2020

Modernisation of the vocational and professional education

In February 2020, the Councils of experts of the Republic of Slovenia for general education and vocational and technical education passed the amended upper secondary education programmes. The programmes include a new component or other forms of educational activities: a compulsory set of contents on active citizenship, as well as non-compulsory contents in gimnazije and interest activities in vocational and technical education. Furthermore, the Council of experts of the Republic of Slovenia for general education approved in February the subject-curriculum and catalogues of knowledge for the above set of contents. The revised programmes will come into operation with the school year 2020/2021.

Other policy developments

According to the Ordinance on the temporary prohibition of assembly in educational institutions and universities, as well as independent higher education institutions (sl [1]), all kindergartens, school, and most of institutions of education of SEN children, all adult education organisations, universities, and independent higher education institutions, residential halls for basic school, upper secondary and/or higher education students, and music schools closed their doors and have remained closed since 16 March 2020. All childminder, too stopped their operations, as well.

The Ministry of education and National Education Institution Slovenia (ZRSŠ) communicated to basic schools and upper secondary schools the recommendation on how to organise and provide distance learning. At the state’s level, a coordination group was set up. The group coordinates and steers the activities of state institutions in terms of providing support to schools. A single entry point for head teachers and teachers to look for support and guidance, namely at the Slovenian educational network (SIO).

In view of the coronavirus epidemics SARS-CoV-2, several deadlines have been extended: enrolment in short cycle higher vocational education programmes and higher education study programmes; application for several calls; cancellation of professional examination for education staff, etc.

Most schools organised distance learning already on the first day after closing, namely supported by the ZRSŠ and ARNES, contentwise and technical support respectively.

In March 2020, the National Education Institution Slovenia (ZRSŠ) after a month-long public debate of experts published the proposed revision of the concept of identifying gifted and talented learners and educational activities for them. The group of experts on education and educational activities for gifted and talented children at ZRSŠ elaborated the document, and the focus groups gave their critical
input, assessment and recommendation. The draft new document is the revised concept of identifying gifted and talented learners and educational activities for such learners at basic school (1999) and upper secondary school (2007). It was premised on appropriate expertise. It provides for identifying potential gifted and talented learners in schools, as well as in kindergartens, and it further outlines the role of mentors, pedagogical coordinators, school counselling service and teachers; It underlines individualisation, differentiation and personalisation in the scope of mainstream instruction and the significance of continuous education and training.

In February 2020, the Minister of education, according to the Adult Education Act of 2018, adopted the Enrolment on basic school for adults programme Rules (sl [2]). It introduced minor changes to the enrolment procedure and new concept of personal educational plan, how to develop and follow it. It allows tracking and reviewing the progress participants make. The Rules will come into operation in September 2020.

In February 2020, the new School textbook fund administration Rules came into operation (sl [3]). School textbook funds have been separate units of school libraries and administered by school librarians. The new rules provide for an expanded range of learning material kept in the textbook fund, and increase in autonomy of school in providing material for learning. It highlights the significance of proper choice of learning material that parents buy. Upper secondary schools that have set up a textbook fund (school autonomy) charge lending fees. Textbook funds are mandatory for basic schools and are state funded. The new methodology used to calculate annual funds now applies to exercise books for grade three students, too. So, the state funds exercise books for all students in the first educational cycle (grades 1–3). However, schools have discretion to allocate funds across grades. School libraries are now included in the information system COBISS as specified by the new Librarianship Act (2015) and related reforms. The system will provide information needed to oversee the implementation of the rules, namely with relevant data.

In January 2020, the Government of the Republic of Slovenia adopted the new scholarship policy for the next five-year period (2020–2024) (.pdf, sl [4]). The same as until now, the state will fund scholarships for occupations in demand or 1,000 new scholarships every year to the tune of €1.23 billion per year. One plans to expand the staffing offer for occupations in demand and increase the enrolment in schools with education programmes for occupations in demand. The set of the programmes has not changed significantly and most of them remain at the level of upper secondary vocational and technical education.

2019

Modernisation of the vocational and professional education

In August 2019, the Ministry forwarded for public debate the new Enrolment in basic school for adults Rules (sl [5]). It specifies the call for enrolment, application procedure, enrolment, content of personal educational plan, rules of providers, and sign out. The Rules is planned to be adopted in the fall of 2019 and start to apply from the school year 2019/2020.

In July 2019, the National Assembly passed the new Vocational Education Act (sl [6]). It evens out the managing of students under age and of age in terms of requests for excused absence from school, notifying parents about the education of their children. Parents of students of age will continue to request for excused of their children's absence from school without prior acquiring their consent. Teachers will have the power to disallow attendance to students whose unbecoming behaviour will disrupt seriously the lessons. Furthermore, students will face expulsion upon being issued the fourth official reprimand.
On this topic and based on the decision by the Council of experts of the Republic of Slovenia for vocational and technical education, one published in January 2019, several amended or new education programmes for upper-secondary vocational and professional education. They all shall start with the school year 2019/2020.

Other policy developments

In December 2019, the Government of the Republic of Slovenia adopted the National Strategy for the Development of Reading Literacy 2019–2030 (.doc, sl [7]). Its aim is for each and everyone in Slovenia to develop the level of literacy needed for them to become skilled at active life and work. The development of reading literacy is the foundation for economic progress, sustainable development, and social cohesion. Furthermore, continuous development of reading literacy at all ages is a prerequisite of lifelong learning. The strategy includes a framework of specific goals for different age/target groups, and descriptors of reading literacy levels per age group. For further information about the strategy see the Overall national education strategy and key objectives [8].

