



Independent national experts network in the area of adult education/adult skills

Full Country Report - Slovenia

Written by Peter Beltram
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Contact: Mantas Sekmokas

E-mail: EMPL-E3-UNIT@ec.europa.eu

European Commission

B-1049 Brussels

**Independent national experts network in the
area of adult education/adult skills**

Full country report - Slovenia

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1. COUNTRY OVERVIEW (STATISTICAL ELEMENT HAS BEEN INSERTED BY ECORYS FROM UPDATED COUNTRY OVERVIEW)

1.1. Trends for the entire population

1.1.1. Employment rate – entire population

Table 1.1: Evolution of employment rate - national average (2010-2016) compared to EU data

	Years										Targets	
	2000	2005	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	EU 2020	National 2020	
EU-28 average	:	67.9	68.6	68.6	68.4	68.4	69.2	70	71	75% of the 20-64 year-olds in employment	75	
Member State	68.5	71.1	70.3	68.4	68.3	67.2	67.7	69.1	70.1			

Source: Employment rates by age and educational attainment level (%) Eurostat code lfsa_ergaed, last updated 25 April 2017.

Explanatory note: This table compares the average employment rate of the population (ISCED all levels) aged 20 to 64 in a given Member State over the period 2000-2016 to EU targets and average, including the EU2020 target, national 2020 targets and the average EU employment rate for 2016.

-Comparison to EU2020 target

The national employment rate stood at 70.1% in 2016, that is 4.9 percentage points under the EU2020 target of 75%. Slovenia is gradually approaching the 2020 target set by the EU.

The employment rate will soon reach the value which was achieved in 2005 - before the 2008 crisis. Nevertheless, the EU2020 target is set very high and regardless of the good national progress and recovery of the national economy, it might be quite difficult to overcome the almost 5% gap in only four years. The major area which could contribute to narrowing the gap is to raise the employment rate of women in the age cohort 50-64. Although the inactivity rate for this age group has dropped from 59% in 2011 to 49% in 2016 it is still much higher in comparison to men (41% in 2011, 38% in 2016)¹.

-Comparison to National 2020 target

The national target has been set at the same level as the EU (75%). The national rate is encroaching toward the target, based on an increasing rate over recent years. However, there

¹ Source: SI-STAT (Statistical Office of Slovenia)

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is a gap of 4.9 percent, which needs to be reduced in order to reach the target, which may not be achievable.

-Comparison between 2016 national data and the EU-28 average for 2016

The national employment rate sits under that of EU-28 by 0.9 percentage points. This is not particularly alarming since quite a few member States are lagging behind Slovenia, and given the recovery in the national employment rate since 2013, this indicates that this gap is narrowing.

-Evolution over time

The employment rate has increased from 68.5% (2000) to 70.1% (2016) overall over a period of 16 years. The national employment rate has fluctuated somewhat over this time, peaking in 2005 (71.1%), and at this point standing above the EU-28 average rate. The rate then fell consistently over the period until 2013 (67.2%), then increasing consistently toward 70.1% in 2016.

Observing the presented data, the 2008 crisis did not affect the EU-28 average employment rate a great deal, while in Slovenia the crisis has caused a substantial drop in the employment rate. The redirection of the rate did not occur until 2015, when the recovery of the whole economy in Slovenia began.

1.1.2. Participation rate – entire population

Table 1.2: Evolution of participation rate in education and training - national average (2010-2016) compared to EU data

	Years									Targets	
	2000	2005	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	EU 2020	National 2020
EU-28 average	:	9.6	9.3	9.1	9.2	10.7	10.8	10.7	10.8	15% of adults in lifelong learning (LLL)	19% (target set in Adult Education Master Plan)
Member State	:	15.3	16.4	16	13.8	12.5	12.1	11.9	11.6		

Source: Participation rate in education and training by sex and age (%), Eurostat code trng_lfse_01, last updated 25 April 2017.

Explanatory note: This table compares the participation rate in lifelong learning of adults aged 25-64 to EU data over the period 2000-2016.

-Comparison to EU2020 target

The participation rate in education and training stood at 11.6% in 2016, compared to a EU2020 target of 15%.

Following the decreasing participation rate, seen since 2010, it might be quite difficult to meet the EU2020 target and even harder to meet the Slovenian national target of 19%, outlined in Adult Education Master Plan 2013-2020.

-Comparison between 2016 national data and the EU-28 average for 2016

The value for Slovenia (11.6%) stands above the EU-28 average (10.8%) as of 2016, but the gap is narrowing.

-Evolution over time

The participation rate for Slovenia has decreased consistently since 2010 (16.4%) to stand at 11.6% in 2016. Therefore the only increase in the rate can be seen between 2005 and 2010 (15.3% to 16.4%). Although the participation rate for Slovenia is still slightly above the EU-28 average, it causes concerns since there has been a pattern of decline, in contrast to the EU-28 average rate. These concerns began in 2012 when Slovenia faced a substantial decrease for the first time, and since this point there has been a continuous decrease in this indicator every year since. There are a number of explanations for this (expert opinion) including the following:

- *Decreases in the level on in-work training, due to the economic crisis;*
- *Lower purchasing power, caused by a high unemployment rate as a consequence of the economic crisis, has induced cuts in family budgets. Non-formal and optional learning activities are therefore often considered as non-compulsory expenditure, which can be limited or avoided.*
- *Changes in the perception of knowledge and attitudes towards learning, caused by an increase in the possibilities of informal learning using internet and other media.*

1.2. Trends for low qualified adults

1.2.1. Share of low qualified adults

Table 1.3: Share of low-qualified adults (ISCED 0-2) – national data (2010-2016) compared to EU-28 average 2016

Geographical area	Years								
	2000	2005	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
EU-28 average	:	30.6	27.3	26.6	25.8	24.8	24.1	23.5	23
Member State	24.7	19.7	16.7	15.5	15	14.5	14.3	13.2	12.7

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Source: Population by educational attainment level, sex and age (%), Eurostat edat_ifse_03, last updated 25 April 2017.

Explanatory note: this table compares the percentage of the population with low qualifications (ISCED levels 0-2) in 2016 to the EU-28 average for 2016 and the period 2000-2016.

-Comparison to EU-28 average

The share of low qualified adults in Slovenia is high and far above the EU-28 average. At 12.7% in 2016, is substantially below the EU-28 average, which stands at 23%. The share of low qualified adults is constantly decreasing.

-Evolution over time

The national share of low qualified adults is constantly decreasing, and has fallen consistently since 2000 (almost halving in this period). Since 2005, the EU-28 rate has decreased by a lower rate, by 7.6 percentage points over this time. In Slovenia, the enrolment rate of youngsters entering upper secondary education is almost 100% and for young adults entering tertiary level education, the level is over 60%. As such, we can expect further decline of the share of low qualified adults. The national Adult Education Master Plan 2013-2020 has set a target of 63% for the share of adults 25-64 who will have accomplished at least 4-year's secondary school (ISCED 3a) by 2020. Current trends indicate that this goal will be met.

1.2.2. Employment rate of low skilled adults

Table 1.4: Employment rates of low skilled adults (ISCED 0-2) – national data (2010-2016) compared to EU-28 average 2016

Geographical area	Years								
	2000	2005	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
EU-28 average	:	55.7	53.8	53.4	52.7	52	52.6	53.2	54.3
Member State	53.4	56.1	51.1	46.7	47.2	45.5	48.5	49	46.1

Source: Employment rates by age and educational attainment level (%) Eurostat code ifsa_ergaed, last updated 25 April 2017.

Explanatory note: This table compares the employment rates of those with low qualifications (ISCED levels 0-2) to the EU average over the period 2010-2016.

-Comparison to EU-28 average

The employment rate of low skilled adults stood at 46.1% in 2016, compared to 54.3% for EU-28 in 2016. This rate is therefore quite low compared to the average EU-28, with a difference of 8.7 percentage points. The low employment rate of low skilled adults is a big issue in Slovenia. What makes this indicator even more problematic is very low employment rate of low qualified women aged 50-64, which is only 29,6% for Slovenia in comparison with 39,1 for EU-28 average (same source as above)

-Evolution over time

The employment rate of low skilled adults decreased between 2005 and 2013 (from 56.1% to 45.5%). The rate then increased between 48.5% in 2014 and 49% in 2015, only to then decrease to 46.1% in 2016. Changes of this indicator across the past ten years are not encouraging. In 2005 the employment rate of low qualified adults was 10% higher than in the year 2016 (although also the share of low qualified adults was 7% higher). This is expected to improve in the future as a result of the structural reforms which will include raising the retirement age. This might affect the employment rate of low qualified older women.

1.2.3. Participation rate of low skilled adults

Table 1.5: Participation rate of low skilled adults – EU average in comparison to national average

Geographical area	Years								
	2000	2005	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
EU-28 average	:	3.7	3.9	4	3.9	4.5	4.5	4.3	4.2
Member State	:	3.6	3.5	3.3	2.7	3	3.1	2.8	2.4

Source: Participation rate in education and training by sex and educational attainment (%), Eurostat code and trng_lfse_03, last updated 25 April 2017.

Explanatory note: This table compares the participation rate in lifelong learning of adults aged 25-64 with low qualification levels (ISCED levels 0-2) to EU data and over the period 2000-2016.

-Comparison to EU-28 average

The participation rate of low skilled adults stood at 2.4% in 2016, compared to a 4.2% rate for the EU-28 average. The participation rate for the entire adult population for Slovenia is still slightly above the EU-28 average, although the percentage for low skilled is far below.

This is worrying and a severe challenge for national adult education policy makers to cope with. All documents and programmes, supported by public funding, are focused on vulnerable groups among which low skilled adults represent an important share. The participation rate, which is so substantially below the average for this portion of the population, indicates that these measures are not having the intended results (expert opinion).

It is worth noting that the figure representing the EU-28 average is slightly misleading. For example, if we take a look at the entire table (same source) it is clear that not less than 19 countries out of 28 have a below average participation rate, and that the average rate is boosted by 4 countries (Sweden, Denmark, Finland and Iceland) where this percentage exceeds 10%.

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-Evolution over time

The participation rate at the national level has fallen from 3.6% (2005) to 2.4% (2016). The overall participation rate has fallen overall over this period, apart from an increase between 2012 (2.7%) and 2014 (2.8%).

Figures presented in the table above demonstrate that the gap between EU-28 average and Slovenia is widening. Learning inactivity of low skilled adults in Slovenia is a serious issue and this should be a signal for the review and introduction of appropriate policy measures.

2. BRIEF OVERVIEW OF ADULT LEARNING SYSTEM

The adult learning system in Slovenia covers three main types of learning:

Formal education for adults:

At all levels, adults have the possibility to enrol in educational or vocational programmes as part-time pupils or students. In these cases, educational programmes and processes are adapted for adults.

Elementary school (9 years, compulsory) is free of any charges (this right is guaranteed by the Constitution Act), whilst secondary and higher levels are payable, though in some cases subsidised by public finances.

General non-formal learning:

There is a very well organised and widely spread network of folk high schools (Adult Education Centres), which are public entities, established by local governments. Their main task is to provide programmes for acquiring basic skills addressing key competences for vulnerable groups. These programmes are free of payment for participants.

