



ANED country report on equality of educational and training opportunities for young disabled people

Country: Slovak Republic

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The [Academic Network of European Disability experts](#) (ANED) was established by the European Commission in 2008 to provide scientific support and advice for its disability policy Unit. In particular, the activities of the Network will support the future development of the EU Disability Action Plan and practical implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Disabled People.

This country report has been prepared as input for the Thematic report on the implementation of EU Equality of educational and training opportunities in European countries with reference to equality for young disabled people.

The purpose of the report ([Terms of Reference](#)) is to review national implementation on equality of educational and training opportunities for young people, and in particular the National Strategic Reports of member states from a disability equality perspective in education and training, and provide the Commission with useful evidence in supporting disability policy mainstreaming.



Section 1: Executive summary and conclusions

According to the Slovak constitution everybody has the right to education and to attend school. Citizens have a right to free education in elementary and secondary schools, according to the individual's abilities and the possibilities at high schools. In addition to free education, the Constitution guarantees for youth and persons with disabilities the right to extraordinary protection in labour relations and to assistance in vocational education. Provisions on how to fulfil these commitments are developed in special regulations (laws). Based on the previously mentioned constitutional laws, a comprehensive system of obligations for various public authorities operating in educational field (schools of all levels and kinds, supportive school facilities, employment services providers, employers) has been established in Slovakia.

The life-long learning system in Slovakia is divided into school education and further education. All extraordinary provisions within the school education are based on recognition of a pupil as requiring special educational needs. This means that he/she requires special accommodation of conditions, content, forms, methods and approaches due to his/her health impairment. Schools are obligated to meet the special requirements of every child in order to ensure their right to education.

Pupils with different types of disabilities may be educated in mainstream school settings (as an individualised integration approach or as a classroom integration approach) or in special schools. According to the statistics¹ in 2009 the majority of disabled students were educated in inclusive school settings, primarily in the individualised form of integration. Ca 60% of individually integrated children with a disability had developmental learning impairments; the proportion of children with other types of disabilities was markedly lower. That is a reason why civil society organisations representing persons with sensory (hearing or visual), physical or mental disabilities perceive the proportion of inclusively educated children with "classical" types of disabilities as being very low (as a rarity). The organisations have criticised a lack of money to ensure a barrier-free environment, necessary compensational devices and appliances, transformation of educational and didactic materials into alternative formats and that lack of services of special pedagogists and teachers' assistants. Despite the right of parents and legal guardians to choose an educational institution for their child, they are often "shifted" (recommended) by mainstream school directors to special educational schools and programs.

University education for students with disabilities is completely mainstreamed. Students are provided with special additional financial or in-kind measures (e.g. funds to support students with disabilities, direct payment for personal assistance, help to purchase a car or device, and finance for coordinators to work with students with disabilities and support centres).

¹ www.uips.sk

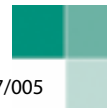


Young people with disabilities have opportunities to learn within the further education system, which allows them to acquire, expand or deepen their skills. One of the components of the further education system is a re/training scheme within active labor market policy, which aims at increasing the employability of jobseekers. This scheme offers mainstream re/training programmes or in-work training programmes to jobseekers with disabilities designed exclusively for them (job preparation of disabled person scheme). The main sources for funding re/training programmes come from the state budget and the European Social Fund.

Despite the well-established legislative rules and existing system of organisational obligations of public authorities operating in this field, there have been identified some serious problems that prevent more children and young persons with disabilities from reaching inclusive education and better outcomes from their educational process. Problems arise in the different approaches of various educational institutions in implementing programmes and policies on inclusive education, which depend on their funder (municipality, regional government or county school office). Civil society organisations point out as a problem the discretionary based system of “financing specificities” which is one of the main sources for financing disability - friendly measures in mainstreaming settings. Non-governmental organisations call for financing special needs requirements to be obligatory. The existing legal order gives mainstream school directors strong powers (discretion) to impact the decision as to whether a child will be educated inclusively or not and whether a child will be moved from mainstream to a special school setting.

For sensory disabled pupils and students a crucial problem is an absence of practical barrier-free communication at all educational levels, including study materials in alternative formats and access to art schools programs. For those representing mentally disabled children and young persons’ interests, the crucial problem is the very limited system of further education and life-long learning after leaving compulsory school. They point out a low level of awareness among the general public about the positive outcomes in inclusive education for both children with and without a disability. This lack of awareness is a real barrier to extending the proportion of children and young persons with disabilities educated within mainstream educational settings.

Generally we can summarise that in Slovakia there presently exists a well established system of legislative rules for educational integration. On the other hand, there is an implementation gap between legal possibilities and real practice resulting not only from financial obstacles but from various level of human capacities (from educational providers’ side and users’ side), too. That can be a reason why chances for inclusive education have not been, until now, equally provided for all children and young persons with disabilities.



Section 2: Legal and policy context

2.1 Main policies providing persons with disabilities with choices to study and learn in inclusive settings

2.1.1 Main policies and documents

The general education system in Slovakia presently consists of four stages²:

- pre-primary education (non-compulsory, from 3 to 6 years of age),
- compulsory education (from 6 to 16 years of age),
- post-compulsory education/upper secondary (from 16 to 18/19/20 years of age) and post-secondary level (from 18/19 to 20/21 years of age),
- higher education (from 18/19 to 20/21/22 years of age by higher professional study or from 18/19 to 21/22/23/24 years of age by college/university/academy).

In the past there have been some legal barriers for children and young persons with disabilities to exercise their education rights and utilise the whole education system on an equal basis with the non-disabled population. Up to 2001 in Slovakia, under former legal regulations, there was the possibility to recognise a “child with no ability to be educated”. This status became a legal basis for exempting him/her from attending compulsory school. The possibility used to be applied primarily in the case of severely mentally disabled children who were excluded from the school and vocational preparation system. Since 2001 the legal situation has completely changed. According to Article No.42 of the Slovak Constitution (Constitutional Act No. 460/1992 Coll. as amended) *“Everybody has right to education. School attending is compulsory. Citizens have right for free of charge education in elementary and secondary schools, according to the individual’s abilities and society’s possibilities at high schools, as well”*. Besides general access to education, the Constitution guarantees in Article No.38 for youth and persons with disabilities *“the right for extraordinary protection in labour relationships and for assistance by vocational education”*. Provisions on how to fulfil these commitments are developed in special regulations (laws).

