environment Agency](#) was entrusted with the operation of the [Enviroportal](#) by the [Ministry of the Environment of the Slovak Republic](#).

[Circular Slovakia](#) is platform in which the public, private and third sector work together to exchange knowledge and stimulate entrepreneurship in the circular economy. In December 2019, the seven founding partners signed a Memorandum of Cooperation in support of the establishment of the Circular Slovakia platform at the Ministry of the Environment of the Slovak Republic. By June 2020, another 20 members from the private and non-governmental sectors and the science community had signed up to the platform.

[Youth for Climate](#) is an initiative managed by NGO called [Youngsters](#). The Youth for Climate Instagram account currently has 27 500 followers. In addition to the facts on about climate, the instagram account provides inspiration and tips about what young people can do to help the climate.

The [Tree of life](#) is an environmental, non-governmental, voluntary and non-profit organization working with children and youth towards the protection and enhancement of the life on Earth. At the same time. Its aim is also to develop children's emotional intelligence, influence their value system and strengthen their personal responsibility to themselves, others and to the world.

[Green Foundation](#) is a Slovak program-based Foundation transcending Central Europe that primarily focuses on developing social innovation, adapting society to major challenges such as climate change, new technologies, and supporting young people's civic engagement. Green Foundation is currently concentrating its attention on the program [Roots & Shoots](#) by [Jane Goodall](#) and development of coworking and community center of great ideas – [Búdka 22](#).

[Truly Healthy School](#) is a programme aimed at helping school children to develop the skills and habits needed for a successful and healthy lifestyle. The Really Healthy School program builds on the experience of the same program in the Czech Republic (and a similar program in the UK - Food For Life Partnership - FFLP), in which more than 70 schools have participated since 2014, offering 3,000 lunches per day under FFLP rules. The program helps to create a culture of healthy eating in schools. It helps school canteens to offer healthy and tasty meals prepared with fresh and seasonal products purchased from local farmers or grocers.

9.6 Intercontinental youth work and development cooperation

Intercontinental youth work cooperation

There are no national programmes or actions available that aim to promote cooperation and exchanges between organisations, individuals active in youth work in more than one continent sending young people abroad (aged 18 – 30) in order to gain experience with development issues.

The [SlovakAID Program](#) offers the financial help for sending volunteers aged 18 – 30 to developing countries, however, its main aim is to support the Slovak development aid objectives and it is not oriented on supporting the youth work between respective countries.

The only source available for youth work co-operation with other continents is the EU Erasmus+ programme through its centralised strand. As this part of the programme is centrally managed in Brussels, there is no complex information available about the scope and content of such activities between the organisations from Slovakia and those from other continents.

One of the very active organisations in this field, using the Erasmus+ funding is [KERIC NGO](#). They are known for co-operation with Latin America and Asia mainly in the field of volunteering. One of the current project [Broader](#) is aimed to support the quality of volunteering between Europe and Latin America and its content is focusing on migration issues.

Development cooperation activities

Much of the opportunities for young people to engage in the intercontinental youth work come in the field of development cooperation.

In this context, the most active players in facilitating intercontinental youth work in context of development cooperation, are member organizations of Ambrela - Platform for

Development Organizations. To include the most active organizations, which train and give opportunities to young people to travel as development volunteers to the so called “developing” countries are:

- [People in Need Slovakia](#)
- [Good Piece of News](#) by [eRko](#) (literally *the letter R*) – Christian Children Communities Movement
- [Adventist Development and Relief Agency Slovakia](#)
- [Habitat for Humanity](#)
- [St. Elisabeth University of Health and Social Work](#)
- [UNICEF Slovakia](#)
- [Magna Slovakia](#)

The organizations mentioned above, and their programmes are often funded and parts of broader programmes of national and European actors, most importantly [SlovakAid](#) with their volunteer programme and European Commission, with its [EUAid Volunteer programme](#). These donor institutions give NGOs opportunity to send volunteers to developing countries for 3 to 12 months and give them a chance to become active members of development aid or humanitarian aid projects in countries like Kenya, Iraq, Lebanon, Ethiopia and many others.

The whole segment of development cooperation volunteering is being annually celebrated by a volunteering award for best volunteers in development cooperation, which is presented by and volunteering organisation [CARDO](#).

Beyond the context of development cooperation, much of intercontinental youth work takes less structured form of international movements like [Fridays for Future](#) or [Extinction Rebellion](#).

9.7 Current debates and reforms

The new multiannual financial framework of the European Commission for years 2021 – 2027 has brought unprecedented opportunities and growth of some key initiatives and programmes in Europe, also relevant for involvement of youth in global issues.

Erasmus+ will remain a key programme for youth mobility and involvement in European and global issues also in the upcoming years, with promised 26 billion euros budgeted for the programme between 2021 – 2027.

Erasmus+ shall remain one of the most important momentum builders for materialization of pathways towards reaching the current European Youth Goals, which were agreed through European Youth Dialogue in 2018 – 2019. Eleven key goals for youth are:

1. Connecting EU with Youth
2. Equality of All Genders
3. Inclusive Societies
4. Information & Constructive Dialogue
5. Mental Health & Wellbeing
6. Moving Rural Youth Forward
7. Quality Employment for All
8. Quality Learning
9. Space and Participation for All
10. Sustainable Green Europe
11. Youth Organisations & European Programmes

More about [European Youth Goals](#).

[IUVENTA – Slovak Youth Institute](#) co-coordinate with the [Youth Council of Slovakia](#) the [EU Youth Dialogue Programme](#), which three Youth delegates from Slovakia took part in the [Conference on the Future of Europe](#).

The [Strategy of the Slovak Republic for Youth for 2021 – 2028](#), which IUVENTA was taking part in the making of it, is currently in force.

Another programme, which will give opportunities to youth to be active in global issues, in the upcoming MFF period of 2021 – 2027, will be the new Development Education and Awareness Raising programme, which is planned to have a budget total of 1,8 billion euros. The programme will support NGO projects and massive campaigns on topics such as Climate change, active citizenship, human rights and global justice, giving youth an opportunity and hopefully also number of tools to be actively engaged in shaping the future of Europe, which is facing number of challenges. More about the [DEAR programme](#).