Since November until February 2020, the draft new Act on Intervention for Children and Youth with Emotional and Conduct Disorders was coordinated inter ministeries. The public debate on the draft ended in August 2019. Its intent is to secure a single system of holistic intervention for children and youth with emotional and conduct disorders in relevant institutes that up until now had been provided within activities of various sectors, as well as set up situation to allow for professional centres that would pursue preventive activities with children in kindergartens and schools. See further information under Reforms in basic and upper secondary general education.

In September 2019, the new Organisation and reimbursement of travel cost for SEN children and youth Rules (sl [9]) came into operation. The Rules define travelling of SEN children for whom funds are provided by the Ministry of education. The major change is the organisation of transport of preschool children who are entitled under the law on early treatment, and these children are now in equal position with children in adapted programmes at educational institution for SEN children and youth. The Rules came about also after the initiative put forward by parents claiming that they can provide for children to travel to and back from school or institution.

End of September 2019, the Ministry of education, science and sport and the Education, science and culture trade union of Slovenia signed an Agreement on the position of mobile teachers for additional professional support and assistance and teachers for additional professional support and assistance (sl [10]). The agreement specifies common travel cost reimbursement and funds to reimburse for the activities of the same nature performed.

In August 2019, the Ministry of education forwarded to public debate the draft new Textbook fund administration Rules. See further information under National reforms in school education [11].

Starting with the school year 2019/2020 and based on the strike agreement described in the next paragraph, a new post for form teacher will be introduced; it places form teachers one salary grade higher than the post of teachers in whatever title. Salary grades shall go up one grade for all teachers in November 2019, and for all teachers in the title adviser and counsellor in September 2020.

Based on the strike agreement, agreement on salaries and annexes to the collective agreement signed by the Government of the Republic of Slovenia and public sector unions one adopted in published in December 2018 and January 2019 respectively, the Public Sector Salary System Act (en [12]), annexes to collective agreements for non-commercial activities, public sector, education and training activities, as well as other instruments to support their enforcement.
2018

Upper secondary vocational and technical education

As for the modernisation of the upper secondary vocational and technical education described under the reforms of 2017, one adopted, end of April the Rules that the Ministry of education put up for public discussion in March 2018. The Rules specify for upper secondary schools:

- enrolment
- assessment
- adjustment of student’s school duties
- school order
- school documentation
- forms of official documents: form and content of official documents
- slovenian language course
- living in residence halls for upper secondary students.

For more information, see the reforms in basic school and gimnazija education of 2018.

Integration of migrant children seeking subsidiary protection and children with subsidiary protection into education

In the beginning of December 2018, the Government of the Republic of Slovenia and public sector unions signed the strike agreements, salary agreement, and annexes to collective agreement. The signing of the documents secured an increase in salaries of most public sector employees, and increase in certain benefits, as well. All public sector employees, apart from doctors, high officials and directors, will be appointed one, two, three or even four grades higher on the salary scale. Furthermore, the Government submitted to the National Assembly a proposed new Public sector salary system Act that shall introduce a lag in employee promotion, namely from April to December, and extend the restraints for job performance related payments as it was included in the agreement between the Government and unions.

In the school year 2018/2019, the rules on the Slovenian language course for upper secondary students came in operation. For further information about the course, see the Modernisation of gimnazija education 2018.

In July 2018, the rules on assessment for persons under international protection with no proof of educational qualification was published. The rules specify the content, organisation and criteria of assessment of knowledge that individuals with no proof of educational qualification need to enter upper secondary education.

For further information, reforms in basic school and gimnazija education of 2018.

As of December 2017, the decree on methods and conditions of upholding the rights of persons under subsidiary protection came into operation. It specifies the education of persons who cannot provide evidence of formal educational qualification. As to the enrolment in the initial year of short upper secondary vocational and upper secondary technical and general education, the decree specified the initial assessment.

Other policy development

In the beginning of December 2018, the Government of the Republic of Slovenia and public sector
unions signed the strike agreements, salary agreement, and annexes to collective agreement ([sl][21]). The signing of the documents secured an increase in salaries of most public sector employees, and increase in certain benefits, as well. All public sector employees, apart from doctors, high officials and directors, will be appointed one, two, three or even four grades higher on the salary scale. Furthermore, the Government submitted to the National Assembly a proposed new Public sector salary system Act that shall introduce a lag in employee promotion, namely from April to December, and extend the restraints for job performance related payments as it was included in the agreement between the Government and unions.

In the 2018/2019 school year, the new standardised organisation of working hours for basic and upper secondary school teachers came into operation. Earlier it was tested on the selected schools. Its background is the amendment to the Collective agreement ([sl][24]) in education. For further information, see the reforms on basic school and gimnazija [20].

The National assembly of the Republic of Slovenia adopted in January 2018 the new Adult education Act ([sl][25]). The Act specifies the content of public service in adult education that includes the programme of basic school for adults and counselling activity in:

- inclusion in the programme of basic school for adults and continuing on the educational patch
- inclusion in officially the recognised education programmes for adults that do not award officially recognised educational qualification
- inclusion in non-formal education programmes for adults
- assessment and documenting the knowledge and skills gained in the non-formal education and informal learning recorded, namely for personal development, continuing education and training, as well as entering the labour market, and
- self-reliant learning.

Public service shall be provided by public organisations for adult education that are part of the public network in a way for the network to cover the entire area of the Republic of Slovenia.

In March 2018, the Minister passed the decision to set up the Analytical centre. For more information, see reforms in pre-school education of 2017 [26].

In February 2018, the law ([sl][27]) on special rights of the Italian and Hungarian ethnic communities in education was passed and it will come into operation on 1 September 2018. For more information, see other policy developments of 2017 below.

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