In the Memorandum of the Slovak Republic government for the period 2006 - 2010³ (Programové vyhlásenie vlády Slovenskej republiky) the commitment of the government is noted. In particular the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic, in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic plans *“to ensure such education of children and pupils with changed working capacities which enable them to find decent job in their real lives”*. (2006, p. 35)

²http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/eurybase/national_summary_sheets/047_SK_EN.pdf

³<http://www.government.gov.sk/data/files/1900.pdf><http://www.government.gov.sk/data/files/1900.pdf>

The interest in support for meeting children and young persons with disabilities' educational needs is explicitly included in one of the most recent documents: the Key areas and actions plans of state policy focused on children and youth in the Slovak Republic for years 2008-2013 (Kľúčové oblasti a akčné plány štátnej politiky vo vzťahu k deťom a mládeži v Slovenskej republike na roky 2008-2013)⁴. Article 4.1, point 4.1.5 states that *"the state is obliged to create conditions for improvement education of children and youth with special educational needs"*. (2008, p. 3). Even so, in part 3 of the National action plan for children for years 2008-2012 (Národný akčný plán pre deti na roky 2008-2012)⁵ it is stated that:

"Education, leisure time and culture activities", point 3.3 commits the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic *"to better availability of instruments for support of accessibility to education for all children, including children with disabilities and children from minorities corresponding to approved governmental departments' conceptions"*.

A very important document is the National Program on Development of Living Conditions for Persons with Disabilities in all Living Areas (hereinafter "National Program"; Národný program rozvoja životných podmienok občanov so zdravotným postihnutím vo všetkých oblastiach života, 2001)⁶, which presents a governmental doctrine to support persons with disabilities in all living areas, including educational affairs. In the rules No.6 "Education" and No.7 "Employment" the document formulates commitments for various public and private authorities to ensure real conditions under which persons with disabilities can exercise their educational rights primarily in mainstreaming/inclusive setting. To work out questions on this section we utilise findings from the report on monitoring the implementation of the document's commitments in years 2008-2009,⁷ in combination with statements and opinions of civil society representatives.

2.1.3 Main legal provision and acts

Despite the priority to ensure education for children and young persons with disabilities in mainstream/inclusive school and learning settings, current practice administers the education of this target group as two institutionalised tracks (§94 of the School act):

1. *education in mainstream schools*
 - as individualised integration – individual pupil attends ordinary school in ordinary class; or
 - as "semi-integration" in special classes placed within ordinary schools

⁴ 2008; <http://www.syrs.org/vseobecne/klucove-oblasti-a-akcne-plany-statnej-politiky-vo-vztahu-k-detom-a-mladezi-v-slovenskej-republike-na-roky-2008-az-2013.html>

⁵ [http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/810B4163BA787E64C12574AD0047285E/\\$FILE/Zdroj.html](http://www.rokovania.sk/appl/material.nsf/0/810B4163BA787E64C12574AD0047285E/$FILE/Zdroj.html)

⁶ <http://www.employment.gov.sk/index.php?SMC=1&id=799>

⁷ At the time of the ANED report's preparation, the report on monitoring has been a work in progress and the basic paper we have received on our request from the Ministry of Education of the Slovak republic is an unpublished document. The whole document will be finished in June 2010.



2 *education in special schools.*

Regardless of the form of the educational model (track), special disability support provisions are only put in place if a child/pupil gains a special status. According to the Act No. 245/2008 Coll. on Education (School Act) (Zákon o výchově a vzdělávání (Školský zákon)),⁸ the status is based on recognition of a *child's or pupil's special educational needs*,⁹ which means that a child or pupil requires in education a special accommodation of conditions, content, forms, methods and approaches due to his/her "health handicap". A child's or pupil's special educational needs are assessed by a special authority – the facility for educational counselling and prevention. According to §144 of the School act "a child/pupil with special educational needs has a right for education by utilising of some specific forms and methods corresponding to his/her needs and for creating of necessary conditions which are needed for the education... he/she has right to utilise by education special textbooks and special didactic and compensation aids..." (e.g. sign language, Braille writing, substitute means of communication).

The wide category *a child or pupil with health handicap* includes:

- child or pupil with disability (with mental, hearing, visual, physical disabilities, with communication disorders or other severe developmental disorders, with multi-faced disabilities), or
- child or pupil with a weak health status (e.g. due to illness), or
- child or pupil with developmental impairments (attention impairments, developmental learning impairments), or
- child or pupil with behavioural/mental disorders (impaired functions in emotional and social areas).

Regardless of the type of disability, according to legislation, any child can be exempted from compulsory school attendance. In reference to the situation of a certain child (his/her maturity for starting education), the start of attending compulsory school can be postponed and the longevity can be extended, based on a school director's decision.

On a medical recommendation (due to unfavourable health status) the child *can be exempted from the obligation to attend the school building* and can fulfil his/her compulsory school attendance in particular ways, as follows:

⁸ http://jaspi.justice.gov.sk/jaspiw1/htm_zak/jaspiw_maxi_zak_fr0.htm

⁹ In our previous works (e.g. Repkova, 1999; Repkova, 2005) we have criticised these about special needs of persons (including children) with disabilities, stressing the idea about universality of human needs, which means that all people have in principle the same needs, including need for education. People are different, individualized not according to the substance (fundamental shape) of their needs but according to the hierarchy and structure of their needs and *requirements on conditions* to meet their needs. (Repkova, 2005:511). This psychologically driven interpretation of the human needs corresponds with the definition utilised in the above context.

- an individual education (if the child’s health status doesn’t allow them to take part in the school educational process), or
- education under the individual learning plan.

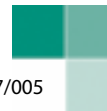
According to the §144 of the School Act “*an guardian has a right to choose for his/her child a school or school facility providing education under the act, which correspondents with child’s abilities, health conditions, interests...; right to freely choose a school or school facility can be applied corresponding with possibilities of educational system*”. However, the final placement of the child with a “health handicap” and special educational needs into ordinary school setting (as an individual integration or as a class integration) is based on the school director’s decision. According to the law, the school director can suggest to the child’s guardian removing the child to another educational setting if the director believes that educating the child with special needs in a mainstream school setting is not in the best interest of the child or his/her schoolmates. “Replacement” (removal) must be consulted with the public school authorities and with the relevant facility for educational counselling and prevention¹⁰. In the case that parents or legal guardians do not agree with the suggested solution, a relevant court makes the decision about how to ensure that the child’s ongoing education continues.

To educate children with special educational needs, schools provide *special educational programs* (hereinafter “EPs”), which are specialised according to the type of disability:

- EPs for children and pupils with mental disabilities,
- EPs for children and pupils with hearing impairments,
- EPs for children and pupils with visual impairments,
- EPs for children and pupils with impaired communication abilities,
- EPs for children and pupils with autism and other pervasive developmental impairments,
- EPs for ill children and pupils,
- EPs for blind/deaf children and pupils,
- EPs for pupils with developmental learning impairments,
- EPs for pupils with attention and activity impairments,
- EPs for children and pupils with multi-faceted impairments,
- EPs for children and pupils with behaviour impairments.