On national level, in Slovakia, the key basis for reform and current debate about involvement of youth in global issues is the global citizenship education mapping, which took place in 2018 and 2019 and was conducted by a group of member organizations of [Ambrela](#).

The key results of the mapping have shown us, that:

- Global education has not been systematically implemented in Slovakia
- Definition of global education among schools and teachers is vague and the term many times refers to different activities of schools
- Global competences of students in Slovakia are average (with very unequal distribution between privileged and disadvantaged segments of young people) - which was confirmed by PISA Global Competence Test results in 2020
- There is a rather full market of quality global education resources already in Slovakia
- Actors providing most value in the area of global education to schools are NGOs and civil society, with very low support from the state and ministries.

Upcoming steps for the agenda of global education in Slovakia lay with the [Ministry of Education](#), which has for year 2021 signed a [Memorandum of Understanding with Global Education Network Europe](#).

Other key actors which are involved in this process are:

- [Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport](#) (and its [regional offices and national agencies](#))
- [Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs](#)
- [Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government for the Development of the Civil Society](#)
- [Ambrela](#) – Platform for Development Organisations
- [Global Education Network Europe](#)
- [North-South Centre of the Council of Europe](#)

The process of drafting the strategy shall include debates about potential shape of sustainable model of development, including financing of quality global education and global opportunities for youth. The process concluded by the end of 2021.

10. YOUTH WORK

History of Slovak youth work is linked to the national liberation movement in 19th century, when many associations started working regularly with children and young people ([10.1](#)). There is currently one document regulating youth work – the Act on Youth Work Support

([10.3](#)). [The Strategy of the Slovak Republic for Youth for the Years 2021 - 2028](#) (hereinafter the "Strategy") defines the key areas, objectives, measures and indicators aimed at improving the lives of young people. It builds on and identifies with the EU's Youth Strategy for 2019-2027.

State care for education, youth and sports is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sports of the Slovak Republic (hereinafter MESRS). The state delegates some tasks to municipalities and cities and then provides financial and other material resources. MESRS transfers the establishment of schools and school facilities to municipalities. School facilities also include leisure centres that are directly active in the field of youth work.

The term youth work as it is understood in some Western European countries (especially the United Kingdom) was not introduced by law until 2008 (when the Act on Youth Work Support was established). Until then, the term youth work meant any activities with this target group, in some cases the public to this day perceives under this term the school activities ([10.1](#)).

There are three positions in youth work: young leader (volunteer aged 15-18), youth leader (volunteer older than 18) and youth worker (employed professional) ([10.5](#)).

MESRS confirms quality of youth work programmes by formal accreditation connected with official certificates for participants, but Youthpass (Erasmus +) is popular tool for presenting acquired competencies through mobility activities as well ([10.6](#)).

Declaration on the Recognition of Non-Formal Education has been signed by more than 100 employers, institutions and official stakeholders and became the leading initiative to raise awareness of youth work value in Slovakia ([10.7](#)).

The debate on the quality of youth work in Slovakia has been going on for some time and some foundations have been laid. However, setting uniform, complex criteria is still not finalized. IUVENTA- Slovak Youth Institute collects and promotes various researches and surveys on youth, youth policy and youth work ([10.4](#)).

Youth work in Slovakia is mainly implemented by non-governmental organizations in which most of the youth workers are volunteers. Youth work in Slovakia is funded through the grant scheme of MESRS, funds from municipal resources, funds from the resources of higher territorial units, donations and contributions from legal entities and individuals, advertising revenues, business income, European Union funds and other resources.

10.1 General context

Historical developments

Before the establishment of the first Czechoslovak Republic in 1918, Slovakia was part of Hungary. Some authors cite a more significant [youth work development](#) period around 1868, when the „self-awareness” movement aroused. This was in the time off *Magyarization process*, an assimilation process by which Slovaks were meant to adopt the Hungarian culture and language either voluntarily or due to social pressure. This „self-awareness” and revival movement was reflected in the activities of literary associations, student meetings, charities etc. The largest student organization at that time was the Slovak Youth Union. There were also student self-learning associations that were run by students’ councils and were created under the supervision of teachers.

In 1918, when the first Czechoslovakia was formed, there was a significant growth of civic association activities and non-profit organizations, most of which operated on voluntary basis. This period was also marked by the development of innovative social policy directed at improving the social conditions of the Czechoslovaks. The newly formed department in the Ministry of Education and National Enlightenment provided new opportunities for the youth work development. At this time, youth work was performed mainly by educational and self-study clubs through regular student meetings, tea parties and other activities. Schools supported sports activities outside of school.

The most famous youth organizations at that time were Český sokol, Československý orol and the Scout union. The first scout unit in Slovakia was founded in 1913. In 1920 the YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association) and in 1923 the YWCA (Young Women's Christian Association) Czechoslovak branches were founded. One of the most important characteristics of this associations is that their approach to youth work was complex and it included both social work and social pedagogy.

In 1933 democratic associations and societies were abolished due to Hitler coming to power. Only approved organizations could continue with their activities. Jews and Czechs were not allowed to participate in the federal activities. The most influential organizations of this period were the Hlinka's Guard and Hlinka's Youth, founded by the monopoly Hlinka's Slovak People's Party. This organizations brought together young people aged 6 to 20 years, separately boys and separately girls. Their mission was to educate the patriots of the state and the nation in accordance with Christian principles. The structure and activities essentially copied the activities of the Hitler Youth in Germany empire. For some time, young boys' membership was even compulsory. Even though it was economically, politically, and socially affected by the situation, youth work continued in content, form, and method as before 1933.

In 1945, after the Second World War, communist activists began to establish the first pioneer groups after the Soviet model Komsomol. In 1949 the Czechoslovak Youth Union (ČSM) was founded. It united four national youth unions: Czech, Slovak, German and Polish. The union was part of the National Front. Youth work had been presented as an "objective necessity of socialistic society".

From 1953 Houses of Pioneers and Young People, set up by the Communist party (Domy pionierov a mládeže) began to spring up in Czechoslovakia. In 1968, the Czechoslovak Youth Union was replaced by the Union of Socialist Youth (Socialistický zväz mládeže – SZM). Obligatory membership in socialistic youth and children's organizations ceased only after the "velvet" revolution of 1989.

