Types of institution

Upper secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary education in the Slovak Republic is provided by secondary schools, which are classified according to the Education Act:

- gymnasiums,
- secondary vocational schools,
- secondary sports schools,
- conservatories.

Secondary schools provide a wide range of education according to pupils’ interest and abilities (ISCED 252, 253, 353, 354, 344, 454, and 554).

Education is mostly full-time form but it can also have a part-time form (evening, part-time, distance), or individual form.

The maximum number of pupils in a class is 31 (extended by 3 if allowed by law), and the minimum number is 17. For part-time study, the minimum number is 8 pupils.

Pupils can take a part of their study abroad.

According to Act No. 596/2003 Coll. on state administration in the education and school self-government, state administration at the secondary school level is provided by self-governing regions, which are responsible for funding, personnel, material, equipment and space in educational process. Self-governing regions make decisions on founding schools, registering and removing them from the network of schools, appointing headteachers usually for a 5-year term, the number of pupils admitted to the first grade. They also provide funding for secondary schools founded by the church or a private entity provided these schools are in the network of schools.

The network is a list of schools and school facilities, which are authorised to provide education and training. The network is administered by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic and it is published on the internet.

Schools listed in the network are obliged to provide education according to the respective state educational programme and they are funded according to the Act No. 597/2003 Coll. on funding of primary and secondary schools and school facilities (SK).

Breakdown of the funding from the chapter of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport for school founders for a calendar year is based on the normatively allocated sources for each
school. It is set according to the number of pupils and it is intended for salaries and school expenses.

**Gymnasium**

Gymnasium is an academically oriented school providing general education at ISCED 344 level. Currently, 35% of pupils in the Slovak Republic study at gymnasiums in three educational programmes:

- **four-year** educational programme,
- **five-year** educational programme,
- **eight-year** educational programme.

In addition to regular 4-year gymnasiums of various focuses, there are 5-year bilingual gymnasiums. In order for gymnasiums to be recognised as bilingual, at least three subjects must be taught in the second language of instruction (the first language of instruction must be Slovak). Intensive language training of pupils in the second language of instruction takes place mainly in the first grade in the extent of at least 8 lessons a week. At the moment there are Slovak-English, Slovak-German, Slovak-French, Slovak-Italian and Slovak-Spanish bilingual gymnasiums.

There are 8-year gymnasiums for gifted pupils, motivated towards academic study, which enrol pupils who have completed the fifth grade of the primary school. Since as many as 31.8% gymnasium pupils study in the 8-year programme, as of the school year 2019/2020, the number of pupils will be regulated at 5% of the population year by the decision of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport. This decision was adopted based on the identified negative impact of the significant outflow of talented pupils from the second level of the primary school (lower secondary education) to 8-year gymnasiums.

During the first four grades of an 8-year gymnasium, pupils can be reassigned back to the primary school if they fail a grade and they are not allowed to repeat it, they lose their medical fitness or sport performance, or upon their legal representative’s request.

Gifted pupils can be assigned to a higher grade even without completing the previous grade.


**Secondary vocational school**

Vocational education has a long tradition in the Slovak Republic. It provides education at ISCED 253, 353, 354 levels. Despite the increase in applicants for study at gymnasiums, about 60% of pupils still study at secondary vocational schools. However, the number of pupils is decreasing and there is a decline in the interest in ISCED 353 study fields – various professions graduates of which are awarded the Certificate of Apprenticeship. Thus we see a lack of some professions in the practice. The cost of one pupil’s secondary vocational school study is about 2100-3700 EUR (gymnasium study 1500 EUR), despite that, the graduates do not reach the required level of professional competencies. It is caused by the fast development of technology, which the schools are not equipped with in the real-time. In order to improve the situation in the training of experts, the dual education system started to operate
in Slovakia in cooperation with employers. Since school year 2015/2016, secondary vocational school pupils in Slovakia have had a possibility to train in the dual education system in order to increase their chances of finding a job. This is allowed by the Act no.61/2015 Coll. on vocational education and training [5] (SK).

Pupils prepare for the pursuit of a profession, group of professions or vocational activities directly at an employer’s workplace according to the specific requirements of the employer. Not only are the employers in the system of dual education allowed to enter the vocational education process, but they are also fully responsible for the organisation, content, and quality of practical training and they cover all expenses related to the funding of practical training.

Secondary vocational school educates and trains pupils in at least 2-year and at most 5-year educational programmes of the respective field of education. Secondary vocational schools currently offer 27 study fields with more than 80 study programmes.