To improve conditions for the education of children with special needs, *the school facilities of educational counselling and prevention* plan their activities.

¹⁰ The facility for educational counselling and prevention is an explicit legal term. Prevention is aimed at optimising conditions for the educational, social and career development of pupils.



They perform psychological, pedagogical, special-pedagogical and social activities aimed to optimise the educational, psychic, social and career development of children with special needs from their birth up to preparation for an occupation. Counselling is provided also to parents (or guardians) and to teaching staff.

The system of financing of state schools is *normative based*, which means that the Ministry of Education provides schools, through their funders, with a contribution budget for each calendar year. This consists of a salary and funds the normative operation of the schools. The normative for a child/pupil/student with a “health disadvantage” is higher than the normative for a non-disabled person. The precise rate for children with disabilities is constituted in the Regulation No. 630/2008 Coll. on the prescription of financial funds from the state budget allocated for schools and school facilities, as amended (Nariadenie, ktorým sa ustanovujú podrobnosti rozpisu finančných prostriedkov zo štátneho rozpočtu pre školy a školské zariadenia).¹¹ This takes into account the severity of the disability and type of educational model. As an example we can point out that the coefficient for deaf or blind pupils educated in special primary schools is 1,800 and in inclusive schools (as individual or class integration) it is 2,710. The highest coefficient is for pupils with combined disabilities or with autism or other severe developmental impairments including mental disabilities or for deaf/blind pupils (4,500 in special schools and 6,790 in integrated schools as individualised or class based integration).

The financing of some additional costs related to special educational needs of pupils/students with health disabilities is ensured according to §4a of the Act No. 597/2003 Coll. on financing of primary, secondary schools and school facilities (Zákon o financovaní základných škôl, stredných škôl a školských zariadení)¹² by the Institute of *Financing Specificities*. Specificities include, among other things, the costs of salaries for teachers’ assistants for pupils with “health disadvantages”. The Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic provides schools with additional means based on their applications and the rate depends on the number of pupils and their disability level. For this purpose, the ministry utilises its own financial reserves and its decisions concerning applications are discretionary (“the ministry can provide the school with the money...” instead of “the ministry is obliged to provide the school...”). This practise has been strongly criticised by non-governmental organisations, as shown in the following text.

When a child lives permanently in a residential social care facility, according to the § 38 of the Act No. 448/2008 Coll. on social services (Zákon o sociálnych službách)¹³ this institution is obliged to create conditions for the child’s education. A child can attend an ordinary or special school or their education is managed on an individualised basis (e.g. a teacher goes to a social facility to teach according to the individual study plan).

¹¹ http://jaspi.justice.gov.sk/jaspiw1/htm_zak/jaspiw_maxi_zak_fr0.htm

¹² http://jaspi.justice.gov.sk/jaspiw1/htm_zak/jaspiw_maxi_zak_fr0.htm

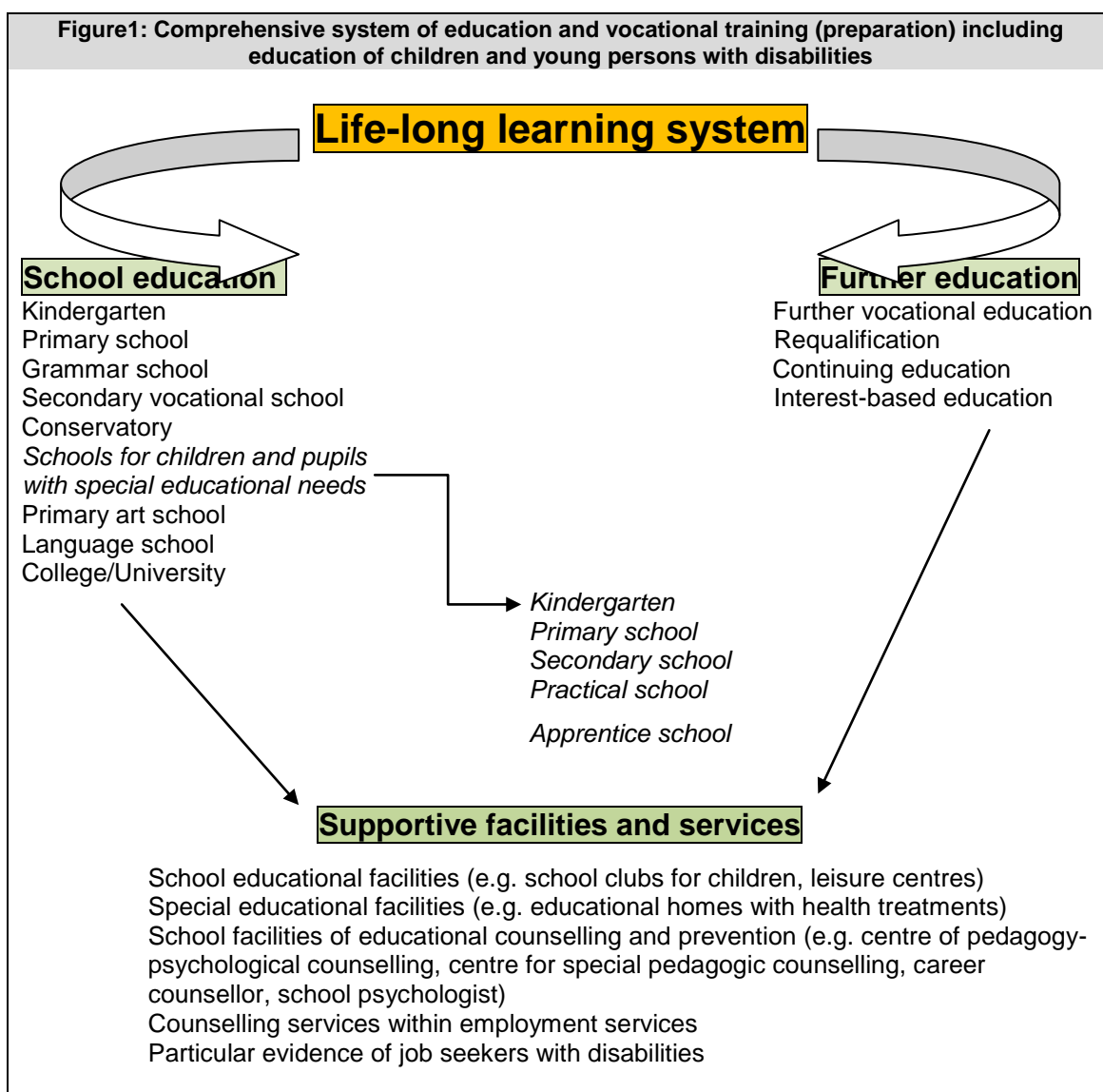
¹³ http://jaspi.justice.gov.sk/jaspiw1/htm_zak/jaspiw_maxi_zak_fr0.htm

The education of young persons with disabilities at the third educational level (high schools, universities) is organised completely in a mainstream learning environment. The following sections are about the special measures aimed to support university students with disabilities.