The changes that occurred after the „velvet“ revolution in 1989 and the establishment of an independent Slovak Republic in 1993, brought many social and political changes. Some initial youth organizations, that were dissolved during the Second World War were now re-established (for example YMCA, Slovak Scouting, and the Salesians). New youth organizations were also formed at this period. For example, the Youth Council of Slovakia (RmS) has been formed in 1990. Its initial role was to bring together organizations working with youth in Slovak Republic and to represent the member organizations in the context of state policy towards youth. It was initially established as a civic association. Since 1999, RmS is an umbrella organization of children and youth organizations in Slovakia. Its main role is to support the member organizations through advocacy, training, providing networking and supporting their needs so they can carry out their activities. Nowadays RmS also conducts research and surveys focusing on youth and youth work, for example in November 2018 (before the elections to the National Council of the Slovak Republic) they conducted a survey on the electoral preferences of first-time voters. Besides other activities, RmS is also a coordinator of National Working Group for Structured Dialogue with Youth. RmS is a member of European Youth Forum.

Documents defining state policy towards youth post revolution:

- Principles of State policy towards Children and Youth (1992, updated in 2000);
- Concept of State Policy in Relation to Children and Youth until (2007);
- Key Areas and Action Plans of State Policy towards Children and Youth in the Slovak Republic for the years 2008-2013;
- the Strategy of the Slovak Republic for Youth for the years 2014-2020;
- the Strategy of the Slovak Republic for Youth for the years 2021-2028.

IUVENTA – Slovak Youth Institute (hereinafter IUVENTA)

Previously the Central House of Pioneers and Youth of Klement Gottwald. After the revolution, IUVENTA's main activities were the support of clubs in Houses of Children and Youth/Leisure-Time Centres and traditional competitions in school subjects (Olympiads). IUVENTA later became the administrator of the first projects foreshadowing wider co-operation in Europe, also during the European Union accession and programmes membership period (CEEPUS, Youth for Europe, Youth in Action, YOUTH and the present Erasmus+). Since 2000, IUVENTA is an institution, directly managed by the MESRS. IUVENTA's main activities are educational activities aimed at youth and youth workers, preparing background materials for official documents in the field of youth and youth work, research and other activities aimed at supporting youth work. IUVENTA implemented two national projects in the field of youth work. IUVENTA is currently the national correspondent for the YouthWiki and the coordinator of the European Year of Youth 2022 (EYY2022) for Slovakia.

The main youth work providers in Slovak Republic are nowadays children and youth associations (non-governmental organizations), leisure-time centres/youth clubs (belonging to the official state formal education system) and non-formal groups of young people (working mostly on short-term projects).

National definition or understanding of Youth Work

[Act No. 282/2008 on Support of Youth Work](#) defines youth work as mainly an educational activity, a societal activity, an informational activity or an advisory activity for youth, young leaders, youth leaders and youth workers. The main goal of youth work is to ensure personal, professional, and social development of target groups through non-formal education.

Non-formal education in the field of youth work is further education of youth, young leaders, youth leaders and youth workers organized by educational facilities with the aim of gaining new knowledge, practical experience and skills needed for youth work, which enables its participants to complete, broaden and deepen their reached acquirements.

The important component of youth work is youth participation. It is an active involvement of youth in the process of planning, decision-making and developing project and events within the frame of social and economic life.

10.2 Administration and governance of youth work

Governance

The governance of youth work in Slovak Republic is managed at state and self-government (local and regional) level. [The Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic](#) (hereinafter MESRS) is the central state authority in the field of youth and youth work. MESRS's Department of Non-formal Education covers the work in the field of youth.

At the level of the Parliament of the Slovak Republic, there are:

- [The Committee for Children and Youth](#) of the Council of the Government of the Slovak Republic for Human Rights, National Minorities and Gender Equality
- [Committee of the National Council for Education, Science, Youth and Sport](#)

IUVENTA - Slovak Youth Institute

IUVENTA - Slovak Youth Institute is a state institution, directly managed by the MESRS. The aim of IUVENTA's activities is the implementation of the state policy towards children and youth.

Regional self-government offices

Regional self-government offices ensure the administrative and organizational issues related to youth policy at regional level in the field of social support for youth. The self-governments advisory and coordination bodies create internal positions for professionals responsible for youth whose task should be to coordinate and methodologically support activities of all organizations and institutions active in this field in the region. As the obligation arising from the legislation each regional self-government has official document setting the regional plan for youth work development.

Other national public bodies who are directly involved in youth policies

For other Ministries see more in [1.5.](#)

Other organizations and Institutions

- [Slovak Centre of Scientific and Technical Information](#)
- [State Pedagogical Institute](#)
- [The Research Institute for Child Psychology and Pathopsychology](#)

Cross-sectoral cooperation

[The cross-sectoral working group](#) for the state policy in the field of youth was established based on the Resolution of the Government of the Slovak Republic no. 192 of 23 April 2014 on the draft of Strategy of the Slovak Republic for Youth for the years 2014 – 2020. In 2021 cross-sectoral working group had two main tasks:

- to evaluate the implementation of the Strategy of Slovak Republic on Youth for the years 2014-2020.
- to participate in the process of developing and the approving of a new Strategy of Slovak Republic on youth for the years 2021-2028.

See more on cross-sectoral cooperation in [1.5.](#)

10.3 Support to youth work

Policy legal framework

Act No. 282/2008 on Support of Youth Work defines youth work as mainly an educational activity, a societal activity, an informational activity or an advisory activity for youth, young leaders, youth leaders and youth workers. The main goal of youth work is to ensure personal, professional, and social development of target groups through non-formal education.

Documents the National Strategy of the Slovak Republic for Youth for years 2014-2020, Concept Note for development of Youth work for years 2016-2020 and Action plan for implementation of Concept Note for development of Youth work for years 2016-2020 and 2017-2018 adopted by the government of the Slovak Republic helped to strengthen the position of youth work. Strategy of the Slovak Republic for Youth for years 2014-2020 set strategic objectives for youth policy, reflecting the needs of young people particularly in the field of education, employment, creativity and entrepreneurship of young people, their participation, health, a healthy lifestyle and relationship with nature, social inclusion and volunteering. It also dealt with global issues and set strategic goals for youth work. Within the Strategy, some goals have been met, some require a long-term and a systematic approach and continuity. The law on youth work support was amended to enable organizations to respond to current youth needs or to create a profile of youth worker. Elements of dual education in vocational education have also been introduced. The new Strategy for 2021-2028 adopted in December 2021 builds on and identifies with the old Strategy and with the EU 's Youth Strategy for 2019-2027.