**Secondary vocational schools prepare pupils for practice - particularly for the pursuit of vocational activities**, mainly technical-economic, economic, pedagogic, health-care, social-legal, administrative, artistic and cultural.

Upon completion of secondary vocational study by “maturita" (school leaving examination), pupils can apply for higher education.

The Ministry of Education, Sport and Science of the Slovak Republic publishes on its website a list of occupations with a surplus or lack of secondary school graduates thus helping the founders with registering and removing schools from the network.

**Secondary sports school**

Secondary sports schools are governed by the same legislative regulations as regular gymnasiums or secondary vocational schools. **Sports' training takes place** within the range of 10-24 lessons a week according to the sports methodologies (in case of gymnasiums). Implementation of sports training is within the schools’ competence.

**Conservatory**

Conservatories **provide complex artistic and artistic-pedagogical education.** It prepares pupils for the pursuit of professions in arts and for teaching artistic and vocational subjects in arts educational programmes.

It is a kind of secondary school, which is divided into two types:

1. Music and drama conservatory,
2. Dance conservatory.

**Music and drama conservatories** provide education and training in the field of singing, music, dance and music-drama art in a 6-year continuous programme, in which pupils take the school-leaving examination upon completion of the fourth grade and graduation examination upon completion of the sixth grade.
**Dance conservatories** provide education and training in the field of dance in an 8-year continuous educational programme, which is completed by the school-leaving examination and graduation examination in the last grade.

**Organisation of post-secondary non-tertiary education**

follow-up forms of vocational education include

- extension courses,
- post-secondary study,

provided by secondary vocational schools.

**Extension courses**

Extension courses are organised in secondary vocational school in fields of study which are linked to the previous vocational education and training in related fields completed by obtaining secondary vocational secondary education; they are completed by a secondary school-leaving examination.

Extension courses provide higher level of general and broadly profiled vocational education and training, by which the pupils

- improve their knowledge for the qualified pursuit of their professions and specialise in the pursuit of some technical-economic activities of operational nature,
- prepare for further education.

**Post-secondary education**

Post-secondary education is organised at vocational secondary schools with the purpose of improving and deepening pupils’ qualification for the pursuit of professions and professional activities.

Secondary vocational schools may organise post-secondary study in educational programmes designed for applicants who have previously received full secondary vocational education or full secondary general education.

The post-secondary study is divided as follows:

- **improvement study** or **innovation study**, in which pupils improve or innovate their knowledge and skills in the already completed study field at secondary vocational school; the study is to be completed by final post-secondary examination,
- **qualification study**, in which pupils achieve special vocational qualification in a field of study other than the one which they took the school-leaving examination in; the study is to be completed by a special vocational component of the secondary school-leaving examination (hereinafter referred to as “vocational component”), which was not a part of the previously taken school-leaving examination.
Geographical accessibility

Slovakia is divided into 8 regions - self-governing regions, which are the founders of secondary schools. When registering to and removing schools from the secondary school network, the founders take into account the population of the region, social composition, cultural and national particularities, interest and needs of the region. Geographical distribution of secondary schools is well-balanced and proportional to the population of the given region. Bratislava region with the capital has a specific status. Due to its high population, Bratislava region has the highest number of secondary schools of all kinds.

Supply of schools for pupils is sufficient in each region and the supply currently exceeds the demand.

There are some study fields and programmes in the network of secondary schools and conservatories which are not provided in every region, and so secondary schools offer pupils a possibility to stay at youth dormitories, which are usually a part of the schools as well as other services, such as boarding, medical care, proper use of leisure time in the form of various leisure time activities, etc.

Overview of the geographical accessibility of schools is presented in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-governing region</th>
<th>G</th>
<th>SVS</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>total</th>
<th>population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bratislava</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>641 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Košice</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>800 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prešov</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>822 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banská Bystrica</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>650 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Žilina</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>691 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nitra</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>680 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trnava</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>560 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trenčín</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>590 000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Legend: G- gymnasium, SVS – secondary vocational school, C- conservatory

Sources:


Admission requirements and choice of school

Pupils can be admitted to 8-year gymnasiums, 8-year sports gymnasiums, and dance conservatories
after having successfully completed the fifth grade of primary school.

Applicants for 4-year gymnasium study can be admitted if they have successfully completed the ninth grade of primary school.

Applicants for 5-year bilingual gymnasium study can be admitted if they have successfully completed the eighth or ninth grade of primary school.

Applicants for secondary vocational school or conservatory study can be admitted if they have successfully completed the ninth grade of the primary school.

