



Slovenian School System Overview

July 2010

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Education population

- Slovenia is a Central European country with a population of 2.057.698 (1 January 2010).
- At the beginning of the 2009/10 school year, there were **161 805 pupils in schools providing compulsory education**, including 1553 pupils with special needs in adapted education programmes.
- The state-wide official language of instruction is Slovenian.

Administrative control

- Administration responsibilities are distributed among the national authorities, local authorities, and schools.
- **The Ministry of Education and Sport (Ministrstvo za šolstvo in šport)** is responsible for the development of pre-higher education policies; inspection procedures; the allocation of funds; the implementation of laws and administrative decisions relating to pre-primary, compulsory and upper secondary education institutions.

- **Local authorities (*občinski sveti*)** are responsible for setting up pre-school institutions and **basic schools (primary schools)**. They take part in their administration and co-finance their operation and the salaries of preschool employees.
- **Schools councils (*sveti šol*)** composed of representatives of the founder, employees, and parents, are the central governing bodies with considerable responsibilities regarding management, finances, and the teaching process.
- **School inspection** is the responsibility of the National Inspectorate for Education and Sport (*Inšpektorat Republike Slovenije za šolstvo in šport*), which falls under the authority of the Ministry of Education and Sport.

Pre-primary education

- **Pre-primary education (1-5 year)** is an integral part of education system. Pre-primary provision integrates centre-based child care and early general pre-school education.
- **Attendance is optional.** Children can be admitted from the age of 11 months until they enter compulsory education at the age of 6 (that is from 5 years and 8 months to 6 years and 8 months).
- The programmes are carried out by **public and private pre-school institutions (vrtci), pre-school units attached to basic schools (vrtci pri osnovnih šolah)** and **private pre-school teachers at a childminder's (vzgojnovarstvene družine)**.
- The Ministry of Education and Sport is in charge of the formation of staff, programmes and aids to particular groups of children.
- **The municipalities** are the main founders and direct providers of services.

Compulsory education

Pupils aged 6 enter the 9-year compulsory school.

Osnovna šola (basic school or single structure of primary and lower secondary education)	9-year compulsory education
Prvo obdobje (First cycle 1-3) (ISCED level 1)	Age 6-8
Drugo obdobje (Second cycle 4-6) (ISCED level 1)	Age 9-11
Tretje obdobje (Third cycle 7-9) (ISCED level 2)	Age 12-14

Compulsory basic education takes 9 years to complete.

Admission criteria

- **Compulsory education is free for all children** whose sixth birthday occurs in the calendar year of entry into the first grade.
- Parents have a statutory duty and a right to choose a public or private school or they may educate their child in a home situation.
- The school located in the school district of the family residence is obligated to enrol their children, but parents are free to choose another basic school of their preference with the school's approval.

Length of school day/week/year

- The school year comprises **175 to 190 days of teaching** (depending on holidays) between 1 September and 31 August of the following year.
- The school year is divided into **two assessment periods**.
- Schools are open **five days a week**.
- **The minimum number of lessons** (45 minutes) varies from **20 per week** (1st grade) to **30** (9th grade) depending on the grade and the number of optional and extracurricular subjects taken.
- Pupils are allowed to take 5 days of additional holidays during the school year.

Class size/student grouping

- The law stipulates a maximum of **28 pupils per class.**

This requirement is lower for classes that include SEN (Special Education Needs) pupils or pupils from the Roma community the maximum number of pupils per class is 21; in classes including SEN pupils. The maximum number is not specified and it is up to the schools expert group to decide with the approval of the Ministry.

- The actual class size in 2008/09 was 19 pupils on average.
- A class normally consists of pupils of the same age.

- In small schools pupils of different ages may be taught together **(multi-grade classes)**.
- In **the first cycle** pupils have **the same general teacher** for most subjects. The first year is taught by two teachers jointly, the second teacher being either a pre-primary teacher or a class teacher (the second teacher participates in teaching only half of the periods).
- In **the second cycle** (4th to 6th grade) pupils have **the same general teacher** for most subjects and **specialist teachers** are gradually introduced in education (teachers of expressive and physical subjects and also foreign language specialists are introduced initially).
- During **the third cycle** (7th to 9th grade) pupils are taught exclusively by **specialist subject teachers**.
- Some subjects (mother tongue, mathematics, foreign language in the last two years (8th and 9th grade) may be taught by two teachers or teaching may involve in-class grouping or subject streaming; it is up to the school to decide among these three options.