Act No. 282/2008 on Support of Youth Work also regulates the conditions under which individuals, organizations and institutions may be granted a state subsidy in the field of youth work.

IUVENTA – Slovak Youth Institute supports youth work through the activities of [Youth Work Support Department](#). Main tasks of this department are:

- providing educational activities and information for youth workers
- networking the stakeholders, youth organizations and youth workers
- research in the field of youth and youth work.

Funding

Main sources of public funding

a) State budget via system of parity taxes through municipalities/towns and regional governments

Local authorities are responsible for children (0-15). Regional authorities have responsibilities for young people from 15 to 18. These financial resources are not earmarked on youth work only, their use is controlled by the self-government, which sometimes retains part of the financial resources as its original competences (Youth Report/[Správa o mládeži 2018](#), p.81).

Youth clubs (Leisure-time activities centres) are financed via system of parity taxes as well as by member fees of club and groups according to legislation given by the local government. Members of the clubs and groups can cover annual fees through [education vouchers](#) as well (provided by MESRS). The education voucher is worth 32 € for 2022. The education voucher represents a special annual contribution of the state to educational and leisure-time activities (hobbies) for students.

b) Grant scheme of the MESRS

1. Programmes for Youth 2014 - 2021

Programmes supported mainly national or intraregional youth organizations ([5.6 Supporting youth organizations](#)), organizations providing youth counselling and information services. Part of the financial amount was dedicated to one-off projects focused on annual priorities, research projects and projects dedicated to local youth policy development (support of local governments in building local youth policy). In 2021, MESRS subsidized youth work providers with 4 191 431,82 €.

2. MESRS grant scheme aimed at supporting youth work effective from 2022

The grant scheme for the new period was approved at the end of 2021 and at the same time the first calls for registration of eligible applicants in the grant system were announced. Similarly to the previous programming period, eligible applicants are, in particular, youth organizations, that work with young people on a long-term and systematic basis. Part of the financial amount is again dedicated to one-off projects focused on annual priorities, research projects and projects dedicated to local youth policy development.

d) Erasmus +

European Union financial support from the beginning (at pre-accession period) became the crucial tool for youth work development. Significant role in Slovak youth work development has European Solidarity Corps. The Erasmus Plus and European Solidarity Corps programs are managed by [the National Agency for Youth and Sport](#), which is part of IUVENTA – Slovak Youth Institute.

Conditions and requirements to benefit from public funding

a) State budget via system of parity taxes:

- system allows the self-governments to decide (based on its own analyses and democratic governance), what activities and purposes the taxes are used for,
- by means of legislative acts, strategies and conceptions, the State defines a common framework e.g., National Youth Strategy, Conception of Youth Work Development,
- it is exclusively on self-governments to decide what means (financed from the taxes) the state-defined goals will be achieved at local or regional levels,
- the quality assurance is also in hands of self-governments.

b) Grant Scheme, MESRS

- more information on the grant scheme in [1.7. Funding youth policy.](#)

c) Erasmus +

Erasmus+ is specific about conditions and requirements on beneficiaries. Each line/Key Action determines exactly who and if what conditions are met can receive a financial subsidy.

Eligible activities and target groups in funding

a) State budget via system of parity taxes:

- eligibility of activities and choice of priority target group is fully on decision of local and regional parliaments according to their needs and priorities.

b) Programmes for Youth - Grant Scheme, MESRS

- any type of activities defined in the Act on Youth Work Support,
- priority group is youth 13 – 17 of age.

c) Erasmus +

- programme support youth exchanges, voluntary service (including European Solidarity Corps), trainings and further education, strategical partnerships etc.
- priority target groups are defined by National Agencies – generally young people with fewer opportunities are priority in all countries (e.g., young unemployed, ethnic minorities etc.).

d) EU funds

In general, youth work is supported by EU funds through Erasmus+.

European structural and investment funds are available in Slovakia, but the decision to allocate these resources for youth work development is exclusively competence of the government and priorities of the individual Programmes. The project KOMPRAX – Competences for Practice, implemented in 2011-2015, was the last programme supporting youth work development. Sustainability period of mentioned project ended in March 2021.

Despite the state financial support, youth work in Slovakia is still lacking enough financial resources and it is still underestimated. There is also a [significant discrepancy](#) between the quality of youth work in rural areas and in the cities.

For more on Funding Youth Work See [1.7.](#)

Cooperation

As youth work is one of the main thematic fields of Slovak Youth Strategy, all consultation processes during the creation of Strategy and its evaluation also contained discussion on youth work development.

By 2021, youth work stakeholders were included in this activities and processes:

- preparation of new Youth Strategy for 2021 – 2028 and its individual themes such as [health and well-being](#) (more than 300 participants),
- working group on quality standards in youth work ([Štandardy kvality práce s mládežou](#)),
- monitoring committee on Programmes for Youth (Statute/[Štatút](#)),
- regular meetings of cross-sectoral working group for state policy in the field of youth coordinated by MESRS.

IUVENTA has signed memorandum pledging to work together in the field of youth work with these partners:

- [Slovenský zväz ľadového hokeja](#) (Slovak ice hockey league)
- [Žilinský samosprávny kraj](#) (Žilina self-governing region)
- [Centrum pre podporu neformálneho vzdelávania](#) (Center for the Support of Non-Formal Education) – CeNeF
- [OZ PREVENTISTA](#) (A project aimed at preventing IT crime and contributing to the promotion of information security)
- [Junior Achievement SR](#) (A project aimed at developing entrepreneurship, economical thinking, and financial literacy in youth).
- [OZ Outdoor Institute](#) (Providing leisure-time and educational programmes for youth)
- [ROZBEHNI SA!](#) (A programmes that helps young people with launching of their projects)
- [EURES Slovensko](#)
- [I AMbitious](#) (Non-formal training programmes for high school students in Slovakia).