Job related training:

There are possibilities for adults, especially the unemployed, to take part in various short programmes for upskilling, re-qualification or gaining higher qualification levels. These programmes are mainly financed by active employment policy measures.

In addition to these three learning possibilities open for adults, the adult learning system in Slovenia also offers various supporting activities for adults, especially for vulnerable groups, which are also free of any charge: counselling, advising, guidance etc.

2.1. Main features and a concise summary of historic development

Whilst trends in recent history often begin in 1991, when Slovenia became an independent state, this common practice often overlooks the development and relatively high level of social services that developed before this time whilst the country was a part of the former Yugoslavia. As far as the system of adult education is concerned, there were some building blocks in place even before WWII, when some institutions similar to today's folk high schools were established.

After WWII Slovenia became a part of Yugoslavia. The wide spread network of public providers (originally called "worker's universities", and later referred to as "folk high schools") were used for three main purposes: raising the skills and competences of employees or job-seekers, raising educational attainment levels and raising the general and cultural knowledge/awareness within the adult population overall.

There were many different initiatives, reforms and quite often unsuccessful attempts to develop educational sector in general and adult education in particular. But nevertheless it is beyond any doubt that when Slovenia gained its independence, basic foundations regarding

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the provider's network, legislative background and professional capacities on the field of adult education were already on place. After 1991 major steps forward were taken, with the establishment of the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education in 1991 and White Paper on Education published in 1995. This document set the general framework for restructuring the educational system, rooted in human rights and the rule of law.

In 1996 the government appointed the National Council of Experts for Adult Education (SI). In the same year the comprehensive Adult Education Act was passed (amended in 2006)². This act regulates non-formal education and learning amongst people who have fulfilled their basic education obligation and do not hold the status of a pupil or a student. It defines the rights of "mature students" in general; programmes and service providers; and special features of financing and organisation in adult education.

In addition to the Adult Education Act, this area is regulated by other school laws (on basic; upper secondary technical and vocational education; upper secondary general education (gimnazija); and short-cycle higher vocational education) and labour and family laws. Part-time students in tertiary education include mature students. The examination system which provides national vocational qualifications (the so-called certificate system) is regulated by a special act.

Also of relevance in this context is the Strategy for Lifelong Learning in Slovenia, issued in 2007 by the Minister for Education. It was drafted as a conceptual framework within the implementation of the EU programme "Education and Training 2010". In addition, other national strategies have been adopted that address education for specific target groups, such as the Strategy for Roma Education (2004; amended in 2011).³ The Strategy for the Inclusion of Migrants into adult education was prepared in 2013 and was approved by the Council of Experts for Adult Education in the same year. It was envisaged that the Strategy would be adopted by the government in 2015, but this didn't occur.⁴

"(...)Turning back to the central piece of legislation, the Adult Education Act stipulates that adult education is provided on the basis of the national long-term master plan. The National Adult Education Master Plan is a strategic and developmental document adopted by the National Assembly. The National Assembly determines public interest in adult education; defines activities required for the implementation of adult education; and provides stable funding from public sources. The Master Plan is the basis for annual work plans which are drafted by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport and adopted by the Government.

The current Adult Education Master Plan was adopted in 2013 and is valid until 2020. It was drafted by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport in collaboration with other ministries and relevant stakeholders. The document took into account the propositions of the authors of the White Paper on Education for the period up to 2020. The group of experts appointed by the Ministry found that providers did not cater sufficiently to the actual needs of specific, vulnerable groups of people, such as the elderly with low levels of educational qualifications,

²Currently, the renewed Adult Education Act is ready for entering the governmental and parliamentary procedures.

³https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Slovenia:Developments_and_Current_Policy_Priorities

⁴ See more: <http://www.elmmagazine.eu/articles/slovenia-shapes-up-intercultural-adult-education/>

the unemployed, immigrants and school drop-outs - even though there was a multitude of private non-formal vocational and professional development programmes available.”⁵

Table 2.1 Number of participants by category of provider and education level

	Main category of provider (which could be a public or private provider, a municipal/regional or national provider)	Level of education (i.e. basic, vocational, higher)	Number of participants
1	Public (folk high schools)	Elementary	1,054 (2014)
2	Public (folk high schools, secondary school AE units)	Vocational	3,087 (2014)
	Private (private AE providers, employers)		693 (2014)
3	Public (folk high schools, secondary school AE units)	General secondary education	522 (2014)
	Private (private AE providers)		105 (2014)
4	Public	Higher education	1,842 (2016)
	Private		2,812 (2016)
5	Public	Tertiary education	6,370 (2016)
	Private		5,532 (2016)
6	Public	General non-formal learning and training	64,081 (2014)
	Private		300,040 (2014)
7	Public	Verified programmes of general learning	15,191 (2014)
	Private		29,253 (2014)

⁵https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Slovenia:Developments_and_Current_Policy_Priorities

2.2. Main providers

Programmes for attaining formal educational levels:

Elementary school for adults (free of charge) is entirely carried out by folk high schools. Currently there are 34 folk high schools in Slovenia.

Vocational and other forms of secondary education programmes for adults are provided either by folk high schools or by special units within secondary schools or by private Adult Education providers, licensed for particular programmes. These programmes are not publicly financed unless they are offered as parts of certain initiatives within LLL policy.

Programmes of higher levels of education for adults (part time students) are provided by higher education institutions and universities (public and private) or other licensed institutions. In general these programmes are not publicly financed (for adults).

General non-formal education programmes:

Most publicly financed programmes are provided by folk high schools and private educational organisations specialising in the delivery of adult education. The Ministry of Education and Sports publishes one or more public tenders, almost annually, this invites providers to apply for publicly financed programmes. Selected institutions, public and private, which cover a wide range of types - from schools and associations to NGOs - who provide, agreed programmes for adults, usually for vulnerable groups, which are free for participants.

Some of these programmes are verified by the Minister (e.g. special programmes for acquiring basic skills). Providers of these programmes are mostly folk high schools.

An important role, mainly in education for older people, is undertaken by the university of the third age⁶. Participants usually have to pay to participate in programmes but quite often they succeed in applying for publicly financed programmes via public tenders.

Job related training (non-formal vocational education):

Providers of publicly financed, job-related training programmes are selected through public tenders, published by the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, or National Employment Agency. Reflecting the range in programmes and the varying needs of the applicants, providers include school units for Adult education, education centres within companies, various chambers (of commerce, industry, trade, craft, and small business), vocational and expert associations, and others. There is a range of programmes in non-formal adult vocational education which do not lead to qualifications or degrees but are nonetheless important for development and enhanced performance within an occupation.

⁶ <http://www.univerza3.si>.

Services and activities, supporting adult education and training:

Within the publicly financed adult education system, providers play an important role in delivering supporting activities, offering various types of counselling, guidance, advising, knowledge exchange, independent learning support and identification of non-formally acquired competences. Most of these supporting activities are carried out by folk high schools, some of them by public libraries, a few by private authorised providers.

It is very important to mention, that in the draft of the new Adult Education Act it is proposed, that these supporting activities will be financed as a special public service from the national budget.

2.3. Main types of publicly financed provision

There are three main types of publicly financed provision, each of them with some particular characteristics:

Direct Financing:

- Elementary school programme, carried out by folk high schools: participants are invited to enrol in the programme twice a year. When applications are submitted, providers are entitled to claim their expenses directly from the Ministry;
- Network of some supporting activities (e.g. counselling and guidance network). Providers of these activities (mainly folk high schools) are financed according to their annual programmes;
- Two main research and development institutes; the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education and the Institute for Vocational Education and Training are financed directly, according to their adopted annual programmes;
- Public service: some ministries, for example the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food, provide some services which are of important public interest but still can be treated as adult education/learning. For example, this includes preventive programmes to promote a healthy lifestyle and Public Agricultural Advisory Service. These services are provided by authorised institutions and are financed directly. It should be emphasised again that in the draft of the new Adult Education Act it is proposed that supporting activities for fostering adult education and for counselling, guidance and validation of prior learning for vulnerable groups will be provided as a public service, with guaranteed supply and direct financing.

Public Tender:

- A large part of publicly financed provision is distributed via public tenders. Public tenders, published by ministries, national agencies or public funds, define the financial scope intended for particular programmes, the eligibility criteria for applicants and all other requirements and details which make the process of selection transparent and equal. Tenders are open for public and private providers, which have to be appropriately registered and have to meet defined requirements.

Public Invitation:

- Some regular services, e.g. self-directed learning, knowledge exchange and the validation of prior learning, are offered by certain groups of specialised providers and do not change, or are at least relatively stable. These providers are obliged to annually report their performance regarding the number and characteristics of participants and to submit annual plan for the next year. In compliance with these two documents they receive a financial allocation each year.

2.3.1. Raise Achievement in Basic Skills

There are many programmes offered to low educated or other members of vulnerable groups. These programmes are developed and designed to support the development of defined basic skills – each of them focused on particular competencies. The quality and relevance of these programmes are approved by the Council of Experts for Adult Education and adopted by the Minister for Education, Science and Sport. In this respect, these programmes are treated as verified.

The overall name for five of these programmes is Training for Success in Life, which aims to increase literacy among adults, strengthen their social skills and encourage active citizenship. There are currently five specific programmes implemented within this framework, namely "Reading and writing together", "Bridge to education", "Challenges of rural life", "My steps" and "Me and my workplace". They are all funded from the national public budget and European Social Fund and are free of charge for participants."⁷

In addition there are other relevant verified programmes. They include digital literacy, project learning and language programmes: "Digital Literacy for Adults", "Foreign Language programmes", "Slovenian Language for Foreigners", "Early Integration of Immigrants" (detailed description can be found [here](#)).

2.3.2. Achieve a Recognised Qualification in Adulthood

Adults can obtain all levels of formal educational qualifications. They can enroll in basic and upper secondary schools, as well as part time, in all tertiary education programmes.

Basic school education

Adults who did not successfully complete basic school education can enrol in the [basic school programme for adults](#).

During the past 10 years the average number of participants in basic school programme for adults is around 1.000 per year. Although the share of adults aged 15-64 without attained elementary education is only 1.5%, this number should be bigger especially bearing in mind

⁷ https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Slovenia:Main_Types_of_Provision

that it is free of charge. It is even worse if we take into account the successfulness of participants: only approximately 250 per year receive basic school certificates.

Upper secondary education

Any adults who wish to complete upper secondary education may enrol in regular upper secondary education programmes with special organisational adjustments for adults. These programmes are primarily provided by upper secondary schools with adult education units, whereas specialised adult education organisations account for less than half of all enrolments.

The number of participants in upper secondary education programmes for adults during past years is around 14,000 each year (15,943 in 2011, 13,201 in 2014). The number of students enrolled depends largely on the possibility of co-financing tuition fees, which is not available every year. Successfulness: in 2014, 2,229 adults received certificates for attaining upper-secondary education level, most of them (1,622) vocational matura certificate.

