

COUNTRY OVERVIEW

SLOVAKIA



<http://keyconet.eun.org>



SHORT SUMMARY

Providing a national description contextualizing key competence development in your country [rationale, objectives etc.]

The initiatives carried out by the National Institute for Education address all key competences listed in the 2006 European Parliament's 'Recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning'.

The overall approach to the development of key competences could be characterised as a targeted approach focusing on more educational dimensions. Regarding the measures supporting the development, on a national level, of key competences, subject literacy and cross-curricular literacy, in 2008 the Slovak Republic approved the School Act. On this basis, the Slovakian Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport approved new pedagogical documents for the state educational programmes at ISCED 0, ISCED 1, ISCED 2 and ISCED 3. The on-going reform of state educational programmes is focuses on an innovation and change in educational standards in terms of quality, and at the same time on the development of new educational programs that understand competences to be a creative ability to solve problems.

Various experimental pilot projects or projects focused on the training of teachers, etc. are being carried out as a mean of support for the development of key competences.

KCD INITIATIVES:

What relevant key competence related initiatives (e.g. curricular reform/national strategy/pilot project/public consultation etc. in relation to students' curricula and assessment, teacher training, school organization, and learning resources) have taken place in your country over the past five years, and which are planned in the future? You may also refer here to the 2012 case notes produced for your country, and any other initiatives which will be the focus of the 2013 case notes.

In 2008 the School Act was adopted, establishing a two-level curriculum, i.e. the state educational programme and the school educational program. The National Institute for Education and the National Institute for Vocational Education developed state educational programmes for pre-primary, primary, lower and upper secondary education, all of which included key competences (according to the Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council on key competences for lifelong learning of 18 December 2006). The first versions of the state educational programmes were approved by the Slovakian Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport in June 2008. Presently, state education programs are under reform. Workgroups and subject committees have been established at the National Institute for Education (made up of teachers and other experts). Developed documents are available for consultation and debate on the National Institute for Education website. The development of a new portal for teachers is being planned.



The National Institute for Education has introduced many initiatives for the implementation of key competences. These initiatives address all key competences listed in the European Parliament's Recommendation. For example, basic competences in science and technology and transversal skills (particularly problem solving and decision taking skills) within the project 'Hands On', or social and civic competences and transversal skills (particularly creativity, critical thinking and problem solving skills) within the project 'Integrated Thematic Instruction'. These aforementioned initiatives were subject to experimental verification.

The Hands On project, based on a constructivist approach, action-based education and the use of scientific methods, enables a steady development of all key competences, especially learning to learn and basic competences in science and technology. Students are led to:

-  Express their own opinions, ask questions, learn how to recognise and define a scientific problem that they will examine,
-  Define assumptions (hypotheses) individually or in a groups, research into and suggest procedures for the verification of these assumptions,
-  Discuss their own concepts, findings and thoughts with classmates in a group, with a teacher or with a researcher on the topic in question (from the Slovak Academy for Sciences or other research institutes),
-  Verify their conclusions using existing literature or discuss them again with experts and register them using graphics,
-  Present their findings in a classroom to their peers, interpret findings and conclusions and compare to those of others.

The project enables the development of non-cognitive elements in a learning process: the development of students' personal and social skills (communicative skills, critical thinking, cooperative skills, ability to cooperate, problem solving and the transversal skill learning to learn). It also enables the direct involvement of scientific experts and parents in the teaching process.

The **Integrated Thematic Instruction** project uses a constructivist approach, active teaching methods, project-based themes and co-operative education, enabling the development of all key competences. Integrating the content of two or more subjects into a central theme develops, in particular, communication in the mother tongue and in foreign languages and learning to learn. A detailed social curriculum containing a precise methodology of life-skills development, and detailed tools for class management allow for an effective development of social and civic competences and transversal skills, especially creativity, critical thinking and problem solving.

In foreign language education, the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) is used to establish the minimum attainment levels in foreign language proficiency. A particular level of attainment is set for the end of lower and upper secondary education and these levels

vary according to whether they apply to the student's first or the second foreign language. State education programmes for foreign languages (English, German, Russian, French, Italian and Spanish) are linked to the CEFR.