2.2 Ensuring of equal rights to life-long learning for persons with disabilities

In Slovakia the system of the life-long learning is codified in the Act No. 568/2009 Coll. on Life-long learning (Zákon o celoživotnom vzdelávaní)¹⁴;

In Figure1 are schematized school, learning and support facilities, which create the system of life-long learning, including learning of children and young persons with different types of disabilities.



¹⁴ http://jaspi.justice.gov.sk/jaspiw1/htm_zak/jaspiw_maxi_zak_fr0.htm

Legal framework for the Figure

Act No. 131/2002 Coll. on High schools as amended (Zákon o vysokých školách)

Act No. 597/2003 Coll. on financing of primary, secondary schools and school facilities (Zákon o financovaní základných škôl, stredných škôl a školských zariadení)

Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment services as amended (Zákon o službách zamestnanosti)

Act No. 245/2008 Coll. on Education (School Act) (Zákon o výchove a vzdelávaní (Školský zákon))

Regulation No. 630/2008 Coll. on prescription of financial means from state budget for schools and school facilities, as amended (Nariadenie, ktorým sa ustanovujú podrobnosti rozpisu finančných prostriedkov zo štátneho rozpočtu pre školy a školské zariadenia)

Act No. 184/2009 Coll. on Vocational education and training (Zákon o odbornom vzdelávaní a príprave)

Act No. 568/2009 Coll. on Life-long learning (Zákon o celoživotnom vzdelávaní)

Related acts

Act No. 447/2008 Coll. on Direct payments for compensation of severe disability consequences (Zákon o peňažných príspevkoch na kompenzáciu ťažkého zdravotného postihnutia)

Act No. 448/2008 Coll. on Social services (Zákon o sociálnych službách)

Act No. 311/2011 Coll. Labour Code (Zákonník práce)

Note: the Figure was prepared by authors for the purpose of this report

Life-long learning consists of school education, further education and the system of supported facilities and services.

School education is primarily aimed to offer the possibility to a child/pupil to get a certain degree of education (from pre-primary schools up to university level). Within the school education there exist at pre-primary, primary and secondary levels special schools for children and pupils with special educational needs, which are very similar to ordinary/mainstream school facilities. Special schools also consist of so called *practice schools* for pupils with mental disabilities, or mental disabilities in combination with another type of disability, who are not able to prepare in mainstream secondary schools or apprentice schools. The education in practice school is aimed to prepare them for daily living in their family, for helping themselves and for practical tasks including household keeping. School education is backed up by *supportive school facilities* serving all children/pupils/students, but especially for children with special educational needs and their teachers or other pedagogical staff.

Further education, open for all ages, is according to the law designed to get a partial or complete qualification or to add, deepen or extend an existing qualification received in school education. Further education is also to build abilities and skills to participate actively in civil society. Completing of any further educational program does not lead to getting a higher degree of education, only to finishing school education. The further education system has significant connotations with employers' obligations to be concerned about extending their employees' qualifications. According to the §§158-159 of the *Labour Code* (Zákonník práce);¹⁵ the employer should provide their employees with disabilities with possibilities for theoretical or practical preparation (requalification), to receive the appropriate qualifications and care. The aim is to adjust the qualification to the employee's current development, retain the employee in a job and to encourage him/her in career development. The activities of further education are also connected to the *sector of employment services*.

¹⁵ http://jaspi.justice.gov.sk/jaspiw1/htm_zak/jaspiw_maxi_zak_fr0.htm



According to the Act No. 5/2004 Coll. as amended (Zákon o službách zamestnanosti)¹⁶ job seekers with disabilities are more protected by having the status of being a disadvantaged job seeker.

Besides the possibilities to utilise all measures aimed to educate and prepare job seekers for a labour market, the Act constitutes a special instrument for job seekers with disabilities. According to the §48b of the law mentioned above, there is a legal possibility to provide a job seeker with a disability with a benefit during the time of education or preparation for the job. The benefit is provided when education or the preparation for a job takes over a month and the financial benefit is a substantial minimum for an adult person.

To harmonise labour market requirements with education and occupational preparation (training) of pupils/students with disabilities, the National Program in Rule No. 7 (Employment) states that school career counsellors and offices of labour, social affairs and family must cooperate with an aim to enable the graduates with disabilities to get a job. The Report on the National Program for the years 2008-2009 informs about the activities of school career counsellors. The report especially focuses on pupils and students with special educational needs and their families to help them choose their future profession, to inform them about new regional labour market requirements, and to ensure cooperation with the offices for labour, social affairs and family and with potential employers in their region. It reported a lack of sheltered workshops or sheltered workplaces in district towns and what were perceived as complications for seeking available job preparation and job performing conditions.

2.3 Ensuring access to educational environments and individualised support

Ensuring general access to educational facilities (including universities) is codified in the Regulation No. 532/2002 Coll. On The General Technical Conditions – standards for building activities and General technical conditions and standards for buildings used by persons with limited ability for movement and orientation (vyhláška, ktorou sa ustanovujú podrobnosti o všeobecných technických požiadavkách na výstavbu a o všeobecných technických požiadavkách na stavby užívané osobami s obmedzenou schopnosťou pohybu a orientácie)¹⁷. According to §51 all facilities (buildings) for schooling and education must correspond to the regulations and constituted standards regardless of which school the child/pupil/student with disability attends (e.g. width of the door, outside ramp to entrance of the building). The monitoring of the National Program's implementation for the years 2006-2007 (Vyhodnotenie realizácie Národného programu rozvoja životných podmienok občanov so zdravotným postihnutím vo všetkých oblastiach života za roky 2006-2007;) in Rule No. 5 (Accessibility) showed that not all schools were barrier-free.

¹⁶ http://jaspi.justice.gov.sk/jaspiw1/htm_zak/jaspiw_maxi_zak_fr0.htm

¹⁷ http://jaspi.justice.gov.sk/jaspiw1/htm_zak/jaspiw_maxi_zak_fr0.htm

This was a result of either lack of money for necessary technical solutions or the absence of any child/pupil with a disability, which led to no pressure to ensure a barrier-free school environment. Very similar reasons have been pointed out in the recently prepared Report for the years 2008-2009¹⁸. Schools tried to ensure available entrances into school buildings, barrier-free toilets, special furniture in school classes, special key-boards, and vertical boards for immobile pupils and students. The report does not inform generally about what proportion of schools is currently barrier-free or not accessible for pupils or students with disabilities.