Master craftsman exams

Adults who have completed vocational upper secondary education and have at least three years of work experience can take master craftsman (...) exams. They can take these exams independently or upon completion of preparatory courses offered by different course providers.”⁸ (see more [here](#)). “The Chamber of Craft and Small Business of Slovenia has been performing master craftsman exams since 2000 for 52 titles of a master craftsman. Master craftsman exams are performed for the majority of occupations in short supply for which no regular secondary education programme is on offer. The obtained title of a master craftsman is an excellent opportunity for getting a job in any respective profession and a competitive edge for enterprises because the brand of a Master emphasises mastery and quality of products or services.” There have been 68 master craftsman examination certificates issued in 2014, 40 in 2015 and 50 in 2016)⁹

2.3.3. Facilitate the Transition to the Labour Market for the unemployed or those at risk of unemployment (ALMPs)

Adult education and training targeting the transition to the labour market is organised within the broader framework of Active Labour Market Policy (ALMP), which is under the authority of the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities. The primary target groups are those registered as unemployed; employees at risk of being made redundant; and final-year tertiary education students.

The Employment Service offers access to several programmes targeting registered unemployed jobseekers. Those who take part in these programmes – following a consultation with their counsellors and the formulation of a jobseekers' action plan – conclude formal agreements with Employment Service and are subsequently entitled to financial compensation for their participation and the associated travel cost.

⁸ ibiden

⁹ <http://www.ozs.si/ozseng/Mastercraftsmanexams.aspx>

"On the job" training

The Programme targets unemployed jobseekers. The aim of the programme is to improve jobseekers' employment prospects by enabling them to test and strengthen their knowledge and skills at a real workplace. There has been 4,289 unemployed included in the programme in 2015, the planned number for 2016 was 2,264. The additional programme targeting unemployed jobseekers below the age of 30 ("On the job" training for young adults) was introduced in 2016 with 1,140 planned participants.

Practical training (working test)

Programmes target unemployed jobseekers that lack work experience or have a vocation that is not sought after in the labour market. There have been 1.124 included in 2015 and 1.050 planned for 2016.

Preparation for National Vocational Qualification (NVQ)

The Programme is open to all unemployed jobseekers. It enhances participants' employment prospects by providing them with the knowledge and skills required for specific vocations that are sought after in the labour market. NVQ is a part of the national qualification framework and is a formally recognised work-related qualification (but not a formal degree of education). There have been 1,338 included in 2015 and 520 planned in 2016.

Project learning for young adults

The Programme is aimed at NEET young adults (aged from 15 to 26) who have not completed basic or upper secondary education. The programme was very successful, even appraised with the title "Winner of the European Regional Champions Award 2007" in the area of innovation and social policy (EU Committee of the Regions).¹⁰ The programme was slightly modified in 2016 and the responsibility has been shifted from MESS to MLFSA. The number of youngsters enrolled in the programme in 2016 was 415.

Formal education

Programmes where participants enroll, upon agreement with the Employment Service cover basic education. The general features of these programmes are described under the Provision to Achieve a Recognised Qualification during Adulthood. Registered unemployed jobseekers who enrol in basic and lower secondary education programmes are entitled to a refund of travel cost and 6 EUR per day of active participation in the programme"¹¹ (see more [here](#)).

Higher education for adults

"Adults can enrol in short-cycle higher vocational, first cycle professional, first cycle academic and second cycle/Master studies.

¹⁰ <http://www.acs.si/index.cgi?m=51&id=168>

¹¹ https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Slovenia:Main_Types_of_Provision

In the Adult Education Master Plan short-cycle higher vocational study programmes are included due to increased needs for qualified people on this level of education, which means that the opportunities to co-finance these programmes from public funds are increased."¹²

In the school year 2016/17, 4,654 higher education students were enrolled as part time students, but there was no financial support available from public sources.

2.3.4. Continuing VET (targeted at individuals and/or companies and/or public sector employees)

There is almost no reliable data on continuing VET for employees. The only available official source is the national statistical office with just one published table presenting the overall figures of "Verified programs of training, refinement and specialisation":

The number of seminars and courses by their duration is as follows:

- 50 hours or less: 2,760
- 51-100 hours: 32
- 101-200 hours: 71
- 201-400 hours: 37
- 401 hours or more: 40

There is no additional data on participants and their characteristics. Comparing figures all these participants are obviously included in the scope of participants in non-formal learning, presented in Table 2.1.

2.3.5. Liberal (Popular) Adult Education

Two forms of liberal/popular education programmes have been continuously receiving public funding, namely study circles and centres for self-directed learning.

Study circles are organised in the form of small groups of five to 12 participants (including specially trained mentors) who are dedicated to independent informal learning. They meet at least five times, for at least 25 hours in total, but there are typically more than 10 meetings per circle and the average number of hours is over 35. Study circles are very popular and widely spread. In 2016 there were 250 circles performed with over 2,500 participants.

Centres for self-directed learning (CSL) facilitate a complementary form of non-formal learning, by providing free-of-charge guidance, space, learning materials and equipment for participants to gain and upgrade their knowledge in different fields. They target adults that cannot access traditional forms of education or find them unsuitable for their needs. There are 36 CSL's in Slovenia and more than 8,000 participants are using their facilities.

Knowledge exchanges are information centres which provide details of those who are looking for knowledge and those who have knowledge to offer. Everybody can take part in

¹² ibidem

the learning exchange (see more [here](#)). There are 11 operating knowledge exchange spots, but only four of these are publicly financed. In 2016, 1,040 citizens offered their knowledge or were looking for it within these four publicly financed spots.

Third age universities

Since 1984, The Slovenian Third Age University have grown to become a network of 52 universities in 51 localities across the country. The network is made up of about 21,000 students, more than 1,000 mentors and 1,000 volunteers. ¹³

These providers are very active and popular. Although participants have to pay to participate in their programmes, the organisation has gradually become very successful in applying to public tenders and thus they manage to receive public finances to support delivery. The range of different types and content of provision offered through various programmes is very wide, covering most of basic competences.

¹³ <http://www.utzo.si/en/about-us/>

3. ADULT LEARNING POLICIES

3.1. A summary of major developments/changes since 2010 and key current policy priorities in the field of adult learning and those specifically targeting low-skilled/unemployed

Adult Education Master Plan

The important document which determines priorities in the field of adult education and training is the Adult Education Master Plan (AEMP). The AEMP defines priorities, programmes, supporting activities, target groups, monitoring instruments and the scope of public finances.

AEMP is structured through four priority fields: general non-formal education; formal education; job-related education/training; and supporting activities.

AEMP 2013-2020 defines specific target groups and addresses their access to quality adult education, among them: the unemployed above 50 years of age without vocational or professional education or with lower professional capacities:

- Employed above 45 years of age with less than 4-year upper secondary education or lacking key or professional competencies;
- Employed who are not able to continue practising their profession above a certain age due to the specific psycho-physical requirements;
- Young school drop-outs;
- Socially deprived, immigrants, Roma, the elderly, the handicapped and convicts;
- Other adults with limited access to social, cultural and economic resources, such as farmers and the population of less developed regions.

The most important novelty of the new AEMP is the decision to encompass additional ministries and thus extend the range of programmes.

Traditionally AEMP has covered programmes including general education, raising the educational attainment and basic skills, within areas covered by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport and the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities. Since many other ministries provide a range of different activities and programmes intended to inform, raise awareness, enlighten or educate different target groups of adults, that can be treated as education in a wider sense, the new AEMP also covers the following types of programmes:

- Informing and raising awareness of the health hazardous habits and behaviour, provided by the Ministry of Health;
- Educating and advising citizens involved in non-professional agricultural activities, how to respond to weather conditions and/or pest threats (Ministry of Agriculture);
- Raising awareness of climate change and encouraging corresponding behaviour in everyday lives (waste separation, recycling, economising water usage etc.), provided by the Ministry for Environment;

- Cultural enlightenment by raising awareness of national cultural heritage, stimulating non-participants to take an active role in preserving and developing it (Ministry of Culture), and many more.

New challenges

By implementing the idea to incorporate so many different programmes into the AEMP, Slovenia is facing many new challenges on various levels of the decision-making process: planning, regulation, measuring, valuating and monitoring.

For example, all teachers, mentors, counsellors and other profiles of educators, involved in providing publicly financed adult educational programmes, covered by the previous AEMP, were obliged to fulfil precisely determined demands regarding their andragogical competences before applying to public tenders. However, most of the providers of the new AEMP programmes did not have to prove any andragogical competences.

The introduction of some instruments that would encourage and stimulate providers to raise the level of their competences regarding teaching methods suitable for different target groups of adults is planned to improve the quality and range of these various programmes, new to the AEMP.

In addition to benchmarks set by EU, the AEMP also defines some concrete operational targets:

- The level of participation in lifelong learning programmes among those aged 25 to 64 should increase from 36% in 2011 to 45% in 2020. This is based on the internationally comparable indicator (AES - Adult Education Survey) which measures participation in such programmes in the 12 months prior to the survey (which is conducted every five years); New results based on the 2016 issue of AES has been published recently (July, 27th, 2017)¹⁴. The level of participation in "lifelong learning" programmes in Slovenia has increased substantially, reaching 47% of adults, which is even better than the target value set the in AEMP. Unfortunately the major part of this increase can be explained by the changed age span of the interviewees included in the sample, from 25-64 (AES 2007, 2011) to 18-69 (AES 2016). The added age cohort 18-25 represents mostly those of the generation that may have continued their education in any case, which means that the increase in participation rate in general does not reflect any improvements.
- The share of adults aged 25-64 who are enrolled in general educational programmes should increase from 5% in 2011 to 8% in 2020. This indicator is similar to EU indicator which measures participation rate of adults in LLL, but has some specifics: it narrows the scope of non-formal educational programmes (which by default does not include formal and vocational education), omitting compulsory programmes (e.g. safety and health at work), direct job related training, driving schools and, if possible, occasional in-formal learning (e.g. surfing the internet). Basically these programmes are linked to basic competencies;

¹⁴ <http://www.stat.si/StatWeb/News/Index/6786>

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- The share of population above 15 years of age with incomplete basic education should be halved by 2020 (i.e. it will decrease from 4.4% in 2011 to 2.2%);
- The share of adults aged 25-64 with completed upper secondary technical education (ISCED 3A and 3B) should increase from 57% in 2011 to 63% in 2020;
- In line with Active Labour Market Policy, half of unemployed should enrol in programmes aimed at increasing their employability during the 2013-2020 period;

Coming closer to these targets, together with employment, drop-out and participation rates, as well as the educational attainment of adults 30-34, set by the EU, will require a range of policy interventions, investments and financial resources. Measures, instruments and programmes, as well as financial sources defined for tackling these challenges, are adopted by the Government and issued in corresponding documents.

3.2. Major national economic-social strategies (and indicate if they refer to adult learning)

The last comprehensive national strategic document Slovenia's Development Strategy¹⁵, for the period 2006-2013, was adopted and implemented in 2005. In 2013, the draft of the new national strategic document was prepared by the Ministry of Economy¹⁶, but was not adopted.

The first document, valid until 2013, sets five development priorities, among which the second one addresses: *Effective generation, two-way flow and application of the knowledge needed for economic development and quality jobs*, with one of the subtitles *Improving the quality of education and promoting lifelong learning*, and the fifth one *Integration of measures to achieve sustainable development*.