Teachers are also trained to be able to develop learners' key competences. One of the main tasks of the Methodology and Pedagogy Centre is to organise and implement training activities of pedagogical and non-pedagogical employees within accredited training programs and the professional development of teachers and of professional employees in schools and educational facilities. The programmes aim to develop professional skills and to support the development of educational programmes in schools and in educational facilities. The professional development of teachers and professional employees presents a wide range of educational activities, from self-education with informal activities to various continuing education programmes (formal education). Continuing education is an important part of professional development for teachers; teachers can also obtain credits that are reflected in a special salary bonus. The Methodology and Pedagogy Centre, as a budgetary organisation of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport, provides continuing education within the National Project 'Professional and Career Development of Pedagogical Employees', which ran until 2013 (national project funded by the European Social Funds).

The National Institute for Education implemented continuing education for teachers aimed at the development of teachers' key competences (projects funded by the European Social Funds):

Training of primary school teachers in foreign languages regarding the conception of teaching foreign languages in primary and secondary education

(five-year national project funded by the European Social Funds, from September 2008)

This project is built on the implementation of the new conception of teaching foreign languages in primary and secondary education. The main objective of the project is to have fully-qualified language teachers in primary education, with specific aims being:

-  For qualified primary school teachers to complete their education with a foreign language (level B2 CEFR), and with an understanding of the pedagogical and psychological basis of foreign language teaching in primary education,
-  For qualified teachers of general educational subjects/a foreign language at lower secondary level to extend their qualification with an understanding of the pedagogical and psychological basis of foreign language teaching in primary education.

As well as ensuring fully-qualified foreign language teachers in primary education, another result of this project will be a reform of the field of study of pre-school and elementary pedagogy with a foreign language (1st, 2nd and 3rd level of university education) in accordance with the 'Conception of Foreign Language Teaching in Primary and Secondary Education' (approved by the government of Slovakia, 12th Sept. 2007), School Act 245/2008, and the transformation of traditional schools into modern educational institutions.



This activity has an impact on a national level: fully qualified teachers of foreign languages in primary education, higher quality language learning and teaching, promotion of multilingualism and intercultural learning, increase of qualification, support for competitiveness in the labour market.

All information about the project is available online:

 www.educj.sk (Slovak version)

Training of primary and secondary education teachers in the subject of Science [DVUi] (national project funded by the European Social Funds)

The training of teachers for the new primary subject of Computer Education was developed and implemented within this national project. Qualified teachers of Computer Science extended their professional knowledge and pedagogical skills, while other teachers were given the opportunity to obtain a qualification to teach this subject. The training was supported by the aims of modern educational technology.

Further information on the project is available online:

 <http://www.statpedu.sk/sk/Projekty/Projekt-DVUi/O-projekte.alej>
(Slovak version)

Training of pedagogical employees of kindergartens as a part of the reform (national project funded by the European Social Funds)

This national project is aimed at the development of specialised texts (lectures) on the content of reform.



OVERALL KCD APPROACH:

How would you characterize the overall approach to key competence development in your country? Is it a holistic approach characterized by an overarching strategy, or rather a targeted approach focusing on one or more specific dimension of the education system (student curriculum, assessment, teacher training, school organization, learning resources etc.)? Does it cover formal and non-formal learning, both primary and secondary school levels?

The overall approach to the development of key competences could be characterised as a targeted approach focusing on more educational dimensions. Regarding the measures supporting the development, on a national level, of key competences, subject literacy and cross-curricular literacy, in 2008 the Slovak Republic approved the School Act. On this basis, the Slovakian Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport approved new pedagogical documents for the state educational programmes at ISCED 0, ISCED 1, ISCED 2 and ISCED 3.

On a regional level, schools develop their own school educational programmes that reflect the linguistic environment of the region itself supported by the languages of education.



KEY COMPETENCES ADDRESSED:

Is there a focus on any particular EU key competence/s or a combination of them, or perhaps there is more of a focus on alternative/complementary competences defined at national level?

The Slovak Republic has adopted key competences according to the Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council on key competences for lifelong learning from 18 December 2006, and implemented them into the state education programmes.