10.4 Quality and innovation in youth work

Quality assurance

Emphasizing quality improvement in youth work is another European trend. In 2015, an EU expert group defined the basic principles of quality youth work, regardless of the context in which it is carried out. One of the forms of quality assurance in Slovakia is the accreditation of non-formal education programmes in youth work by [the Accreditation Commission](#) (hereinafter AC) in the field of youth work. AC was established by the MESRS based on § 7 par. 5 of Act no. 282/2008 Coll. on the support of youth work and on the amendment of Act no. 131/2002 Coll. on Higher Education Institutions and on Amendments to Certain Acts. The Accreditation Commission evaluates applications for the quality label.

The creation of innovative quality improvement systems was supported in the first calls of the programmes of MESRS „*Youth Policy Priorities*” (Youth Programmes 2014-2020). However, in other types of organizations (apart from children's and youth supra-regional organizations) at the level of regions, cities and municipalities, there is still a lack of agreement on what defines quality in youth work.

In 2018 a working group for the final definition of quality standards was set up by MESRS.

In the amendment of the Act No. 282/2008 on Support of Youth Work, a quality label was included. MESRS also introduced a new institute of the quality brand – *the Modern Youth Centre*. The quality label “*Modern Youth Centre*” should be awarded by the MESRS based on applications evaluated by the Accreditation Commission in the field of youth work.

[Youwatch](#) conducted a [study](#) on quality in youth work in 2019. One of the key findings of this study is the fact that the organizations, institutions, and groups (hereinafter OIS)

involved in the state financial support system are better in strategic planning and providing information than the OIS outside of the system. OIS that have ongoing support from donors, for e.g., churches, are also in better situation than the other OIS, as they can focus on development of strategic areas based on which they can gain further financial resources. This is not an ideal situation for the novice OIS or the OIS that are in long-term financial deficit. They either do not develop in some key areas at all (for e.g., strategic planning) or are only in the initial stage of their development. These OIS can thus improve the quality only with external support, or only at the cost of great effort.

Research and evidence supporting Youth Work

In 2016, RmS carried out a research aimed at [identifying the impacts of youth work](#). The research was funded from the PRIORITY-2016/1/008 / D project from the MESRS's programmes Youth Policy Priorities. The key findings were:

- organizations provide young people with a space to actively acquire many knowledge and skills, including value principles,
- research procedures show a high degree of consistency in the implemented attitude decisions with the values of the organizations,
- the research also provided evidence of the importance of the influence of youth organizations on the prevention of extremism and intolerance.

The [benefits and impact of work with children and youth](#) in Slovakia were studied also by Peter Lenčo in 2011. The author studied how young people measure the benefits of youth work, in which they participate through children's and youth organizations. According to young people, it is primarily a matter of providing space for meaningful use of leisure time, which is associated with the opportunity to learn something new, as well as various experiences, such as the opportunity to travel. Young people declared that engaging in an organization brings them inner enrichment, a good sense of self, a sense of inner fulfilment, usefulness, need, pride and meaning. They appreciated the organization for giving them space to grow and develop. According to young people, the organization helps them build a value system. Organizations also provide a space for new contacts, and friendships, which are appreciated by their members. Often these are friendships that go beyond the local community, have a nationwide or even international character. In addition to friends and comrades, who are also members of the organization, various programmes activities of children's and youth organizations make it possible to meet other people and build social capital that young people can use in the future, e.g., when looking for jobs (Lenčo, P., 2011).

Participate Youth Work

The Strategy of Slovak Republic on youth for the years 2021-2028 was developed based on active dialogue between young people and representatives of the state administration, regional and local government as well as the non-governmental sector.

Smart youth work - youth work in the digital world

Slovakia has both types of measures for fostering the application of digital technologies to youth work. Various NGO initiatives but also initiatives from state institutions offer and provide activities for application of digital technologies for youth and for youth workers as well.

These are current good practices in the field of smart youth work:

- A training programmes accredited by the AC in the field of youth work for youth workers called *ON/OFF – Online and offline tools in youth work* implemented by IUVENTA implemented since 2020;
- Online psychological hotline for youth provided by the civic association [IPčko](#);

- the State Pedagogical Institute created a database of short educational videos – [EDUTV](#), where young people can find videos on school subjects but also on other subjects such as financial literacy, employment, and values;
- [National Project IT Academy](#) – education for the 21st century - Strategic goal of this project is to create model of education and training of young people for the current and future needs of the knowledge society and the labour market with focus on informatics and ICT.
- [ITfitness](#) - testing of digital skills of young people and awarding certificate for successful participants, organized by [National Digital Coalition](#) for digital skills and vocations in Slovakia
- Project OPEN FUTURE ([Budúcnosť INAK](#)) Pontis Foundation Slovakia – developing digital literacy of youth. The programme introduces a unique cooperation: it connects **municipalities**, which are interested in skill development of young people; **experts** who are willing to give their time and know-how for a good cause; and **young people** who have the right motivation to improve their abilities and increase their potential;
- [Learn 2 code](#) - Online platform providing more than 90 courses (many of them are accredited by the Slovak Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport). The Learn2Code association was established in response to the limited possibilities of digital education in Slovakia and the need to adapt teaching to individual needs. Students can take their courses without being tied to place and time. They also offer education through online courses, which they have prepared in cooperation with dozens of professionals from various fields. Their goal is to make digital education accessible to the younger generation, and thus increase their chances of successfully entering the labour market.
- [Aj ty v IT](#) - NGO providing IT courses for girls and women in Slovakia. Their vision is that at least 30% of girls study in IT schools and at least 40% of women work in IT positions.
- Activities of [DigiQ](#) – Digital intelligence - Provides workshop series for elementary school students focusing on data protection and online safety. During COVID-19 epidemic – 23 webinars in 6 weeks for elementary school students focused on social media, disinformation, protection of personal data, hacking and related terms (Phishing, Scam, Spam, Adblocker, Virus, Antivirus)
- [CKO](#) – centre for community organizing (Centrum komunitného organizovania) - “Not in our town – NIOT” (Nie v našom meste) - workshops and trainings for use of digital technologies for local activism
- [CeNef](#) – Center for the support of Non-formal education - Network (in)security (“(Ne)bezpečne v sieti”) – Erasmus + project in cooperation with DigiQ and AMO (Association for international affairs) – use of modern technologies for Youth Work. Provides workshops for elementary school students and for youth workers engaging young people (Age 13-30 yrs)
- NGO [O.Z. Preventista](#) - Workshops and webinars for elementary and secondary school students as well as for parents focusing on raising awareness about cyber security, cyber criminality and prevention of cyberbullying
- Youth workers in Slovakia can use an online tool to assess the competences needed for setting up digital projects. The tool – called [“Discover your competencies on-line”](#) – has been developed by non-governmental organizations with the support of the MESRS grant scheme.