Recently the Slovenian Government has adopted a new national strategic document called Strategy of Long-Living Society¹⁷, prepared by IMAD.¹⁸ Among four pillars on which the strategy is based, the first one is "Labour Market (working activity) and Education", with specially mentioned intergenerational knowledge exchange and equal access to education.

Regardless of the fact that currently no valued comprehensive national strategic document exists, which would be adopted by the government, IMAD each year produces a so called Development Report¹⁹, which refers to all issues which would be normally covered by the national development strategy.

¹⁵http://www.umar.gov.si/fileadmin/user_upload/projects/slovenia_development_strategy.pdf

¹⁶http://www.mgrt.gov.si/fileadmin/mgrt.gov.si/pageuploads/EKP/Drugi_dokumenti/SRS_09_08_2013.pdf

¹⁷http://www.umar.gov.si/fileadmin/user_upload/publikacije/kratke_analize/Strategija_dolgozive_druzbe/SDD_sprejeta/DolgozivaDruzba_splet.pdf

¹⁸ IMAD – Institute for Macroeconomic Analysis and Development.

¹⁹ Last issue:

http://www.umar.gov.si/en/publications/single/publication/news/porocilo-o-razvoju-2017-1/?tx_news_pi1%5Bcontroller%5D=News&tx_news_pi1%5Baction%5D=detail&cHash=82b885320ab88071c0e23f9089408635

3.3. Distribution of responsibilities regarding adult learning (for further information see [Eurypedia](#)).

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport (MESS) is responsible for adult education, namely its Directorate for Upper Secondary, Higher Vocational and Adult Education and the Division for Higher Vocational and Adult Education within it.

Two so-called "councils of experts", one for adult education (AE) and the other for vocational education and training (VET), play important roles with the MESS. These councils are composed of members, appointed by different social partners. Within the structure of the Ministry for Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities (MLFSA) there is a Directorate for Labour Market and Employment and a special Division for Lifelong Learning within it.

For the development of the system, monitoring and analysing its outcomes, designing and implementing new programmes, training teachers, trainers, mentors, counsellors, advisers and other professionals in adult education, there are two public institutions: Slovenian Institute for Adult Education, and Institute for Vocational Education and Training.

For job related training aimed at raising employability and re-entering of unemployed in employment, a very important role is given to National Employment Agency, which coordinates and implements programmes and measures defined in Active Employment Policy Programme (AEPP), prepared by the MLFSA and adopted by the national Government.

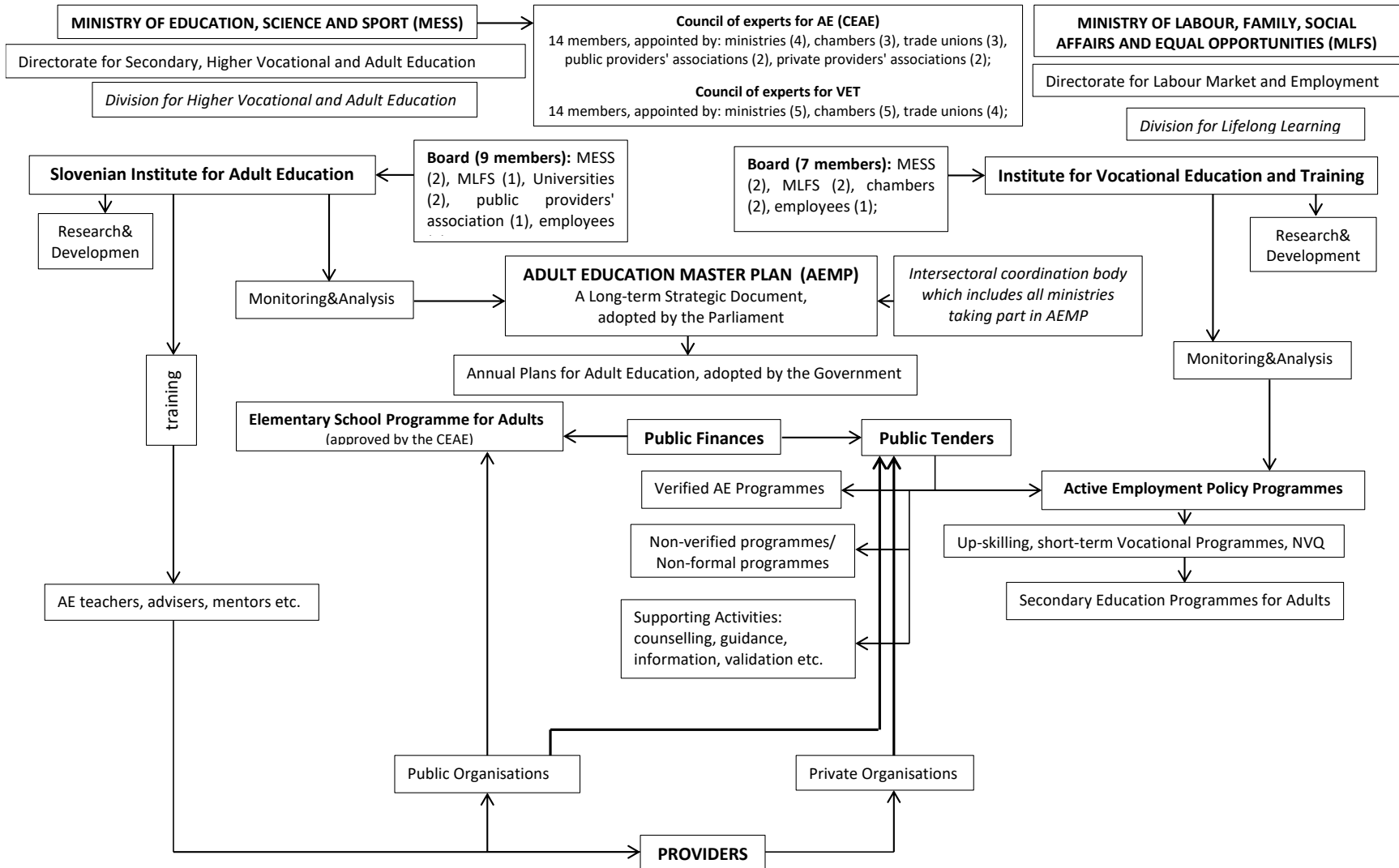
The most illustrative way of presenting the system of adult education in Slovenia and the distribution of responsibilities is to design an organigramme of the whole system of publicly financed adult education programmes provision (see below).^{20 21}

²⁰ The scheme outlines regulation principles for most of the publicly financed AE programmes offered by MESS and MLFSA. Programmes offered by other ministries, included in AEMP and APAE, are not covered with this organigramme what makes it deficient. On the other hand, if the new Adult Education Act is adopted the scheme will have to be modified and updated with the public service proposed in the present draft of the Act.

²¹ Designed by author in 2016 for the DIMA project. <http://dima-project.eu/en/>

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SLOVENIA the scheme of Adult Education organisational structure



3.4. Lifelong learning strategy (for further information see [Eurypedia](#))

The Minister for Education, Science and Sport adopted a Lifelong Learning Strategy in 2007²². The main weakness of this document was its lack of feasibility due to absence of corresponding action programme, which actually was a part of the original document, but which has not been approved.

3.5. Adult learning policy framework (regulatory and implementing acts) (for further information see [Eurypedia](#)).

3.5.1. Legislative framework

The organisational and financial issues of the whole education system in Slovenia are regulated by Organization and Financing of Education Act (*Zakon o organizaciji in financiranju vzgoje in izobraževanja*)²³, called the umbrella act, adopted in 1996 and amended several times, most recently in 2016. Adult education, in particular its general, non-formal type, is additionally regulated by the Adult Education Act (*Zakon o izobraževanju odraslih*), also adopted in 1996 and amended in 2006²⁴. All types and levels of formal education for adults (elementary, secondary, vocational and higher) are regulated by special sections within respective special Acts.²⁵

There are two legislative developments which are directly tackling adult education and training:

Earlier in 2016, an amendment to Organisation and Financing Education Act was adopted, which establishes public network of public providers of adult education programmes throughout the country.

As mentioned in the section describing main providers, there are 34 folk-high schools in Slovenia, providing formal and non-formal educational programmes for adults as well as supportive activities, such as guidance, counselling and recognition of non-formally acquired skills and competencies. According to valid legislation, all these programmes and activities are financed using two among instruments mentioned above: public tender or invitation. Due to the fact that the great majority of these programmes are targeted to vulnerable groups, the new legislation propose that these activities will be financed directly, as a public service. This means that a stable public network will be established, engaging fully employed educators, at disposal to adults most in need for knowledge and competences. This importantly introduces the need for a renewal of the Adult Education Act. A task force team has been appointed by the Minister of Education, Science and Sport which has already prepared the final draft of the new act. It is expected that the new act will be adopted in 2017.

²² http://www.mss.gov.si/fileadmin/mss.gov.si/pageuploads/podrocje/razvoj_solstva/IU2010/Strategija_VZU.pdf

²³ <http://www.uradni-list.si/1/objava.jsp?sop=2007-01-0718>

²⁴ <http://www.uradni-list.si/1/objava.jsp?sop=2006-01-4673>

²⁵ e.g. within Elementary School Act there are articles setting rules for adult participants.

The second development refers to implementation of apprenticeship legislation. The Law on Apprenticeship was adopted on May 8th, 2017.²⁶

The organigramme demonstrates that the system of AE in Slovenia is quite reasonably designed.

3.5.2. *Implementing acts/programmes*

1. Annual Plan for Adult Education²⁷;
2. Active Employment Policy programmes and measures²⁸;
3. Operational Programme for the Implementation of the EU Cohesion Policy 2014-2020²⁹;
4. National Reform Programme 2016–2017³⁰

Financing mechanisms are based on Annual Plans for Adult Education (APAE), prepared and coordinated by the MESS and yearly adopted by the national Government. APAE defines targets for all included programmes, like addressed target groups, number of participants, and monitoring outcomes. For job related training aimed at raising employability and re-entering of unemployed in employment, a very important role is given to National Employment Agency, which coordinates and implements programmes and measures defined in Active Employment Policy Programme (AEPP), prepared by the MLFSA and adopted by the national Government

The main purpose of the APAE is defined financial scope and resources for it.

Providers of programmes are selected by public tenders, issued by the MESS, MLFSA or by the Scholarship, Development, Disability and Maintenance Fund of the Republic of Slovenia (SDDMF) which usually processes programmes, defined in AEPP.

3.6. **Quantitative targets**

As presented above in Section 3.1, there are several quantitative targets and/or benchmarks defined in official documents. Some of these correspond to targets, set by the EU authorities, some of them are defined in our most important document as far as AL is concerned, the AEMP 2013-2020.