According to the law (§95 of the School Act), the school where the child with special educational needs attends is completely responsible for creating all the conditions for a successful educational process.

This includes ensuring necessary compensational and learning aids, specially accommodated learning text or educational approaches. The Report 2008-2009 informs on the task of the State Pedagogical Institute to unify requests of special schools for visually impaired pupils and students to publish suitable textbooks or didactic materials for their education. Their requests have been considered as a basis for the Edition Plan of the Ministry of Education for the year 2010. Individual barriers of the child related to his/her disability are somewhat overcome by the help of a *teacher's assistant*. The need of a teacher's assistant for a certain child is assessed by the Centre of Special Pedagogic Counselling which recommends this kind of support for a school. There is no statistical data on how many teacher assistants have been operating in schools. There is only information that for the year 2010 schools have been financed via Regional school offices with the total amount of €4,040,880 to cover 596 full time assistants (information received upon request from the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic, April 2010). We can surmise that the number of teachers' assistants may be higher than 596, e.g. if they work part time or if they are funded from other sources.

University education of young persons with disabilities is organised completely in an inclusive setting. High schools/universities take into account the eligible requirements for providing some preferential disability-related measures for this target group.

Measures aim to overcome potential barriers and problems related to the studies of young persons with disabilities. According to the Act No. 131/2002 Coll. on high schools as amended (Zákon o vysokých školách);¹⁹ high schools (universities) "*[have] to create reasonable conditions for studies of students with disabilities referred to their special study needs without declining requirements for their study performance. Reasonable conditions content choice to study under individual study plan, if it is necessary prolonging of study period with concessions exemption and ensuring conditions related to school attending*".

¹⁸ This is the biennial Report on the implementation of the National Program which was not completed during the time of this report's preparation. For this purpose we utilised an unpublished basic paper prepared by the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic.

¹⁹ http://jaspi.justice.gov.sk/jaspiw1/htm_zak/jaspiw_maxi_zak_fr0.htm



Students' health statuses can be considered in the programs of the students' housing support (§98 of the Act). The school establishes, among other provisions, the so called *Fund for Support of Students with Disabilities' Studies* and uses it to create reasonable conditions for the studies of young persons with disabilities.

K. Repkova et al. researched in 2005 the study conditions of students with disabilities in university settings, primarily in an internal doctoral study program. In her qualitative research she cooperated with 20 coordinators for work with students with disabilities and with 9 students with disabilities (4 at masters level and 5 at doctoral level). According to the author's findings, the majority of coordinators did not have experience with the students with disabilities due to not having experience of direct co-operation.

According to her co-researcher M. Tatarova, there existed some barriers to encourage young persons with disabilities to enter a doctoral study program with the perspective of starting a scientific career. The barriers included: architectural barriers, communication barriers (low access to literature available in alternative forms), a low level of accessibility of support services and places (e.g. libraries), insufficient awareness and skills of school service staff to provide students with disabilities with reasonable assistance. The research showed a very interesting finding in that students with disabilities were implicitly "pushed up" to study social and helping disciplines (e.g. psychology, sociology, social works, nursing, pedagogy). There was a somewhat general attitude that natural or technical disciplines were not appropriate for them and that they were pre-determined for social and helping disciplines because of their first-hand living experience.

Finally we point out the obligations of employers to establish disability - friendly working environments. The Labour Code in §158 commits them "*...to create working conditions to enable employee with disability for a job and to better work places architecture to enable employee with disabilities, if it is possible, to reach the same working results as other employees and to make work him/her as easy as possible*". Employers can ensure the creation of a disability-friendly working environment in either a mainstream work setting or as a form of a sheltered workshop or sheltered workplace. The support for these solutions is constituted in the Act on Employment Services from 2004, as amended), including the ensuring of *job assistance*.

Implicit support of inclusive education and vocational training of young persons with disabilities exists even in the *system of direct payments for severe disability compensation*. In the majority of cases, there is an effort to overcome any concerns about the dual nature of public support, and explicitly in the educational process (e.g. personal assistance vs. teachers' assistance or job assistance; direct payment for the purchase of devices, vs. obligation of school to equip child/pupil/student with a disability with all necessary aids, technical appliances). On the other hand, there is a necessity to address wider schooling support concerns e.g. transport to and from school, personal accompanying to and from school, etc. This type of support is very often provided by the system of individualised compensation of social consequences of severe disability.



2.4 Important subjects helping to move inclusive education and training policy forward

The main responsibilities in the educational field fall on the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic and the Ministry of Health Affairs of the Slovak Republic and their subordinated facilities (municipalities, upper territorial units, county school offices and research institutions)²⁰.

There are some platforms to communicate some suggestions, ideas and needs for new solutions, revisions addressed to educational affairs:

- The Governmental Council of the Slovak Republic for persons with disabilities is a consultation based on governmental authority and consists of representatives from all relevant ministries, local and regional governments, subordinated executive and research institutions. Also members of the council are representatives from all public authorities who have responsibilities and interests in educational affairs, e.g. the Slovak radio, Slovak television; representatives of organisations advocating the rights and interests of persons with all types of disabilities and their families,
- Suggestions come from different types of experts, forums or meetings with non-governmental organisations (e.g. conferences, seminars, panel discussions, workshops, dissemination events within various projects),
- Continual communication within school and education related institutions and networks.

2.5 New proposals and strategies to support disabled children and young people. The impact of the UN convention in discussions of reform to education and training policies

Based on the Ministry of Education's statement, the last legislative development in educational affairs has been aimed to finish the school education reform related to the *Millenium Conception* and the *National Program on Education for the coming 15-20 years* (approved by the Slovak government in 2003). Within this period some crucial legislative regulations have been approved – New School Act, Act on Vocational Education and Training, Act on Pedagogical and other Employees, Act on State School Administration, Act of Financing of Regional School Affairs. The whole the time has fitted within the time to prepare the UN-Convention ratification process within which Slovakia has tried to harmonise its key legislation with Convention's requirements. That is the reason why presently there are no crucial discussions about a radical need for change in the state-of-the art in educational field.