10.5 Youth workers

Status in national legislation

Act on Youth Work Support defines several positions in youth work as follows:

- young leader: a person of age 15 -17 and actively participates in the organization of youth activities led by a youth leader or youth worker;
- youth leader: a person of minimum age 18, who is responsible for conducting and coordination of youth activities;
- youth worker: a person who supports young people in their personal development and their knowledge, skills, and competences; prepares and organizes events or programmes in the field of youth work, can be in an employment relationship, conducts business on the basis of a trade license in the field of youth work or carries out voluntary activities in the field of youth work;
- lecturer/trainer in youth work: a person who develops, through educational activities, the competences of youth workers, youth leaders, young leaders, and other persons active in youth work;
- youth work coordinator: a person who plans, directs, and coordinates youth work in relation to the competences of the municipalities or regional governments in the field of youth work.

Five positions linked to youth work are included in National Qualifications Framework/[National System of Professions](#) (hereafter "NSP"):

- youth worker ([pracovník s mládežou](#))
- lecturer/trainer in youth work ([lektor v práci s mládežou](#))
- youth work methodologist ([metodik práce s mládežou](#)),
- youth work coordinator ([koordinátor práce s mládežou](#)),
- coordinator of volunteers ([koordinátor dobrovolníků](#)).

NSP as a united informative system describes standard requirements for the labour market for recognised professional qualifications. The NSP defines the requirements for professional and practical skills which are needed for the work activity in the labour market. Its main aim is to create a united national reference register of national job standards.

Specific standards and criteria for persons active in youth work

Act on Youth Work Support defines two basic criteria:

1. that the person has not been convicted of an offense in the past or has not committed any offenses (no criminal record, strong personal integrity);
2. legal capacity of person active in youth work.

In addition, youth worker in Leisure-time centres/Youth club (centres belong to national system of education) must have prescribed qualification (at least secondary education with specialization in pedagogy), good health condition and speak Slovak language (Act on Pedagogical Employees/[Zákon o pedagogických a odborných zamestnancoch](#) [6]).

In 2015 the competence profiles of young leaders, youth leaders and youth workers were defined in the framework on KOMPRAX – Competences for Practice (ESF project, [implemented by IUVENTA](#) [7]). In each competence there are detailed descriptions of indicators divided to several levels according to the profile.

Competences of young leader:

- ability to work in a team,

- ability to motivate self and others,
- ability to communicate effectively,
- presentation skills,
- project thinking,
- financial literacy,
- entrepreneurship and self-development,
- knowledge on non-formal education in youth work.

Competences of youth worker:

- ability to work in a team,
- ability to work with group processes,
- knowledge of youth as a social group,
- ability to motivate,
- conflict solving,
- entrepreneurship and self-development,
- ability to communicate effectively,
- presentation skills,
- cultural and intercultural skills,
- project thinking,
- organizational competences,
- financial literacy,
- application of organizational and legislative standards in the field of youth work,
- ability to work with information,
- knowledge of non-formal education concept,
- practical use of opportunities for non-formal education in youth work.

Youth leader has in principle the same competence profile as youth worker with some small differences e.g., organisational competence – with meaning ‘*abilities to run youth organisation*’ is not included.

Discussion on quality standards in youth work is discussed in special working group – see [10.8.](#)

Education, training and skills recognition

Despite the legislative definition of “youth worker”, “youth work methodologist” and “lecturer/trainer in youth work” in the NSP, there are no universities with opportunities to study “youth work” and to become a professionally certified youth worker. It is possible to study, for example, social pedagogy, pedagogy for leisure-time activities, specialised didactics, animation of free time activities, andragogy, etc.

Many youth NGOs have specialized training programmes for youth leaders e.g. Slovak Scouting. Youth workers in Leisure-time centres/Youth clubs have usually Master degree in Teacher Training and Education Science which can be obtained at [11 universities in Slovakia](#) (Ružomberok, Prešov, 2 universities in Trnava, Komárno, Bratislava, Nitra, Banská Bystrica, Košice, Dubnica n/Váhom, Žilina).

Continuous professional development of individuals active in youth work is ensured differently in youth NGOs and in Leisure-time centres. Youth workers (on voluntary basis

e.g. in national youth and children NGO) have specialized further trainings for more experienced youth workers, usually accredited by MESRS and delivered by NGOs (see also [10.4 Quality and innovation in youth work](#)). Employees of Leisure-time centres/Youth clubs can participate in trainings provided by [National Institution for Teachers' Education and Training](#).

IUVENTA – Slovak Youth Institute is long-term provider of further education of individuals active in youth work (majority with accreditation of MESRS).

All educational programmes in youth work accredited by MESRS include obligatory procedure to prove acquired competences in form of tests, practical demonstration or presentation as the basic condition to obtain final certificate.

Mobility of youth workers

In Slovakia there is no large-scale programmes (funded by national funds) offering the possibility for youth workers to take part in exchange opportunities, cooperation and networking. Erasmus+ is major provider of financing at national level e.g., series of [trainings for youth workers in human rights](#) (NAHRE) in 2019 organised by IUVENTA.

10.6 Recognition and validation of skills acquired through youth work

Existing arrangements

On 20 December 2012, the Council of the European Union issued the [Recommendation](#) on the validation of non-formal and informal learning, calling on individual Member States to implement the relevant guidelines by 2018. This was expected to complete almost 50 years of discussions on the nature, significance, methods and results of validation. qualifications acquired outside the formal education process. Highlighting these issues in EU and national education policies is a response to the need for an increasingly flexible workforce in a rapidly changing labour market, which the formal system is no longer managing.

In 2013, the [Declaration](#) on the Recognition of the Contribution of Non-formal Education in Youth Work was created. The Declaration is a tool that raises the profile of non-formal education and brings together all those who realize that non-formal education has an important role to play in educating the young generation. The declaration has so far been signed by more than a hundred prominent representatives of the state, private, public and non-governmental sectors.