²⁶ <http://www.pisrs.si/Pis.web/pregledPredpisa?id=ZAKO7512>

²⁷ http://www.mizs.gov.si/fileadmin/mizs.gov.si/pageuploads/podrocje/odrasli/Letni_program_izobrazevanja/LPIO_2017.doc

²⁸ http://www.mddsz.gov.si/fileadmin/mddsz.gov.si/pageuploads/dokumenti_pdf/zaposlovanje/Smernice_APZ_2016_2020_final.pdf

²⁹ http://www.eu-skladi.si/sl/dokumenti/kljucni-dokumenti/op_ang_final_web.pdf

³⁰ http://www.mf.gov.si/fileadmin/mf.gov.si/pageuploads/EU_semester/2016-05-17_NRP-SI_EN.pdf

Table 3.1 Targets linked to AL in broader economic policies/LL strategies/framework or implementing act

General information		Progress toward target			
Target (target figure and date to be achieved by)	Adoption date (e.g. 31/03/2013)	Initial value (at date of adoption)	Current value	Summary of progress against target	Source of information
75%: employment rate 20-64, by 2020	(adopted by the EU)		70.1%	Before the crisis, in 2008, the value was already at 73%, then it dropped to 67.2% in 2013. During past 3 years It is gradually increasing.	EUROSTAT
40% of tertiary education attainment 30-34, by 2020	(adopted by the EU)		44.2%	The value is constantly increasing.	EUROSTAT
Halved the share of adults 15+ with incomplete basic education (compulsory 9-years elementary school), by 2020	2014 (AEMP)	4.4%	3.4%	The value is constantly decreasing. The target is feasible.	Statistical Office of Slovenia
63% of 25-64 with ISCED 344 educational attainment, by 2020	2014 (AEMP)	57%	60%	The value is constantly increasing. The target is feasible.	Statistical Office of Slovenia

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5% early leavers from education 18-24, by 2020	(adopted by the EU)		4.9%	The value is not changing significantly	EUROSTAT
19% participation rate 25-64 in LLL, by 2020	2014 (AEMP)	12.5%	11.7%	The value is decreasing. The target is not likely to be achieved.	EUROSTAT
45% participation rate 25-64, measured by AES	2014 (AEMP)	36% (2011)	47% (2016)	This data are not reliable (see comment in Section 3.1. above)	Statistical Office of Slovenia
8%, participation 25-64 in general non-formal programmes, by 2020	2014 (AEMP)	5%	6.5%	This benchmark is quite ambiguous and is difficult to measure	SIAE

2.1. Quality assurance

A thorough insight on the quality assurance system of adult education in Slovenia can be found on the Eurydice website³¹. Here we present some major points:

- Adult education is governed by the same regulations for quality assurance as the education of youth.
- Quality assurance in adult education is mainly focused on internal evaluations and quality development;
- Institutions for adult education conducting publicly valid programmes are bound by law to perform self-evaluations.
- The Slovenian Institute of Adult Education developed the model 'Offering quality education to adults', based on self-evaluation, which is used by most organisations for adult education. The model encompasses:
 - self-evaluation planning,
 - methodology for the acquisition and evaluation of data,
 - implementation of self-evaluation,
 - evaluation of the acquired data,
 - planning of measures of improvement and
 - evaluation of the action results.

³¹https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Slovenia:Quality_Assurance_in_Adult_Education_and_Training

- Quality Advisers Network: SIAE offers training and advice and promotes the achievements of organizations for adult education by conferring quality certificates.
- Peer visits: a frequent evaluation method includes visits of adult education staff in selected institutions for adult education. Peer evaluators professionally assess the self-evaluation reports of the host organization.
- Evaluation of the Adult Education System: the evaluation and control of the adult education system is conducted by the same methods as the evaluation of the youth education system: external assessment of knowledge, evaluation studies and research projects, monitoring of novelties and inspections.

3.7. Future policy developments (envisaged or under discussion already)

Reforms and legislative initiatives, which are already in different stages of processing (e.g. Apprenticeship Act has been adopted, Adult Education Act is in its final procedure) will fill some of the gaps in the whole system. The AEMP 2013-2020 and OP 2020 are also comprehensive documents based on strategic orientation of policymakers.

As already mentioned in section 3.2., an important document which should be crucial for the further development of the country in general is the Slovenia's Development Strategy. As noticed above, the former one was valid for the period 2007-2013, the new document valid for the period 2014-2020 is still not finalised (the first draft was issued in August 2013).³² This delay is unfortunately quite meaningful because it can be understood in two ways:

- As an indication of a subordination of the national decision-makers to EU initiatives and guidance;
- As an indication of disagreements among different politic orientations of current ruling coalition.

The second meaning might have implications regarding different approaches towards the adult education system, where a more liberal and strictly market-oriented fraction could diminish the importance of adult education, not directly linked to employability. This could endanger the publicly financed space of provision of programmes, aimed at raising the basic competences for vulnerable groups.

But, so far, there is no indication for such a scenario and adopted documents mentioned above can be treated optimistically.

³² http://www.mgrt.gov.si/fileadmin/mgrt.gov.si/pageuploads/EKP/Drugi_dokumenti/SRS_09_08_2013.pdf

4. INVESTMENT IN ADULT LEARNING SYSTEMS AND THEIR EFFECTIVENESS

4.1. Total investment in adult learning and change over time

An important shift towards better financial position of adult education was the adoption of the Adult Education Master Plan (AEMP), based on an extensive expert work done by the SIAE. Its first issue was adopted by the National Assembly back in 2004 and was valid for the period 2005-2010. This was an important step forward toward adequately addressing the relevance and importance of adult education giving it a proper share of financial means, larger than before by far. The financial scope of programmes, defined in the document for the whole period of validity was approximately €300m, including both, national and ESF sources.

The AEMP 2005-2010 was realised through detailed Annual Programmes (APAE), adopted by the Government, which followed the economic situation in the country, including the financial crisis 2008. For the whole seven-year period there were €215m public sources available (among which €80m were appointed from ESF). A great deal of this scope, €95m, was used for job related training and upskilling for unemployed.³³

The AEMP 2005-2010 has given priorities to different fields of publicly regulated and financed adult education and training programmes, putting in first place general non-formal education, which is believed to be basis for encouraging adults, especially low qualified, to get involved in learning activities.

Due to dramatic increases in the unemployment rate from 2008 onwards, stronger emphasis has been given to job-related programmes for raising employability. Therefore, the structure of shares among priorities has substantially changed compared to what had been planned in AEMP.

The new AEMP, adopted in 2013, encompasses as many as six ministries, four more than the previous AEMP. Thus the financial scope of the new AEMP 2013-2020³⁴ is almost €400m. But if we compare the scope for the two ministries, Ministry of Education, Science and Sport and Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, which solely formed the previous AEMP, the scope is €210m, which is even smaller than before.

According to the data on financial support to the Member States between 2014 and 2020, available in July, 2016 for the European Commission from Operational Programmes for the European Social Fund (ESF), the planned financial support from the European Union for the investment priority most directly targeting adult learning, i.e. Investment priority 10.3 – Enhancing access to lifelong learning, is €178.6 million.

Apart from public sources appointed to adult education and training provision, a substantial share of activities are financially covered by employers and households.

According to official statistical data, employers are spending 5.57€/months per employee on the average on education (7.47€ in public sector and 4.64€ in private). This is quite a modest

³³ Analysis of AEMP 2005-2010 http://arhiv.acs.si/porocila/Analiza_ReNPIO_2005-2010.pdf

³⁴ AEMP 2013-2020 http://www.uradni-list.si/files/RS_-2013-090-03262-OB~P001-0000.PDF#!/pdf

figure if we consider that there are several compulsory contents of training within companies (safety and health at work, hygiene requirements).

The data on household's expenditure shows that 1% of the family budget on average is dedicated to education (viewing adult education in broader sense, we could add to this percent as part of the 8.5% share of the family budget that households dedicate to recreation and culture).

4.2. Public national investment

Table 4.1 Breakdown of public national investment (2017):³⁵

General information		Progress toward target				
Title of public investment source	Financing amounts	Targeted number of participants	Targeted level of provision	Total	Year the funding started	Reference document
Elementary school for adults – National budget (MESS)	€1.3m	950	Fully financed	€1.3m	2017	APAE 2017
Training for unemployed – National budget (MESS)	€1.6m	2,166	Fully financed	€1.6m	2017	APAE 2017
AE supporting activities – National budget (MESS)	€1.6m	120,000	Fully financed	€1.6m	2017	APAE 2017
Supporting employment activities – National budget (MLFSA)	€1.7m	14,000	Fully financed	€1.7m	2017	APAE 2017

³⁵ Only programmes fully covered by the national budget, without ESF projects for which national budget participate 20% of the total value. These programmes are listed in Section 4.3.

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Training and education for employment National budget (MLFSA)	€1.8m	800	Fully financed	€1.8m	2017	APAE 2017
Training for advisors in agriculture (Public service) - National budget (MAFF)	€7.6m	60,000	Fully financed	€7.6m	2017	APAE 2017
Basic education on climate changes and sustainable development - National budget (MES Climate changes Fund)	€0.1m	350	Fully financed	€0.1m	2017	APAE 2017
Acquiring basic cultural competences - National budget (MC - Public Fund for Cultural Activities)	€0.2m	8,000	Fully financed	€0.2m	2017	APAE 2017
TOTAL	€15.9m	206,266	Fully financed	€15.9m	2017	APAE 2017

4.3. EU support via structural funds (primarily ESF) planned/launched as part of 2014-2020 financial framework

Previous sections emphasised that current data on employment rate, especially of low skilled adults, as well as participation rate of adults in lifelong learning are not favourable. Policy-makers are planning to invest a considerable amount of resources in corresponding

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programmes, while encouraging trends on the labour market, and not promising data on participation. The Operational Programme for the Implementation of the EU Cohesion Policy 2014-2020 OP 2020)³⁶ specifies:

“Based on the needs analysis, Slovenia will address key challenges in the area of improving access to lifelong learning for the older population, the less-skilled and the less-educated, helping employees gain relevant competences in order to reduce the gap between supply and demand in the labour market and job availability, and promoting flexible learning pathways, improved career guidance and orientation in order to improve the competences of young people at all levels of education for the labour market needs and society, all within the scope of the investment priority for enhancing equal access to lifelong learning.

Within the framework of the investment priority for improving the responsiveness of the education and training system to labour market needs, the vocational and professional education system will be modernised to improve its appeal and increase the focus on practical qualifications, and to better link the vocational education system with labour market needs.”³⁷

The main goals are the following:

- Enhancing equal access to lifelong learning for all age groups in formal, non-formal and informal settings;
- Upgrading the knowledge, skills and competences of the workforce;
- Promoting flexible learning pathways including through career guidance and validation of acquired competences.

Specific objectives include:

- Improve competences of those less involved in lifelong learning;
- Improving the basic and vocational competencies of employees with an emphasis on the elderly of 45 years, lower educated and lower skilled;
- Improve employee competences to reduce labour market mismatches.

As already mentioned above, according to the data on financial support to the Member States between 2014 and 2020, available in July, 2016, the planned financial support from the European Union for the investment priority most directly targeting adult learning is EUR 178.6 million.

In August, 2016, there were two public tenders issued by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport:

- Acquiring basic skills and vocational competences 2016-2019, worth €11m (18 public providers were confirmed);

³⁶ Operational Programme for the Implementation of the EU Cohesion Policy 2014-2020; http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/skills-matter_9789264258051-en

³⁷ OP 2020, p. 199 http://www.eu-skladi.si/sl/dokumenti/kljucni-dokumenti/op_ang_final_web.pdf

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- Counselling, guidance and assessment 2016-2022, worth €9.5m (15 public providers were confirmed).