Admission examination dates and profile subjects for the admission examinations are determined by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic [2] based on the proposals by secondary school headteachers. Admission examinations may consist of a maximum of three profile subjects. The profile subjects of admission examinations for secondary schools with national minority languages of instruction are supplemented by the secondary school’s language of instruction.

The secondary school headteacher will determine the form, content, extent of the admission examination and the criteria for admission, following the discussion with the school’s pedagogical board.

One of the conditions for admission to study at secondary schools of artistic nature and conservatories is successful completion of the so-called talent examination which serves for verifying special abilities, skills and talent. These examinations take place within the time period of 15 March - 30 April of the respective school year.

Admission examinations are held on the same date all over the Slovak Republic. The first round is held in the second full May week and it starts on Monday. If the number of pupils planned to be admitted is not reached, the second round of admission examinations is held in the third full June week starting on Tuesday.

Primary school pupils can simultaneously submit two applications for secondary school study. If they are applying for study at a school that requires verification of special abilities, skills or talent, they can submit another application. Applicants with changed working ability will also attach a relevant medical assessment committee’s statement on their ability to study in the chosen field. Applications of pupils who are younger than 18 must be signed by their parents (legal representatives).

When deciding on admission, the secondary school headteacher takes into account the result of the admission examination, pupil’s results in subject Olympiads and competitions, which are related to the study field the pupil is applying for. If the applicant achieves at least 90% in the nationwide testing of 9-grade primary school pupils, he/she will be admitted without taking admission examinations.

Foreigners can also be admitted to study at a secondary school if they demonstrate the required knowledge of the language of instruction.

The admission examination results will be published by the headteacher within 3 days. Subsequently, the decision on admission to study will be sent to the admitted applicants.

Secondary schools will enrol the admitted applicants who have received the decision on admission to study at the respective secondary school based on the enrolment form issued by the applicant’s primary school. Primary schools will issue only one enrolment form for each applicant. The form is
transferable and it will be kept by the secondary school to which the applicant was enrolled.

If the applicant is admitted to another secondary school as well, he/she will submit the enrolment form to the school to which he/she will enrol. Results of an admission examination are only valid in the school year in which the examination is taken.

Secondary school “graduates” with the school-leaving certificate can apply for post-secondary education at secondary schools. They can choose from the fields of economic, technical, artistic or medical orientation.

The extension courses are organised in secondary vocational school fields of study which are linked to the previous vocational education and training in the related fields of study completed by secondary vocational education.

Secondary school “graduates” can submit their applications for extension courses and post-secondary study by 31st May. The applications are to be submitted to the headteacher of the respective school.

The deadline for unsuccessful applicants for higher education is extended to 31st July.

The first date of admission examinations is always planned for the last full week of June. The second examination will be held within the last two full weeks of August. The specific date of the examination is defined by the headteacher. The headteacher will publish the admission requirements one month before the admission examination date at the latest.

Age levels and grouping of pupils/students

**Teaching at secondary schools is organised in grades according to the age in the classes of each grade.** Education is coeducational. There is not a strict division of pupils according to their abilities. The age of secondary school pupils is usually 15 -19 years with the exception of pupils of 8-year gymnasiuums, bilingual gymnasiuums, and conservatories. Extension courses and post-secondary education are not limited by age.

Each subject is taught by a teacher with appropriate approbation.

Study at all secondary schools is to a greater extent organized as a full-time study in classes with a maximum of 30 pupils, which can be extended to 33 pupils in cases defined by law.

The part-time form of study can be organized as evening or distance learning. Distance learning is not used yet.

The full-time study can be combined with part-time study. Education according to an individual educational programme or individual learning plan is also allowed.

Secondary school classes can be divided into two or more groups for teaching of compulsory and optional subjects; it is possible to create groups comprised of pupils from different grades for teaching of non-compulsory subjects.

At secondary schools it is possible to divide classes for teaching of compulsory and optional subjects into two and more groups and it is possible to create groups of pupils from different grades for
teaching of non-compulsory subjects.

It is possible to group pupils of different classes of the same grade for teaching of Religious/Ethics education. If the number of pupils in one group for teaching of Religious education or Ethics education drops below 12, it is possible to group pupils from different grades as well.

Special vocational training at conservatories takes place individually, in groups or collectively. A group is comprised of 5 - 9 pupils depending on the specialisation of the study.

The typical age of pupils involved in the post-secondary education not included in the tertiary education is 19 - 20 years; age limits are not legislatively defined.