In Slovakia, there is no national model for validating the skills acquired through youth work. Act no. 568/2009 Coll. on the Lifelong Learning Act created at least some preconditions for further progress. In § 21 it defines the National Qualifications Framework as "a publicly accessible register containing a description of partial and full qualifications distinguished and recognized in the Slovak Republic required in the form of qualification standards and assessment standards" and in Part 3 it defines the eligible educational institutions and the process of recognition of the results of further education. The created qualification standards serve only as inspiration in the creation of educational programs and are not yet regulated by the law.

Skills

National ESF project [KOMPRAX - 'Competences for Real Life'](#), implemented by IUVENTA in 2011-2015, was the largest national initiative to support non-formal education in youth work. The aim of the project was to enable young people and youth workers to have access to the renewed and flexible acquisition of competencies in youth work with comprehensive counselling services.

The specific objectives were:

- to support the quality of educational programs in youth work with the aim of preparing graduates for lifelong learning;
- to develop the level of key competences of youth leaders and youth workers to facilitate their access to the labour market;
- contribute to the recognition of competences acquired in youth work in the field of formal education and labour market;
- to promote social recognition of youth work and ensure the development of information channels and databases on youth work and the education system in this area.

As a part of its role in promoting quality youth work and providing education and training for youth workers, IUVENTA undertook a national project [PRAKTIK – Practical skills through non-formal education in youth work](#), over a two-year period (2013-2015). The project was cofunded by the European Social Fund. The PRAKTIK project focused on developing practical skills in youth work for both youth workers and youth leaders as well as contributing to change and innovation in youth work and non-formal education. The aim of the project was to improve the quality of youth work in leisure activities and to ensure the development of practical skills; provide space for youth leaders to actively participate in the preparation and implementation of activities; and ensure the transfer of know-how from youth workers to youth leaders.

The PRAKTIK project was implemented in all regions of Slovakia, apart from Bratislava. Within the PRAKTIK project, there were 35 facilitators working in the regions to ensure the implementation of the project at regional level. The project comprised three main activities with accompanying outcomes.

The aim of Activity 1 was to create a network of thematic youth centres, specifically oriented towards the creation, development and evaluation of practical education and training programmes for youth workers and youth leaders. Each youth work centre focused on a priority thematic area which resulted in an experiential education programme for youth workers and youth leaders. These programmes were developed, in the following areas, by a group of experts and the programmes were accredited under the 2008 Act on support of youth work:

- promoting a healthy lifestyle
- promoting the practical use of ICT
- development of practical skills in working with small materials
- search and support work with talented youth
- support and development of experiential activities in environmental education
- support and development of citizenship education and multiculturalism
- support and development of global education.

Quantitative outputs, relating to the establishment of thematic centres, training programmes, and publications, were also identified and measured.

The aim of Activity 2 was to improve the quality of further education and training for youth workers and to promote the use of innovative methods, such as experiential learning, and approaches in youth work. The activity aimed to teach youth workers and youth leaders how to prepare, implement and evaluate youth activities and how to share their experiences of working with young people with their peers and 20 fellow youth workers. Certificates of completion of accredited education in the field of specialized activities in youth work as provided for in the 2008 Act were awarded to each participant. Activities were supported by experts in the relevant fields, educational experts and at regional level. Quantitative outputs, relating to the training of youth workers and youth leaders, activities and accreditation, were also identified and measured.

The aim of Activity 3 was to implement short-term and long-term activities, which served as a space for practical verification of the acquired knowledge, skills and attitudes of youth leaders and youth workers. At the same time, one of the tasks of the activities was to create space for the intersection of formal and non-formal education through activities and events. Quantitative outputs, relating to short term and long-term activities, participants and methodologies, were also identified and measured.

During the project, a total of 40 entry and 37 thematic educational programmes were implemented, attended by some 500 professional and voluntary youth workers; and 40 short-term and 37 long-term activities were organised involving some 3 250 children and young people. Seven thematic publications also resulted from the project reflecting the experiences of the different regional thematic centres.

10.7 Raising awareness about youth work

Information providers

1. IUVENTA – Slovak Youth Institute
2. Association of Information and Counselling Centres for Youth
3. Youth Council of Slovakia (RMS) and Association of regional youth councils (AKRAM)

IUVENTA – Slovak Youth Institute

- provides information on educational opportunities, e.g. through [own web page](#), via information network of [Eurodesk.sk](#), Slovak version of [European Youth Portal](#) and others.
- provides advice and consultations on the [accreditation](#) of non-formal education programs in the field of youth work,
- provides information and consultation on financing youth work.

Association of information and counselling centres for youth ([ZIPCEM](#))

- provides a wide range of information services from various areas (brigades, counselling, education, leisure, etc.),
- an overview of active youth organizations providing opportunities for non-formal learning as part of the project "[In Good Hands - Learning non-formally](#)",
- network of Information centres for youth ([ICM](#)) provides information on current opportunities for non-formal education at national as well as regional level.

Youth Council of Slovakia (RMS) and Association of regional youth councils (AKRAM)

- [RMS www.mladez.sk](#) a [AKRAM](#) promote the activities of their member organizations, including education activities.

Key initiatives

1. [Conference on Youth Work \(2021\)](#) - IUVENTA

- The conference was held under the auspices of the President of the Slovak Republic, Zuzana Čaputová and the Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic, Eduard Heger.
- The conference was thematically divided into five blocks: young people and youth work during and after the pandemic, support for youth work at local level at home and abroad, possibilities of inclusion of young people with disabilities in youth work, possibilities of social inclusion in youth work.
- During the presentations and discussions, Slovak and international speakers presented current theoretical and research knowledge about youth, as well as practical experience in working with youth

- The block on the possibilities of social inclusion in youth work was marked by the presentation of publications created by DYNAMO International. These publications, which IUVENTA has translated into the Slovak language, provide recommendations for the implementation of activities with children and young people through field social work. Publications are available for download on the IUVENTA website
- The conference also included a ceremonial awarding of youth workers. The overview of the winners and more information about the event are available [here](#).

1. [Conference Empower \(2019\)](#) - IUVENTA

- Continuation of the initiative to recognize non-formal education of youth work by various stakeholders,
- Signing of the Declaration by the new [25 signatories](#),
- Examples of cooperation between different stakeholders using methods, forms or approaches to youth work.