The Public Scholarship, Development and Maintenance Fund (PSDMF)³⁸ has published a public tender, based on the new ESF perspective which is still open:

- Creative path to knowledge, worth €4m.

Very recently (June, 2017) the PSDMF has published:

1. Public tender for co-financing of tuition fees for raising the level of education, worth €6.7m, targeting at adults with less than upper secondary education attainment, who have already successfully accomplished their education class (reimbursing tuition fees).

In the 2017 APAE, there are different programmes defined within the EU programmes, adopted by the Government to be publicly financed in 2017 from ESS sources with 20% of participation from the national budget:

“Improving competencies and promoting flexible forms of learning”:

1. Acquiring basic skills and vocational competences, worth €4m;
2. Raising educational attainment, worth €3.4m;
3. Professional support in the field of acquiring basic competences, worth €0.2m;
4. Professional support for information and advisory activities and evaluation of informally acquired knowledge for employees worth €0.1m;
5. Invitation to tender for the financing of information and counselling activities and for the identification and evaluation of informally acquired knowledge from 2016 to 2022, worth €1.5m;
6. Implementation of vocational education and training programmes 2017-2022, worth €4m;
7. Development of training programmes for further vocational education and training, worth €0.1m;
8. Development of working competences of imprisoned people, worth €0.13m;

“Vocational education and training”:

9. Training of mentors for the implementation of practical training by working according to educational programmes for acquiring education, worth €0.3m;
10. Raising professional competencies of teachers, worth €0.3m;

“Access to jobs”:

11. Non-formal education and training for vulnerable target groups, worth €2.7m;
12. On-the-job training for long-term unemployed, worth €4.4m;

³⁸ Recently renamed to Public Scholarship, Development and Maintenance Fund (PSDMF)

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1. Encouraging the integration of people who have lost their jobs in labour market measures, worth €0.6m;

“Active inclusion”:

1. Project Learning for Young Adults (PUM-O), worth €2.5m;

“Sustainable integration of young people into the labour market”:

13. Workplace training for young people, worth €2.2m;
14. Non-formal education and training - young people, worth €0.7m;

“Fostering the equal accessibility to lifelong learning”:

15. Competence Centres, worth €2.1m;

“Active and healthy ageing”:

16. Comprehensive support for employers for active ageing of their workforce, worth €4.4m;

“Integration of immigrants”:

2. Slovene language courses, worth €0.5m;

Total budget for adult education in 2017 supported from EU funds: €34.6m (€27.8m from ESF and €6.8m from the national budget).

4.4. EU support via structural funds (primarily ESF) provided as part of 2007-2013 financial framework

During the ESF financial framework period 2007-2013, €165m were allocated for “Development of human resources and lifelong learning” programmes for Slovenia³⁹, demanding additionally €30m participation from the national budget.

Between 2007 and 2010, while the first issue of AEMP was still actual, according to analysis, provided by SIAE, €56m of ESF sources were realised (out of €80m allocated for that period).

Before the second issue of AEMP was adopted in 2013, there was a three-year period 2011-2013, covered by annual programmes and by the ESF financial perspective 2007-2013. In this period, €109m were realised, of which €62m from ESF, and €52m for job related training.⁴⁰

³⁹ http://www.mddsz.gov.si/fileadmin/mddsz.gov.si/pageuploads/dokumenti_pdf/op_ess_final.pdf, p. 132;

⁴⁰ Analysis of adult education annual programmes 2011-2013 http://arhiv.acs.si/porocila/Analiza_ReNPPIO_2011-2013.pdf

4.5. Effectiveness of investment

Effectiveness can be measured from two points:

1. Were programmes realised according to plan regarding the scope of provided programmes, number of participants, accomplished learning activities and delivered certificates, if required?
2. Which outcomes regarding educational attainment, acquired competences and employment have been reached in comparison to planned goals and/or set benchmarks?

As far as the first point is concerned, according to reports on realisation of APAE, regularly prepared by responsible offices (MESS, MLFSS, SIAE, National Employment Agency), all invested money is spent effectively and transparently.

The second view unfortunately only partially allows a satisfactory assessment of the effectiveness of investments. On the one hand, we can assess the rise of educational attainment positively. On the other hand, data on participation rate in LLL, PIAAC results and still severe problem of long-term unemployment of low skilled and other vulnerable groups demonstrate that major goals of investment in adult education are not achieved. In this respect we cannot assess investments as effective.

Despite this, according to yearly analysis from SIAE, these financial investments in adult education in all these years were quite effective. The number of vulnerable groups members participating in learning activities was very high, some successful programmes for basic skills acquirement have been developed and implemented, a lot of unemployed took advantage of all numerous opportunities to raise their employability and re-enter the labour market, a network of services providing counselling, guidance and other supportive activities was established.

However, there are programmes where sources are not used effectively, like fully financed elementary school programme for adults, which perform very poorly.

Furthermore, there is a very low and further decreasing participation rate in LLL, a very low employment rate of low qualified adults 55-64, and an extensive number of years of study at tertiary level. All of this data indicates that Slovenian decision makers should consider some re-allocation of investments. Investments in adult education linked to the new ESF financial perspective 2014-2020 have begun to be realised in the year 2017 which means that we are not able to assess their effectiveness yet.

5. ASSESSMENT OF EXISTING POLICY

Despite some positive signals of the gradual economic recovery after the beginning of the crisis in 2008 (gradual increase of the GDP with optimistic forecast for the next few years, significant decrease of the unemployment rate), Slovenia is still facing severe economic and social problems. The share of population at risk of poverty approaches 20%, the share of part-time and temporary employment contracts is increasing on one hand, as well as the share of full-time employees receiving minimum wages, whereas the share of long-term unemployed remains at high level as well as the share of highly educated first job seekers on the other hand.

The demographic curve showing the dynamic of ageing of the population is very steep and the ratio between active and inactive population is dramatically deteriorating. In addition, Slovenia has a very low employment rate of older workers (only 31% of the population 55-64).

Data presented in other sections have shown some encouraging facts concerning education performances in Slovenia: the share of early school leavers is one of the lowest in Europe, the share of tertiary educated young adults 30-34 has already surpassed the targeted percentage, almost all youngsters enrol in upper secondary education and over a half in tertiary.

However, the decrease of the participation rate of adults in LLL and very poor results in PIAAC survey demonstrate that policy-makers should be concerned about the situation and looking for solutions.

- According to the author (country expert), the policy-makers dealing with adult education and training (MESS, MLFSA, Employment Agency) are aware of most of the problems and tackle them adequately, which can be seen through adopted documents presented above. Unfortunately, the situation in the economic sector was not good for several years and it has had different direct and indirect impacts on the educational and vocational sectors: there was not enough economic activity, and the labour market is still facing a severe lack of jobs;
- Although the share of low skilled long-term unemployed persons is high, it is of concern that the share of highly skilled first job seekers is still troublesome. On the upper-secondary level, 72.3% of graduates get employed in the first three years after leaving education (EU28 average 75%), while on the tertiary level graduates, employment rate three years after leaving education is 80% (EU28 average 82,8%). Although the difference of almost 4% comparing the EU28 average is substantial, it looks like that the trend might turn in a positive direction, since this percentage increased from 74,3% in 2014 to 80% in 2016. Nevertheless, the number of unemployed tertiary graduates is still high. The direct impact of this situation is the emigration of fresh graduates to other countries (mostly Germany and Austria) which can be treated as "brain drain".
- The inactivity rate of older people is very high, as was already mentioned.

From 2016 onwards, the Slovenian economy is significantly recovering and hopefully these negative trends will change their inclination.

The unemployment rate, regardless of its significant decrease in past two years with its numerous social implications, is still one of the most serious problems Slovenia and other EU countries are facing. Consequently, the majority of efforts in the field of education and training is focused on raising employability and to overcome skills mismatches on the labour market. The biggest share of finances is targeted at job-related training programmes: upskilling, ICT competences, vocational qualification schemes, validation of prior learning etc. Due to the fact that European Social Fund became the most important source for financing adult education and training, it is inevitable to accept and share the ESF priorities.

The share of financial sources aimed at job-related training, regardless of its importance, inadequately overlaps possibilities of other types of adult education, especially general non-formal education. Quite often sources are spent for upskilling or adapting to particular jobs which should be organised and financed by the employers.

A re-orientation of the whole sector of adult education to job related training (e.g. shift from DG Education and Culture to DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion) might have long-term negative consequences and could not improve performances of the low skilled in the field of basic competences and general knowledge.

The following sub-sections assess the existing policy through the lens of the six key success factors for effective adult learning policy that have been identified in a recent study.⁴¹

5.1. Increase employers' investment in learning

Apart from some good examples⁴², employers are not investing enough in learning and training of their employees, especially in low skilled workers in the author's opinion.⁴³ High ranked professionals and managers have numerous possibilities for upgrading their education and competences, while low qualified workers have much less. One of the reasons lies in a surplus of job-seekers in the labour market.

Policy-makers are very well aware of this problem. Apart from the programme of this kind opened at the moment, offered by the National Employment Agency, called "Training at the workplace for 2016 and 2017"⁴⁴, worth €8.7m, there are some corresponding programmes offered recently (APAE 2017) by MLFSA, based on the OP 2020:

1. "Sustainable integration of young people into the labour market":

⁴¹ Key success factors, indicating the strength of evidence (available in all languages): <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/en/policy-tool/key-success-factors>; Study "An in-depth analysis of adult learning policies and their effectiveness in Europe": <https://epale.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/final-report-20150817-en.pdf>

⁴² e.g. Chamber of Crafts on national level used to have a special fund for covering education and training costs of their members, which all members have to participate in; unfortunately this positive example is now reduced to only regional level.

⁴³ Of course there are many exceptions of this rule, and these companies are usually more successful.

⁴⁴ http://www.ess.gov.si/delodajalci/financne_spodbude/razpisi/usposabljanje-na-delovnem-mestu

- Workplace training for young people, worth €2.2m;

2. "Active and healthy ageing":

- Comprehensive support for employers for active ageing of their workforce, worth €4.4m;

5.2. Improve equity of access for all

Two approaches exist regarding the equality issue:

- Formally, there is a complete equality of access guaranteed for all participants in all publicly financed educational programmes for adults. In this respect, there is no room or need for improvements;
- Due to the very different social and educational background of different vulnerable groups, equality can be achieved only by using principles of so called "positive discrimination", which gives members of these groups some extra "bonuses" for accessing educational programmes. Our policy-makers are following these principles. This means that in cases where access capacities are limited, priority is given to members of vulnerable groups.

5.3. Deliver learning that is relevant

Employers in Slovenia have enough possibilities to take advantage of choosing among the suitable and well educated workforce on the labour market. They have many possibilities to choose from, amongst a variety of offered programmes by numerous providers. In this respect, educational policy is not very focused on employer needs, although there are some publicly offered co-financed programmes, mentioned above.

As far as learners are concerned, the main focus of the policy decision-making is aimed at raising employability by raising the level of key competences and raising educational attainment of low-skilled.