STAKEHOLDERS INVOLVED:

Who are the main stakeholders involved in key competence development in your country?

The main stakeholders are: organisations of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport, particularly the National Institute for Education, National Institute for Vocational Training, Methodology and Pedagogy Centre, and State School Inspection. These topics are also discussed and developed at universities within their educational research, but such initiatives are not coordinated on a national level.



KCD IMPLEMENTATION PROCESSES:

How does the implementation of key competence development/reform in school education function in your country? (e.g. process followed, political commitment, consultation with stakeholders and their respective roles, incentives for stakeholders, dedicated funding, teaching material, definition of goals and standards, assessment and evaluation mechanisms, impact on teacher training/professional development and school practices/leadership, scaling-up approach, based on research/evidence? etc.)

KCD is implemented using a targeted approach that focuses on certain aspects of the education system. Directly-managed organisations of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport work on the development of this issue.

Regarding the measures supporting the development, on a national level, of key competences, subject literacy and cross-curricular literacy, in 2008 the Slovak Republic approved the School Act. On this basis, the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic approved new pedagogical documents for the state educational programmes at ISCED 0, ISCED 1, ISCED 2 and ISCED 3.

On a regional level, schools develop their own school educational programmes that reflect the linguistic environment of the region itself supported by the languages of education.

The National Institute for Education is currently working on a reform of the state educational programs.



OBSTACLES AND FACILITATORS:

What would you identify as obstacles and/or facilitators to developing and implementing a key competence approach in your country's education system, or to more generally introducing any type of educational reform related to the definition of key competences and revision of the curriculum, and to joint collaboration on such issues relying on the input from those working on different dimensions (e.g. teacher training, learning resources etc.)?

One of the obstacles is a methodological problem linked to the term 'competence'. Following the 2008 school reform, it was shown that 'competence' has in fact come to have various meanings: an input, content, means and goal. This term has had an impact on the reform itself but with no clear purpose or definition. The on-going reform of state educational programs shows, for example, that performance is closely linked to a variety of subtasks, often expressing standard knowledge or ability. Performances are quantitatively overexposed, with an attempt to cover the entire scope of education. There is a lack of subject-specific competence models in the educational programmes and performance is not explicitly focused on results, i.e. in what time frame they are to be achieved and measured. From this perspective, there has been an attempt to reform and change the educational standard and the abovementioned problem will become a part of further teacher training and the development of new educational programs that will understand competences as a creative ability to solve problems.

Another obstacle can be seen in the lack of funding for the education sector and for the evaluation of teachers' professional work. Problems are encountered in adopting the concept of key competences as a category of educational science by the pedagogical community.

The National Institute for Education is working on the reform of the curriculum, which will help in the implementation of key competences in education. To fulfil this objective, the development and adoption of a complex strategy at government level would be helpful.



Additional information/useful URL's:

1. Documents and projects:

-  State educational programs for all levels: <http://www.statpedu.sk/sk/Statny-vzdela-vaci-program.alej>
-  Conception of teaching foreign languages in primary and secondary education. Effectiveness of teaching foreign languages regarding the accession of the Slovak Republic to European Union, 2007: <http://www2.statpedu.sk/buxus/docs/pred-mety/koncvajsreu.pdf>
-  Language Education Profile, the Slovak Republic, 2008: <http://www2.statpedu.sk/buxus/docs/predmety/pvpnjvsr1.pdf>
-  Training of primary school teachers in foreign languages regarding the Conception of teaching foreign languages in primary and secondary education: www.educj.sk
-  Training of primary and secondary education teachers in the subject of Science (DVUi): <http://www.statpedu.sk/sk/Projekty/Projekt-DVUi/O-projekte.alej>

2. Websites of institutes:

-  Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic: <http://www.minedu.sk/>
-  National Institute for Education: <http://www.statpedu.sk/sk/Uvod.alej>
-  National Institute for Vocational Training: <http://www.siov.sk/>
-  Methodology and Pedagogy Centre: <http://www.mpc-edu.sk/>
-  State School Inspection: <http://www.ssiba.sk/Default.aspx?text=g&id=33&lang=sk>