Curriculum control and content

- **The National Curriculum Document**, adopted by the National Council of Experts for General Education, comprises general content of compulsory subjects and general objectives which all pupils should achieve.
- Within this framework, schools and teachers specify the actual content of subjects.
- They choose their **own teaching methods** and have the freedom to select textbooks and exercise books of their choice (although textbooks must be selected from a list of approved materials adopted by the Council of Experts).
- Basic school activities include the **compulsory curriculum** and **extracurricular activities**.

Compulsory school subjects in basic education are:

- mother tongue (Slovenian; Hungarian and Italian in ethnically mixed areas),
- one foreign language studied from the age of 9 to 14,
- mathematics,
- geography, history, civic and patriotic education and ethics,
- environmental studies, physics, chemistry, biology,
- social studies, music, visual arts,
- technologies (ICT included), home economics and sports.
- In the last cycle, schools must offer optional compulsory subjects in the field of social sciences and humanities, natural sciences and technology, and foreign languages.

Extra activities consist of

- before-school and after-school classes and other forms of pupils' care,
- supplementary lessons (for underachievers),
- additional lessons (for talented pupils),
- extra-curricular activities and out-of-school classes.
- In after-school classes pupils study, complete their homework and participate in cultural or artistic activities and sports.

Assessment, progression and qualifications

- Pupils are assessed by their teachers on the basis of the learning objectives laid down in the curriculum and the assessment procedures' regulations.
- Pupils' learning outcomes are assessed continuously in written, oral and practical forms and by tests set by teachers.
- Teachers use **descriptive grades** in **the first cycle** and **numerical grades** only in **the second** and **the third cycle**.
- Pupils and their parents receive information about the pupil's progress regularly throughout the school year.

- At the end of each school year they receive **a report** which contains the grades awarded in individual subjects.
- **An overall grade for total achievement**, which was very important in the past, was abolished in the school year 2008/09.

State-wide assesment

- is organized at the end of the second and the third cycle.
- **After the second cycle**, written tests in mother tongue, mathematics, and a foreign language are organised. The participation of pupils is not compulsory.
- **At the end of the ninth year**, external assessment in 3 subjects is organised: in the mother tongue, mathematics and a third subject selected by the Minister for Education each individual school year (biology, foreign language, geography).
- **Pupils' results of the external assesment** do not affect the grades or the progression of pupils to the next cycle or to the upper secondary level of education.
- Instead, they only provide feedback to schools, parents, and pupils.

Post-compulsory education/upper secondary and post-secondary level

<i>Splošno srednje izobraževanje – Gimnazija</i> (general upper secondary education)	15-18 years of age (four years)
<i>Srednje tehniško in strokovno izobraževanje</i> (technical upper secondary education)	15-18 years of age (four years)
<i>Poklicno izobraževanje</i> (short and medium length vocational upper secondary education)	15-17 years of age
<i>Maturitetni tečaj</i> (preparatory classes for the matura examination, classified as ISCED level 4)	19 or more (one year)
<i>Poklicni tečaji</i> (vocational courses, classified as ISCED level 4)	19-20 years of age (one year)

Higher education

- Tertiary education in Slovenia comprises higher vocational college education and higher academic and professional education.
- Higher vocational education is provided by higher vocational colleges (*višje strokovne šole*) that offer two-year vocational education at the sub-degree level.
- By the academic year 2010/11, all higher education institutions have introduced the three-cycle structure of three degrees: Bachelor, Master and Doctorate.

Ongoing reforms and policy initiatives related to “ET 2020” strategic framework

- In April 2009, the minister of education appointed a group of experts to prepare the new **White Paper on Education**. They will review the current situation and draft the development plan for the future.
- Their tasks include an overview and analysis of the current situation in education, and identification of trends and policies in the EU, especially in the priority areas.
- The group is expected to complete its work by 1 March 2011.

Source: Eurydice, European School Systems, Jan. 2011

“The important thing is not to stop questioning.”

Albert Einstein