It is difficult to make an assessment whether these targets are properly approached. Due to the situation within the labour market and in society in general, consequently, learning needs are changing very fast. However, there is a suitable organisational structure of institutions and proceedings that can cope with challenges and tackle problems.

5.4. Deliver learning that is of high quality

All publicly financed learning programmes for adults are monitored and evaluated from the point of view of quality. This quality assurance is a part of the system of public finances. Each provider of publicly financed educational programme is obliged to send a report when the programme is accomplished to SIAE, with detailed data about participants and costs. This data is elaborated and analysed.

There is also a special programme, offered to public providers of adult education, and schools which also enrol adults, called "Let's Offer Adults Quality Education" which has been designed

and implemented at SIAE.⁴⁵ This programme promotes the awareness of the importance of quality assurance, using several approaches, including self-evaluation and external monitoring.

5.5. Develop learners' interest in learning

Potential learners have clear opportunities aimed at increasing their disposition towards learning, for example:

Counselling and guidance (C&G): there is a network of 14 C&G publicly financed centres, evenly spaced throughout the country, in which counsellors inform potential learners of their learning and educational opportunities, validate their portfolio of competences and skills and encourage them to (re)enter in learning processes;

Support for self-directed learning (SDL): there is network of 36 SDL publicly financed centres, located in folk high schools or in public libraries, which are offered to learners for supporting their learning activities;

One of the initiatives aiming at attracting potential learners and promoting lifelong learning is **Lifelong Learning Week**, organised annually by SIAE over the past 20 years.⁴⁶ Each year some novelty is introduced aiming at improving learners interest for learning. For example, recently an initiative, called Role Models Attract has been initiated.⁴⁷

There are several other activities and publications, issued by SIAE⁴⁸, which directly address the problem of how to attract potential learners to enter in learning activities. One of good examples are several DVDs, issued by SIAE, addressing particular key competences.⁴⁹

There is enough room for improvement in this field, of course. Although some promising initiatives, conducted by some folk high schools, more efforts should be put into reaching members of the most vulnerable groups, which are not aware of all these offered supporting capacities.

5.6. Ensure coherent policy

The main instrument for planning and monitoring activities on the field of adult learning, education and training is AEMP, mentioned several times above. There are three anchors defined in the system for assuring the effectiveness of this instrument:

Procedure of designing and adopting AEMP:

- The document is based on expertise of SIAE, and co-ordinated with stakeholders;
- The document is adopted by the National Assembly, which guarantees its financial allocation.

⁴⁵ <http://kakovost.acs.si/poki/>

⁴⁶ <http://tvu.acs.si/predstavitev/>

⁴⁷ <http://llw.acs.si/learners/>

⁴⁸ <http://www.acs.si/publications>

⁴⁹ http://www.worldcat.org/search?q=su%3ANeformalno+izobraz%CC%8Cevanje+Video+DVD-ji.&qt=hot_subject

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- Procedures for implementation and monitoring:
 - AEMP is implemented through APAE which are co-ordinated with all 6 ministries that take part in the AEMP. This task is appointed to a special Co-ordination body in which all ministries are represented. During the past three years, the number of ministries involved in the APAE raised to 9, which is a positive signal for further development of common initiatives in cooperation.
 - SIAE is obligated to elaborate an analysis of the realisation of the APAE each year and presenting it to the Council of Experts for Adult Education.
- Every second year, MESS, which is responsible for AEMP, reports on the two-year outcomes to National Assembly (in 2017, the report will encompass a three year period)
- Programmes, included in Active Employment Policy, are analysed and monitored by the National Employment Agency, which delivers monthly and annual reports, and reports to the MLFSA.

6. STRENGTH AND WEAKNESSES OF THE ADULT EDUCATION SYSTEM

6.1. Strengths

- A well-organised system of policy-making structures in the two responsible ministries MESS and MLFSA, including the involvement of stakeholders and their jurisdiction within the Council of Experts for Adult Education and Vocational Training, a competent main research and development institution with a role in monitoring and evaluation;
- A well-organised network of public providers of adult education and training programmes;
- The adoption of the important comprehensive strategy document Adult Education Master Plan by the National Assembly, and its implementation through Annual Programmes of Adult Education, adopted by the Government.
- Legal framework which reasonably take into account adult education as an equally important part of education within the principle of Lifelong Learning.

6.2. Weakness

- Finance. There are two major sources of public funds aimed at adult education, the national budget and the ESF. Limits and shortages of financial sources in the National Budget due to long-term negative impacts of the crisis, which, firstly, shrink the sustainability of a vast publicly financed network of providers and put obstacles to the efficient use of ESF funds due to rules of co-financing, are still present, although the recovery of the economy enables positive expectations for the future;
- Ineffective outreach of those groups that are beyond the awareness of possibilities of educational offer. Some potential learners should literally be visited in their homes and encouraged to participate in offered programmes
- Lacking of an implemented system for validation of prior learning. One of most challenging issues emerging in the field of adult education is evaluation of prior non-formal learning outcomes and skills. A proper approach to this area requires a comprehensive system of acknowledgement, validation and certifying, with appointed services. In Slovenia, such a system is still in its developmental phase.

Recently OECD has published Skills Strategy Diagnostic Report for Slovenia, which will be available early in September, 2017 .

1. On the OECD website there are some suggestions for Slovenian policymaker how to tackle severe problems concerning unemployment:
2. "Strengthen the connection between the Employment Service and the Centres of Social Work by shifting responsibilities to overcome the separation of benefit administration and counselling, or even partially merging the two authorities.
3. Enable the Employment Service to help harder-to-place jobseekers by freeing up time for caseworkers to counsel these jobseekers and help them into training and work, as well as deal with additional social and health problems.
4. Tackle high long-term unemployment by making social assistance benefits dependent upon looking for work and enabling people to maintain some benefits over a longer period when they find work.

5. Promote longer working lives through further changes in the unemployment, pension and disability benefit system as well as the labour law to encourage later retirement.”

6.3. The main trends in relation to main statistical indicators

There are several statistical indicators with defined values set as targets or benchmarks, mainly establishing what progress should be expected by the year 2020. Most of them are mentioned in different sections of this document above, being defined at the EU, or at Slovenian national level.

6.3.1. Participation rate of adults 25-64 in LLL

Benchmarks set at the EU level (15%), or even more ambitious national level targets (19%) are very unlikely to be fulfilled. Trends across the past few years are negative and the value of the indicator for Slovenia has been decreasing since 2010. There is no evidence that it could be redirected in the near future. Although this indicator does not necessarily reflect the real situation, due to the rather unclear methodology, it has a strong message especially if we consider that the participation rate of the low qualified, which are in the centre of most of publicly financed education initiatives, remains very low.

6.3.2. Participation rate of adults 25-64 in general non-formal education

As explained before, this benchmark (8% by 2020) was defined by AEMP 2013-2020. Although it is rather difficult to make a clear distinction between job-related and general non-formal educational programmes, the trend is positive. The number of offered programmes aimed at acquiring basic competences not directly job-related and the number of participants is increasing.

6.3.3. Indicators measuring educational attainment, enrolment rates and early school leavers

Values for these indicators, are either being set at the EU level (early school leavers, share of adults 30-34 with tertiary education) or on the national level (share of adults who have not completed elementary school and share of adults who attained at least 4-years upper secondary education), are satisfactory and trends are positive for all of them.

6.3.4. Indicators measuring various features of unemployment and activity rates

The unemployment rate in general is decreasing and the trend is negative, although the share of the low qualified within long-term unemployed is still significant. A major problem remains with the lack of investment and entrepreneurial initiatives, which also means that there is a lack new jobs within the labour market.

The employment rate indicator, set at the EU level (75% of 20-64, by 2020) is unlikely to be met, although the trend is positive. A very severe problem in this respect in Slovenia is a very low activity rate of low educated elderly people (55+), especially women.

The indicator measuring the share of graduates entering the labour market no later than 3 years after finishing education, although having positive trend, demonstrates that there are not enough jobs offered to keep pace with the supply of labour. Approximately 28% of upper secondary education graduates (vocational), 50% of upper secondary education graduates (general), and 20% of tertiary education graduates are not able to find employment within three years.

6.3.5. Ageing

As is the case in almost all EU countries, Slovenia has an ageing population. This has several implications, also within the area of adult education. One of the most important issues is the prolongation of working age and the challenge of the acquisition and upgrading of competences for the older population.

6.4. The legal framework, governing adult learning, including policy targets

The system of adult education in Slovenia, including legal framework and governance, is deemed satisfactory to stakeholders.⁵⁰ The new Adult Education Act which is likely to be adopted in 2017, will highlight some issues that will have to be addressed in the near future, such as the need to establish and regulate the public network of providers. The important issue still on the agenda is establishing and implementing the system for the validation and recognition of skills and competencies acquired non-formally or in-formally.

The other issue which is still to be addressed is the adoption of an adequate implementing instrument for monitoring and validating programmes provided by the 7 ministries, included in APAE (apart from MESS and MLFSA).

6.5. The investment in learning

The new ESF financial perspective 2014-2020 is relatively generous with regard to the financial means intended for adult education. At the current time, the investment from national and European (ESF) sources is not of major concern.

On the other hand, employers still do not invest enough in their workforce, especially in the low skilled, although there is not enough reliable data to demonstrate this statement. Due to a rather high unemployment rate and corresponding lack of jobs within the labour market, employers are looking for candidates that are already skilled (specialised) for the particular job. On the other hand, the author (country expert) considers that employers should be more willing to finance programmes that would help to develop the required skills within their workforce.

⁵⁰ This statement is based on the positive opinion of members the Council of Experts for Adult Education, which consists of 14 members, appointed by different ministries, representatives of chambers, social partners and providers.

6.6. The assessment of 6 areas of policy intervention;

As described in all six sections in chapter 5, most of the areas are addressed properly and are promising to be further improved in the future.

The area which is properly addressed and to which is given high priority on all levels of policy, but still does not demonstrate expected results is "Develop learners' interest in learning". The novelty proposed in the new Adult Education Act (public service of supporting activities) is aiming precisely at this problematic issue.

In my opinion the only area which is not (yet) properly addressed is "Increase employers' investment in learning", as mentioned in the section 6.3.

6.7. Whether the identified weaknesses are being addressed currently in your country, and if so, how.

Weaknesses identified in Section 6 are in general properly addressed but not yet eliminated.

As far as **finances** are concerned, the new ESF financial perspective 2014-2020 offered a substantial increase of the financial scope. Also the network of public providers, which really were in bad financial shape until recently, could improve their position with taking part in major public tenders, already mentioned above. Also procedures of application, monitoring and managing these programmes have improved significantly in comparison with previous perspectives.

Ineffective outreach of vulnerable groups of adults most in need of education is still the major problem but is, in my opinion, properly addressed by, as mentioned above, the proposed legal novelty.

The problem of the coherent system of validation and recognition of prior learning is still open. I believe our policymakers are facing similar problems as do policymakers in other countries. On one hand advocates of "formal" system of educational attainment and qualification standing on the rigid position of official evidence of knowledge and skills, while on the other hand promoters of evidence, based on trust and confidence bet on non-formal approach, emphasising job-related practical experiences and outcomes of in-formal learning. These two approaches are present also in other countries (the first is more valued in northern countries, the second in southern). The fact that no major step towards coherent system has been taken so far in Slovenia doesn't mean that policymakers hadn't addressed the problem properly.