²⁰ E.g. the Research Institute for Child Psychology or Pathopsychology (<http://www.vudpap.sk/sk/>); the State Pedagogical Institute (<http://www.statpedu.sk/sk/>); Institute for Information and School Prognosis (<http://www.uips.sk/>); Institute for Labour and Family Research (<http://www.sspr.gov.sk/>)

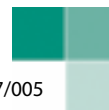
Within the presently prepared Report on the National Program 2008-2009,²¹ the ministry identified a problem of how to ensure an accessible educational environment for children/pupils/students with disabilities regardless of the school funder. Under the current legislative framework there are various authorities in the position of the school facilities' funders – municipalities establishing pre-school facilities and primary schools, regional governments establishing secondary schools and county school offices establishing special schools – each of their approaches are different. There is a call from the ministry to unify the different approaches to ensure a comparable school (educational) environment for all pupils/students with disabilities regardless of their ages or residence.

Besides this problem, the ministry has pointed out that the main problem of integrated education is the fact that current legislation does not explicitly obligate the school to utilise the provided money for integrative education. .

The civil society organisation of the National council of persons with disabilities in the Slovak Republic have "on the tailor made request" for information about some other serious problems related to the education of children and young persons with disabilities and asked for corrections to be made. They have articulated some questions:

- how to transform the institute "financing the specificities" from a discretionary system to an obligatory one. According to the National Council of Persons with Disabilities, in Slovakia's statement (Mamojka, Měchura, 2010), prices for specific devices (e.g. ICT for visually impaired persons) are very high and are not covered within the extended normative for a child/pupil/student with special educational needs. When devices are designated by sponsors or public financial collections as non-sustainable, they request the constitution of an obligation of the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic to create a yearly special budget to finance these. This special budget would include financing of all necessary devices to ensure comparable educational conditions for pupils and students with disabilities to non-disabled schoolmates.
- Representatives from the civil society sector point out a big problem with the availability of study materials in alternative forms, especially the transcription of written books and other didactic materials into forms suitable for pupils/students with visual disabilities. Materials in alternative forms are available only for pupils and students attending special schools, and not for pupils and students attending inclusive primary and secondary schools.
- an open question is how to finance primary art schools for pupils with disabilities. According the New School Act (2008) these schools cannot be established by special schools and financed by county school offices. Integrated art education for blind pupils within mainstream art schools is not possible because of the absence of authorised/qualified art specialists.

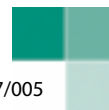
²¹ This is the biennial Report on the implementation of the National Program which was not completed during the time of this report's preparation. For this purpose we utilised an unpublished basic paper prepared by the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic.



The situation has been strongly criticised by civil society organisations, stressing the damaging impact on the art development and further career perspectives of children and young persons with disabilities (especially those who are visually disabled),²²

- Šmehilova (2010) draws attention to a gap between legal possibilities to ensure communication in alternative forms in various settings (schools, leisure time facilities, sports) and actual practice. According to the author educational institutions (facilities) do not have a clear approach to the education of hearing or visually disabled young persons. There is no respect for the importance of establishing educational environments and conditions which are accessible to these groups of young persons. She points out that in Slovakia there is a lack of good practice in schools employing teachers with disabilities (hearing or visual) to mediate educational content in the best way. To summarise, sensory disabled young persons are facing barriers to exercise their right to inclusive education because of the absence of practical barrier-free communication, despite existing relevant legislation.
- Mišova et al. (2010) note the fact that the legislative framework enables educational integration. On the other hand, they point out that for the implementation of an inclusive educational approach, legislation alone is not enough. Pointing out the practical problems with the integration of mainly children with mental disabilities, the authors try to encourage intensive public discussion about the principles of inclusive education.

²² Mamojka, B.: Letter of the Slovak blind and partially sighted union to the lord mayor of the Bratislava Magistrat. Bratislava, March 29th, 2010.



Section 3: Evidence of outcomes and progress towards inclusion

3.1 Investments in segregated learning institutions and inclusive institutions

The major source of funding for the education of pupils and students with special educational needs as well as the education of non-disabled pupils and students comes from the state budget. Financing of regular (mainstream) primary and secondary schools and special primary and secondary schools is based on an individual pupil's or student's normative. This means that schools are funded according to the number of pupils and staff and the economic costs required for an educational process. The financial normative for disabled pupils / students varies, depending on the severity of disability and the type of educational model and is higher than the normative for non-disabled pupils/students (for detailed information see section 2.1.2 Main legal provision and acts).

There is currently no separate data available on the expenditure on special (segregated) or on integrated (inclusive) education. The standard classification of financial expenditure is intended merely to the special education budget e.g. education of pupils and students with special education needs via special schools.

Expenditure on integrated (inclusive) education – e.g. education of pupils and students with special education needs within mainstream education – is not specifically monitored. According to ad hoc data (i.e. data specially processed for the national report) provided by the Institute of Information and Prognoses on Education, in the school year 2007/08 total public expenditure on mainstream and special primary schools and secondary schools along with other related expenses amounted to € 1 658.1 mil. (see table 1). Public expenditure on special education amounted to € 86.3 mil., which represented 5.2% of total public spending on primary and secondary education in the school year 2007/2008.

Total public spending on mainstream education, in which pupils and students with special needs are integrated, amounted to € 867.0 mil., which represented 52.3% of total public spending on primary and secondary education in the school year 2007/2008 (see table1).

Tab.1 Expenditure on segregated and mainstream education in the school year 2007/2008		
<i>1. Expenditure on segregated education in the school year 2007/2008</i>		
Type of school	expenditure in € (Thous)	% of total expenditure
Special kindergartens	1601	0,10%
Special primary schools	59609	3,60%
Special grammar schools	8510	0,51%
Special secondary vocational schools	238	0,01%
Special apprentice centers and practical schools	16303	0,98%
Total expenditure on segregated education	86261	5,20%
<i>2. Expenditure on mainstream education in the school year 2007/2008</i>		
Kindergartens	136352	8,22%
Primary schools	427482	25,78%
Grammar schools	74741	4,51%
Secondary specialised schools	87216	5,26%
Secondary art schools	11113	0,67%
Secondary vocational schools	61495	3,71%
Associated secondary schools (ASC)	68608	4,14%
Total expenditure on mainstream education	867008	52,29%
<i>3. Expenditure on other services</i>	704779	42,51%
Total expenditure (1+2+3)	1658048	100,00%
<i>Source: Institute for Information and Prognoses in Education; ad hoc data</i>		
ASC- merged schools, e.g. two kinds of schools: secondary specialised schools and secondary vocational schools		

According to the data in Table 1, expenditure on special education represents only a fraction of the total spending on primary and secondary education. However, these figures do not represent the total expenditure on the education of pupils and students with special educational needs, as has been mentioned previously, since expenses on inclusive education are not monitored.