2. **Conference Slovak Youth Report 2018** ([Konferencia Správa o mládeži 2018](#))

- Mid-term evaluation of the Implementation of the Strategy of the Slovak Republic for Youth for the Years 2014 – 2020
- Special attention paid to the discussion, in particular, to support flexibility, accessibility of systems and partnerships of all providers of education, including youth work.

3. **Declaration on the Recognition of Non-Formal Education (2013)**

- Within the framework of ESF National Project "Komprax - Competence for Practice"
- Initiative towards employers and formal education representatives on recognizing the importance and benefits of youth work to develop competences for the labour market and the overall personal and social life,
- Creation of functional partnerships promoting the continuity of formal and non-formal education with a view to recognize competences acquired in youth work.
- [Signature of the Declaration in 2013](#) (more than [100 signatories](#)),
- Separate publication on the issue of recognition of non-formal education in youth work ([Krok za krokom k uznaniu](#)).

Other initiatives

- [Europe Goes Local](#) - project of several national agencies Erasmus+ to support the development of quality youth work at municipality level,
- Publication *Reading Book of Non-formal Education in Youth Work* ([Šlabikár neformálneho vzdelávania](#))
- IUVENTA – [Supergeneration Podcast](#) – created thanks to the cooperation with the EURODESK Slovakia information network (which is part of the Erasmus + National Agency for Youth and Sports and the European Solidarity Corps), regional coordinators of the Youth Work Support Department and external collaborators. Podcasts inform youth workers and young people about European and national opportunities and where to look for them and how to use them in their personal and professional life. At the same time, they open some of the current critical topics and bring the views and opinions of experts in the given areas.

10.8 Current debates and reforms

Forthcoming policy developments

- ACT no. 488 of 25 November 2021, which amends the National Council of the Slovak Republic no. 369/1990 Coll. on General Establishment, which amends certain laws
- Informatization of education system plan towards 2030
- [Recovery plan for Slovakia](#)

Ongoing debates

1. Development of key competences and basic skills of youth

The development and strengthening of key competences of young people necessary for work as well as private life is a necessary precondition for achieving a state in which every young person will be able to fully develop their potential. Non-formal education, as well as other forms of youth work, are an irreplaceable tool in helping young people to acquire key competences.

2. Employment and financial literacy

Young people are among the groups at high risk of high unemployment, and also discrimination in the labour market and in the workplace. In 2020, an average of almost 25,000 young people in Slovakia under the age of 29 were monthly registered as jobseekers.

Youth work, through non-formal education, provides opportunities in which programs and support mechanisms can be created and implemented to develop the necessary competences of youth and gain practical experience to be better prepared for the labour market.

2. Impact of climate change on youth

One of the biggest challenges facing the current young generation is climate change. Young people should therefore be given the opportunity to actively participate in decision-making at local, national and global level and to actively support those initiatives that lead to the adoption of legislation with a long-term impact.

3. Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on youth

It is now clear that the coronavirus pandemic will have far-reaching impacts on the younger generation. According to the continuous survey "[How are you, Slovakia?](#)", initiated by the Slovak Academy of Science, MNFORCE and Seesame, young people under the age of 40 experience stress and anxiety related to the pandemic the most. There is no doubt the pandemic will take a significant mental health toll on youth. Youth workers should therefore be sufficiently prepared. Youth workers will have to adapt to the ways in which they provide their services and also the tools they use. One of the main topics today is digital youth work, which during the pandemic became a necessity.

GLOSSARY

Accreditation of an educational facility is a state approval of an educational facility's competency to realise a specialised activity within the area of youth work.

Career guidance and counselling is covered mainly by two sectors – educational sector and sector of employment services. Services organised under the responsibility of ministries and/or regional governments are available to various groups of citizens and are free of charge. Services are provided both for individuals who have not yet entered the

labour market and also job seekers who are looking for work, as well as for those who are currently employed (SAIAC, 2014)

Hobby education (in state educational system) is education taking place in schools and schools facilities (mainly in Leisure time centres/youth clubs). Providers of hobby education organize activities for pupils outside the classrooms whose content is focused on the hobbies, recreational, physical and social activities of pupils. Content of activities is different from the curriculum of compulsory school subjects. Hobby education is provided at least 60 hours in the school year.

Houses at the halfway provides social service for a certain period of time to a person in an unfavorable social situation who does not have secure accommodation after termination of social service provision in another facility, after termination of the substitute care or after the end of the protective education.

Leisure Time Centre (Youth Club) is a facility in the educational system where children and young people up to the age of 30 can participate in hobby education, community youth work or any other activities based on needs and expectations of young people.

Material need is a situation where the income of a household member does not reach the statutory life minimum and the members of the household are not employed or cannot work etc. Elementary life conditions is one hot meal a day, the necessary dressing and shelter.

Non-formal education in the field of youth work is the further education of young people, young leaders, youth leaders and youth workers organized by educational entities in order to acquire new knowledge, practical experience and skills necessary for working with youth, enabling its participants to complement, expand and deepen their education.

Non-formal youth group is the free alliance of minimum 3 young people (at least one is 18 years old) who prepare and implement own activities and initiatives. In Slovakia, non-formal youth groups can obtain financial support for their activities ([Youth Work Support Act](#)).

Special educational need is the requirement to modify the conditions, content, forms, methods and approaches in education and training for the child or pupil that arise from his or her health disadvantage or talent or its growth in a socially disadvantaged environment. These adjustments are necessary to develop the abilities or personality of a child or pupil and to achieve an adequate level of education and adequate inclusion in society,

Pupil with special educational needs is an individual who has diagnosed special educational needs. These needs are diagnosed by institution for educational counselling and prevention.

Social inclusion of young people is a process ensuring that socially excluded persons or those at risk of social exclusion have been offered opportunities and possibilities helping them to fully participate in economic, social and cultural life of a society and live their everyday lives in a way, which is considered a routine. With regard to youth, this process may be understood also as a complex system of interventions leading to creation of opportunities for young people with fewer opportunities ([Youth Report 2014](#)).

Youth initiative is a project where young people participate actively and directly in activities of their own design. The project is initiated, created and implemented by young people themselves.

Youth Information Centres are NGOs providing information for young people through various channels. They serve as the first point of contact for their questions. The umbrella organisation of youth information centres is ZIPCEM. They are supported by the financial scheme of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport.

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