7. FURTHER POLICY REFORMS AND ORIENTATIONS NEEDED

7.1. To what extent current policy sufficiently addresses those challenges

As described above, in my opinion policymakers have all major issues concerning adult education on the agenda addressed sufficiently.

7.2. What key additional future policy reforms and orientations could be needed (including, but not limited to financing) to address those challenges

As already mentioned above, an important document which should be crucial for the further development of the country in general is the Slovenia's Development Strategy. The former one was valid for the period 2007-2013, the new one valid for the period 2014-2020. It is still not presented in its final version (the first draft was issued in August 2013).⁵¹ This delay is unfortunately quite meaningful because it can be understood in two ways:

- As an indication of a subordination of the national decision-makers to EU initiatives and guidance;
- As an indication of disagreements among different politic orientations of current ruling coalition.

The latter might have implications regarding different approaches towards the adult education system, where a more liberal and strictly market-oriented fraction could diminish the importance of adult education, not directly linked to employability. This could endanger the publicly financed space of provision of programmes, aimed at raising the basic competences for vulnerable groups.

But, so far, there is no indication for such a scenario and adopted documents mentioned above can be treated optimistically.

7.3. Whether there are any particular issues with policy implementation and the functioning of the adult education system.

The problem of implementation of a coherent system of validation and recognition of non-formally acquired knowledge and skills, as mentioned above is an issue which mainly concerns two ministries, the MESS and MLFSA. Due to the opposite approaches of each of the two it is likely that the system will still not be implemented imminently.

⁵¹ http://www.mgrt.gov.si/fileadmin/mgrt.gov.si/pageuploads/EKP/Drugi_dokumenti/SRS_09_08_2013.pdf

8. SUMMARY

The adult education system in Slovenia is well organised and, mostly, adequately meets the needs of the population. What makes the Slovenian system suitable and efficient is a dense network of public providers and a reasonable structure of decision-makers.

8.1. An updated summary of the country statistical performance (concise country overview submitted as a separate document);

Country statistical performance:

1. The first section of the presented document refers to EU benchmarks set in the document Education and Training 2020, addressing adult education and employability outcomes.

Slovenia performs satisfactorily with respect to the two following targeted figures:

1. The share of early school leavers is one of the lowest among all EU countries and by far surpasses the benchmark (EU target: <10%, Slovenia (2016): 4.9%);
2. The share of adults 30-34, with tertiary educational attainment (EU target: at least 40%, Slovenia (2016): 44.2%).

The two benchmarks which are unlikely to be met by 2020 are:

1. Adult participation in Lifelong Learning (EU target: 15%, (National target: 19%), Slovenia (2016): 11.6%);
2. Employment rate of population 20-64 (EU target: 75%, (National target 75%), Slovenia (2016): 70.1%).

8.2. An updated summary of key challenges faced and current policies/reforms/financing

8.2.1. Policy reforms in Country-specific recommendations (CSRs) and National Reform Programmes (NRPs)

The activities of policy-makers follow the overall positive attitude towards adult education. There is a comprehensive strategic document, adopted by the National Assembly (AEMP 2013-2020) which defines priorities, target groups and set benchmarks for outcomes. Documents that follow EU initiatives and recommendations (OP 2020) adequately address actual challenges.

The very low participation rate in LLL (11.6%), which in 6 years dropped from over 16%, has not yet been explained. The provision of programmes for adults and the number of participants are stable, so there are no instruments yet identified for tackling this problem.

The employment rate will also be difficult to reach. Slovenia still faces a very low activity rate of older generations (employment rate of population 55-64 is no more than 30%). This will be a great challenge for the future in the field of adult education, because the activity rate very closely responds to the qualification level.

The other, very severe problem is the increasing share of unemployed highly educated first job seekers to meet the EU benchmark. This EU benchmark states that *"The share of employed graduates (aged 20-34 with at least upper secondary education attainment and having left education 1-3 years ago) should be at least 82%"*⁵², which will be very difficult to achieve.

Slovenia's performance was comparatively low according to the PIAAC survey. Although the results are slightly better in comparison to IALS survey from 1998 (in that survey performance was very poor), Slovenia still lags behind countries we would like to be compared with. These results are also important for setting adult education policy decisions for the future, because some bright examples show that young and better educated adults perform far better than older and less qualified adults (above the OECD average). Therefore, it is still very important to invest in education of main target groups: older, low qualified adults.

Financial perspectives within ESF offer a substantial level of financial resources for adult education and training. The responsible structures in Slovenia act adequately which can be demonstrated by the comprehensive document OP 2020.

As far as the situation of the labour market is concerned, the main problem in Slovenia is the low level of economic activities and consequently the lack of jobs. The unemployment rate is very high, although lower than the EU average (around 100,000 are unemployed, compared to around 800,000 employed). Although the share of low qualified long-term unemployed is high and is even increasing, a more severe problem is the unemployment of younger highly educated adults. A lot of educated youngsters are emigrating to neighbouring countries.

Regardless, the problem in Slovenia is not a low level of employability of unemployed (the situation is closer to over-qualification) but a lack of jobs. There are a lot of programmes, aimed at upskilling, adapting to new jobs, career guidance, training at job on one hand, and supporting services for employers, such as acquiring competences in human resource management and managerial skills. Financial sources for these kinds of programmes are substantial and by far exceed the scope aimed at general non-formal learning for raising basic skills.

Recently, the OECD has published Skills Strategy Diagnostic Report for Slovenia, which will be available early in September, 2017⁵³.

On the OECD website there are some suggestions for Slovenian policymakers on how to tackle severe problems concerning unemployment, as follows

Strengthen the connection between the Employment Service and the Centres of Social Work by shifting responsibilities to overcome the separation of benefit administration and counselling, or even partially merging the two authorities.

⁵² http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/strategic-framework/index_en.htm

⁵³ <http://www.oecd.org/slovenia/employment-and-skills-strategies-in-slovenia-9789264278929-en.htm>

Enable the Employment Service to help harder-to-place jobseekers by freeing up time for caseworkers to counsel these jobseekers and help them into training and work, as well as deal with additional social and health problems.

Tackle high long-term unemployment by making social assistance benefits dependent upon looking for work and enabling people to maintain some benefits over a longer period when they find work.

Promote longer working lives through further changes in the unemployment, pension and disability benefit system as well as the labour law to encourage later retirement."⁵⁴

8.3. An updated summary of further policy reforms needed

According to the author's (country expert) assessment, the majority of issues needed to be addressed by the policy-makers are already on the policy agenda:

1. It is very important that all activities, concerning the implementation of ESF 2014-2020 operational programme, which have already been initiated, proceed accurately and promptly.
2. The legislative novelties, concerning Adult Education Act, which are momentarily in the phase of approved draft proposal, will presumably be adopted before the end of 2017. These novelties will stabilise work conditions of public providers that will hopefully enable them to outreach potential learners.
3. There are still some unsolved questions concerning the system of validation of prior learning linked to competencies and skills measurement.
4. An overall problem how to increase the demand on the labour market for knowledge and competences of Slovenian population which has a plenty of those, in other words, how to attract investments.

⁵⁴ <http://www.oecd.org/slovenia/slovenia-should-boost-efforts-to-help-long-term-unemployed.htm>

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10. ANNEX 1: INVENTORY OF ADOPTED LEGAL ACTS, STRATEGIES, LAWS

Name	Date of adoption	Short description of content
Adult Education Act	October, 2017 (in governmental procedure), adopted presumably by the end of 2017	The most important legal act for AE. Counselling, guidance and validation organised as public service, provided by a network of public folk high schools.
The Act amending the Zakon o srednjem poklicnem in strokovnem izobraževanju (Vocational and Technical Education Act)	Proposed, July, 28th	Regulates status of part time students, includes also provisions addressed at part time students.
The Act amending the Zakon o gimnazijah (Grammar School Act)	Proposed, July, 28th	Regulates status of part time students, includes also provisions addressed at part time students.
Apprenticeship Act	Adopted, May, 5th, 2017	Regulates the status of apprentices in the training and education processes.

11. ANNEX 2: INVENTORY OF POLICY INTERVENTIONS

Name of intervention	Source (with hyperlink)	Budget	Outputs	Which of the 6 building blocks for successful adult learning policies does it target? (tick all relevant)						Further details/description (purpose, duration, responsible entity etc.)
				Fosters learners' interest in learning	Employers' investment in learning	Improve equity of access for all	Learning that is relevant	High quality learning	Coherent policy	
Counselling and Guidance centres (C&G); Support for self-directed learning (SDL); Lifelong Learning Week;	http://www.acs.si/index.cgi?lang=4	€1m	20.000+8.000+100.000 Vulnerable groups of adults	X						<p>Raise awareness of benefits of learning</p> <p>A network of 14 C&G publicly financed centres, evenly spaced throughout the country, in which counsellors inform potential learners of their learning and educational</p>

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									<p>opportunities, validate their portfolio of competences and skills and encourage them to (re)enter in learning processes;</p> <p>Provide guidance on learning options Network of 36 SDL publicly financed centres, located in folk high schools or in public libraries, which are offered to learners for supporting their learning activities;</p> <p>Engage social partners. Ensure good initial learning experience. Initiatives aiming at attracting potential learners and promoting lifelong learning;</p> <p>Responsible: SIAE</p>
Comprehensive support for employers for active ageing	https://www.ess.gov.si/delodajalci/financne_ https://www.ess.gov.si/delodajalci/financne_spodbude/razpisi/usposabljanje-na-delovnem-mestu-2017-2018	<p>€28m</p> <p>€1,9m</p> <p>€7,4m</p>	2.110+4.000 employees 55+; unemployed		X				<p>Financial incentives for employers</p>

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<p>of their workforce; Working test; Training at the workplace;</p>									<p>Promote accredited qualifications Promote work-based learning Provision of a working test of the unemployed and reimbursement of the eligible costs of the experiment performed. Responsible: MLFSA, Employment Agency</p>
<p>Counselling, guidance and validation;</p>	<p>http://www.acs.si/index.cgi?lang=4</p>	<p>€1,5m</p>	<p>20.000 Disadvantaged groups</p>			<p>X</p>			<p>Fund learning for disadvantaged groups Provide targeted guidance and support Recognise prior learning Outreach via a range of organisations Develop basic skills Identification of prior learning, portfolio of skills and competencies, guidance through</p>

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										training/education possibilities; Responsible: SIAE
Let's Offer Adults Quality Education; Professional education and training of educators.	https://kakovost.acs.si/home/	€7,4m	4.200 educators						X	Monitor and evaluate the development of skilled adult education workforce. This programme promotes the awareness of the importance of quality assurance, using several approaches, including self-evaluation and external monitoring; Training of mentors for the implementation of practical training by working according to educational programmes for acquiring education; Responsible: SIAE
(AEMP) Adult Education Master Plan 2013-2020	https://www.uradni-list.si/glasilo-uradni-list-rs/vsebina/114925	€72 (2017)							X	Comprehensive strategic long-term document which includes all major publicly

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