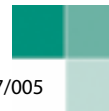
3.2 Participation of young disabled people in education and training

Availability of Statistics

Statistical data on special education (segregated) and integrated education (inclusive) of pupils and students with special educational needs are monitored in the information system of the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic. Data is collected and processed by the Institute of Information and Prognoses on Education²³, which is a special purpose institution established by the Ministry of Education with the major function of educational data collection. Statistical data on the education of children and young people with special educational needs is available only for pre-primary, primary and secondary education. Relevant data for post-secondary education and university education are not available. Statistical data on the education of pupils and students with special educational needs are processed annually for each school year in the form of statistical yearbooks. The Statistical Yearbook on Education is available both in print and in electronic versions.²⁴

²³ <http://www.uips.sk/>

²⁴ <http://www.uips.sk/prehlady-skol/statisticka-rocenka---specialne-skoly>



Data reporting on the number of young people not in education, training or in employment are not available.

Basic data on the participation of pupils and students with special educational needs in education

Pre-primary education

Preschool children with special educational needs attend either special kindergartens or integrated classes within mainstream kindergartens. According to the Statistical Yearbook on Education from the Ministry of Education in the school year 2008/2009 there were 69 special kindergartens (state, private and church), with 136 classes and 1165 children with disabilities of various kinds in the Slovak Republic. Almost half of the total number of kindergartens are designated for children with mental impairments. 498 preschool children with special education needs were enrolled within mainstream kindergartens (public, private and church) in the same reference period. The total number of children with special educational needs in pre-primary education (segregated and integrated) amounted to 1,663, which represents 1.2% of the total number of pupils in pre-primary education in the school year 2008/2009.

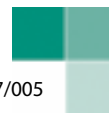
Primary education

Special primary schools make up the largest segment of special education in Slovakia. There were 273 special primary schools (state, private and church) in the school year 2008/2009 with 19,968 pupils, of whom 82% were students with a mental disability.

In mainstream primary schools (public, private and church) in the same reference period 15,442 students with special education needs were integrated in regular classes, more than half (54%) of them were students with developmental learning impairments (i.e. dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, etc.), and a quarter of them (24%) were students with mental disabilities. The total number of pupils with special educational needs (segregated and integrated) in primary schools amounted 35,410, which represents 7.1% of the total number of pupils in primary education in the school year 2008/2009.

Secondary education

Special secondary education (special grammar schools, special secondary schools, vocational apprentice centers, practical schools) amounts to 111 schools with 659 classes and 5,840 students. Over two thirds (67%) of the total number of students of special secondary schools were students with a mental disability. There were 3,546 students with special educational needs enrolled within mainstream secondary education in the same reference period and almost three quarters of them (74%) were students with learning difficulties.



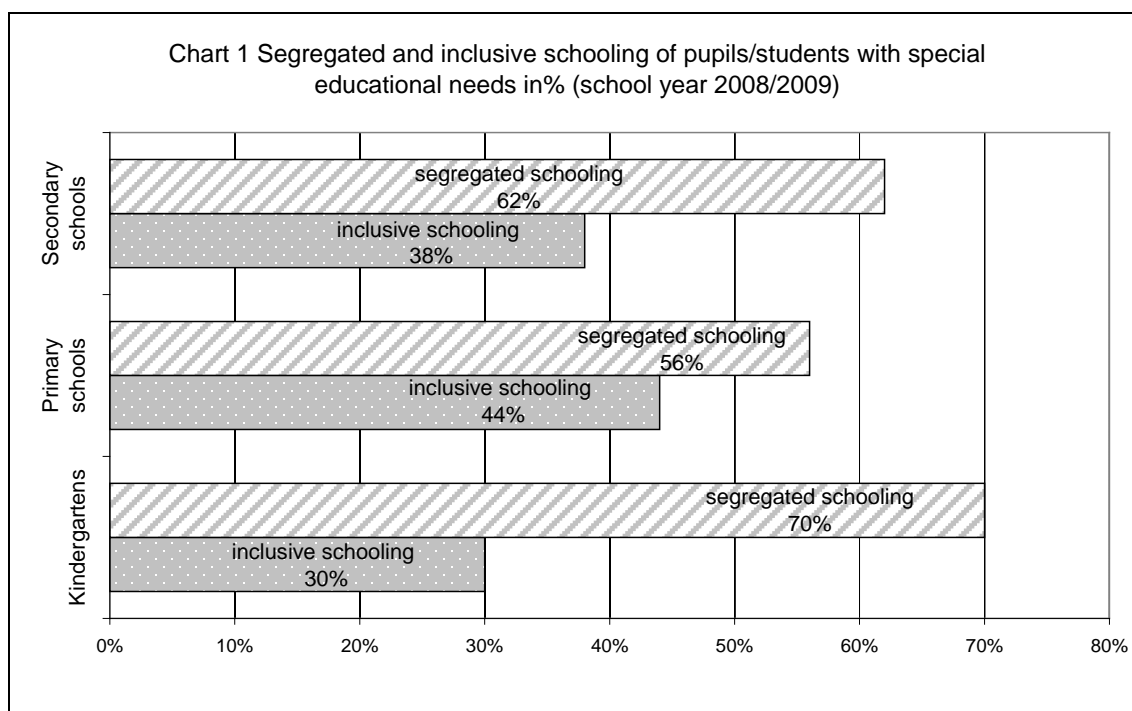
The total number of students with special educational needs in segregated and integrated secondary schooling was 9,386, which constituted 3.1% of the overall number of students in secondary education. The number of pupils/students in segregated and inclusive schooling is illustrated in table 2.

Tab. 2 Pupils and students with special educational needs				
Type of school	Number of pupils/students			% of total number*
	segregated schooling	inclusive schooling	total	
Kindergartens	1 165	498	1 663	1,2
Primary schools	19 968	15 442	35 410	7,1
Secondary schools	5 840	3 546	9 386	3,1

Source: Eurydice- Eurybase; Statistical Year Book of Education 2008/2009

* Total number of pupils and students in education in the school year 2008/2009

The highest proportion of inclusion of pupils with special educational needs into mainstream schooling has been in primary education, where the proportion of integrated pupils reached 44%, while the same proportion in mainstream secondary education was 38% and in mainstream pre-primary education it was 30% (see Chart 1).



Source: Statistical Yearbook of Education 2008/2009²⁵

Analysis of statistical data on the participation pupils/students with special educational needs integrated into mainstream schools (in terms of type of disability), shows that:

²⁵ <http://www.uips.sk/prehlady-skol/statisticka-rocenka---specialne-skoly>

- Within pre-primary mainstream schools, the highest number of pupils was represented by pupils with mental disabilities and physical disabilities;
- The largest group within primary mainstream schools was formed by pupils with developmental learning impairments (i.e. dyslexia, dysgraphia, dyscalculia, etc.) and mental disabilities;
- Within secondary mainstream schools the most extensive group was represented by pupils with developmental learning impairments (see table 3).