**Organisation of the school year**

In the Slovak Republic, the school year starts on 1st September and ends on 31st August of the following year. It is divided into the period of school lessons and the period of school holidays. Instruction period is structured into

1. term (starts on 1st September and ends on 31st January of the following calendar year) and
2. term (starts on 1st February and ends on 30th June of the standard calendar year).

The period of school holidays consists of

- **Autumn holidays** last three days. They are set by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic every year usually for the end of October.
- **Christmas holidays** last from 23rd December to 8th January of the following calendar year,
- **Mid-year holidays** last one day following the end of the first term,
- **Spring holidays** last one week. Their beginning is usually set by the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic within the period between the second half of February and the first half of March,
- **Easter holidays** last four days over the period of the Easter holiday and
- **Summer holidays** last from the end of the second term until the beginning of the first term in the new school year.

The school year is 36-40 weeks long and the number of days of learning is about 180- depending on the number of free days and holidays in the calendar year.

The maximum number of lessons per week at 4-year and bilingual gymnasiums is 36; the maximum number of lessons per week in the first grade of 8-year gymnasiums is 30, in the second and third grade 34, and in the fifth to eighth grade 36. The weekly number of lessons at secondary vocational schools is at minimum 33 and at maximum 35. General education at secondary vocational schools comprises 35-45% of the study and depends on the educational programme.

Details on the organisation of a school year are published annually in [pedagogical-organisational guidelines](#) (SK) accessible at the website of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic.

The post-secondary study is organised as the full-time study, part-time study or combined study.
The extension courses take at least two years. The study is organised as the full-time study, part-time study or combined study and it is completed by a secondary school-leaving examination.

**Organisation of the school day and week**

The creation of the timetable depends mainly on the teaching plan. Teaching plans are drafted for orientation. They define the number of lessons pupils need to take throughout the whole study and give headteachers and teachers of secondary schools space for the internal and external differentiation of pupils. The structure and proportionality of subjects in the teaching plan have to correspond with the function and type of school. For secondary schools – gymnasiums and vocational secondary schools, there are several variants of teaching plans.

The timetable at secondary schools is based on the weekly number of lessons for individual subjects and it is drafted by the headteacher. In the drafting of a school timetable, but mainly of a daily timetable, health, pedagogical, psychological and psycho-hygienic principles are respected.

A lesson at secondary schools takes **45 minutes**. Usually, there is a 20-minute break after the third lesson. Otherwise, there are 10-minute breaks after each lesson. If the instruction of pupils from the same class continues in the afternoon, there is at least a 30-minute break between the morning and afternoon lessons. Lessons alternate according to their difficulty in such a way that pupils have enough time to relax.

Instruction in schools takes place 5 days a week. The lessons usually start at 8 a.m., or at 7 a.m. at the earliest. Instruction of pupils younger than 18 usually finishes by 6 p.m., at 8 p.m. at the latest.

Instruction of a pupil in one day takes at most 8 lessons (not including sports and artistic training). Vocational training of the first- and second-grade pupils per day takes at most 6 lessons. Vocational training of the 3rd -5th grade pupils per day takes at most 7 lessons. Vocational training can start at 6 a.m. at earliest and finish at 10 p.m. at latest.

Secondary school headteachers can exempt pupils from attending compulsory subject lessons or physical activities based on the relevant doctor’s statement.

A lesson at secondary vocational schools takes 45 minutes; vocational training and vocational practice lessons take 60 minutes.

Schools set their timetables according to their possibilities and needs in compliance with appropriate legislation. The start of instruction at secondary schools is also set with regard to the transportation possibilities and pupil’s commuting from different part of the region.

Schools can use their premises and facilities for business in compliance with the Education Act. They offer boarding services, accommodation services, courses and seminars for adults, sale of various small products made in the course of the practice, etc. They can let out their premises for different activities if approved by the founder.
Legislative references

National Council of the Slovak Republic, 2008. Act No. 245/2008 on education and training (Education Act) and on the change and supplement to some acts as amended by subsequent provisions (Zákon č. 245/2008 Z.z. o výchove a vzdelávaní (školský zákon) a o zmene a doplnení niektorých zákonov v znení neskorších predpisov [9]) (last accessed 07/01/2020).


Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic, 2009. Decree No. 231/2009 on details and organisation of school year on primary schools, secondary schools, basic schools of arts, practical schools, vocational secondary schools and language schools as amended by subsequent provision (Vyhláška č. 231/2009 Z.z. o podrobnostiach o organizácii školského roka na základných školách, na stredných školách, na základných umeleckých školách, na praktických školách, na odborných učilištiach a na jazykových školách v znení neskorších predpisov [10]) (last accessed 12/07/2019).

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