Mamojka (2010) considers it important to stress that the intensity of school integration significantly depends on the type of disability and its severity. As the author points out, the proportion of schools including pupils/students with partial visual impairments is relatively high in comparison with the proportion of blind pupils/students.

Type of disability	autism	mental disabilities	hearing impairments	visual impairments	impaired communication abilities	physical disabilities	developmental impairments		Total
Type of school							behavioral impairments	learning impairments	
Kindergarten	31	135	32	36	83	126	37	18	498
Primary school	102	3657	308	242	758	1018	981	8356	15422
Grammar school	6	x	44	35	x	52	14	251	402
Secondary Specialized school	10	x	97	73	x	222	86	2636	3124
Conservatory	1	x	0	0	x	0	1	18	20
Total	150	3792	481	386	841	1418	1119	11279	19466

Source: Statistical Yearbook on Education 2008/2009

3.3 Indicators of equal opportunities in education of pupils/students with special educational needs

The present educational legal and institutional framework ensures the right for children/young people with health disorders to be educated with respect to their individual needs. The education system has to be adapted to meet the needs of pupils/students with special educational needs.

To enhance equal opportunities in education, the system of schooling of pupils/students with special educational needs has undergone essential qualitative changes since 1990, e.g.:

- transferred from an almost exclusively segregated model of education to a model of educational options. Disabled children and their parents now have a possibility to choose between education in a special school or mainstream school,
- mainstream schools were accessed for pupils/students with special educational needs,
- in order to meet the needs of pupils/students with special educational needs, diverse forms of individualisation of schooling were established,

- to promote inclusion of pupils/students with special educational needs into mainstream education a special pedagogical counseling system has been developed and set up. This type of counseling is provided for diagnostic, psychotherapeutic, educational, re-educative, rehabilitation, corrective and other services that enable pupils/students with disabilities to develop their abilities or skills. The system also provides counseling services to parents of disabled children, to pedagogical workers and other stakeholders,
- to increase participation of pupils/students with special educational needs into mainstream education, a broad range of support provisions have been enforced i.e.: architectural adaptation of facilities serving for schooling of disabled pupils (doors, building entrances etc.) and ensuring compensational and learning aids (see more in section 2.3).

Equal opportunities for pupils and students with special educational needs can be achieved, inter alia, by additional pedagogical staff available in the class and a lower number of pupils/students in the class. Sufficient number of teachers and a small number of classes are the major prerequisites of schooling of pupils/students with special educational needs. Comparison of indicators in special schools and regular schools, shows that in all types of special schools (pre-primary, primary and secondary) the average number of pupils per class was significantly lower than the average in regular schools and that the pupil-teacher ratio was also significantly lower in comparison with regular schools (see tab. 4)

Indicator	pre-primary school		primary school			secondary school	
	special	regular	mental defects	special	regular	special	regular
				other kinds of handicaps			
Average number of classes per school	2.0	2.4	10.3	5.3	10.9	5.9	15.0
Average number of pupils/students per school	16.9	48.2	82.7	47.9	210.9	52.6	387.9
Average number of pupils/students per class	8.6	20.0	8.0	9.0	17.2*	8.9	25.9
Pupil-teacher ratio	5.8	10.3	6.5	7.4	15.7**	5.1	12.1
*average value for 0 to 9 grades							
**average value for 1 to 9 grades							
Source: http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/eurybase/eurybase_full_reports/SK_EN.pdf							

3.4 Educational outcomes and qualifications of young disabled people in education and training

Statistical sources

Standard indicators of educational outcomes such as student enrolment, number of new entrants, number of graduates, education personnel etc. of young disabled people are not available. Lack of data in this area is the consequence of deficiency of reliable data on the total disabled population including data of their age, gender and educational structure.



Academic sources

Special education in Slovakia has a long tradition, in which the learning process in terms of content, methods, organizational forms and educational capabilities is tailored to the needs of pupils with special educational requirements (See more on the organisation of the education system in Slovakia 2008/2009: section 10 of the Special Educational Support, 10.1 Historical Overview.)²⁶

Although the education of pupils in mainstream schools is a difficult process that requires spatial adjustment, specific devices, special didactic matters, including special teacher assistance, the number of pupils in mainstream education is currently increasing. The total number of integrated disabled pupils/students for all educational levels increased from 3,451 in 1996 to 22,051 in 2009. Therefore, the question of the effectiveness of integrated and segregated education of pupils with special educational needs is the subject of frequent discussions between teachers, special educators and psychologists.

A valuable contribution to this discussion was the research carried out by authors Levčíková, Kollarík, Marušincová, and Domancová²⁷ (1999-2002) of the State Pedagogical Institute in Bratislava. The goal of the research was to determine *the level of learning outcomes of pupils with disabilities in integrated classes of mainstream primary schools*. During the school years 1999/2000, 2000/2001, 2001/2002 the learning outcomes (in mathematics and the Slovak language) of pupils with a physical disability and hearing impairment integrated in mainstream primary schools classes were monitored and compared with the outcomes of their non-disabled classmates, pupils with a physical disability in special primary schools for physically disabled pupils and pupils with hearing impairment in special primary school for hearing impaired pupils.

The research found that:

- pupils with disabilities under provisions in mainstream schools can achieve the same or even better learning outcomes compared with special schools,
- the basic prerequisite for achieving satisfactory learning outcomes by pupils with disabilities in mainstream schools is special-pedagogical counseling and attendance,
- although the learning outcomes of pupils with disabilities integrated within mainstream schools were below the average of non-disabled pupils, in some individual cases pupils with disabilities were able to achieve better results than their non-disabled classmates,

²⁶ http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/eurybase/eurybase_full_reports/SK_EN.pdf.

²⁷ Levčíková, M.: Učebné výsledky žiakov so zdravotným postihnutím integrovaných v bežných školách. *Pedagogická revue*, ročník 57, marec – apríl 2005, č.2, ss. 162 – 176.

- there was no statistically significant difference found in the learning outcomes between those integrated in mainstream schools and in special schools. This confirms the fact that in meeting the special educational needs in mainstream schooling, a majority of pupils with disabilities may receive their education under mainstream provision. This requires, however, improving the provisions for integrated education in mainstream schools²⁸.

Misova (2010) and her working team representing the Slovak Association for help to persons with mental disabilities (Združenie na pomoc ľuďom s mentálnym postihnutím) in defending the interests of persons with mental disabilities analyses the situation in inclusive education mainly from the perspective of children/students with mental disabilities who are most often excluded from mainstream educational possibilities. The authors try to explain why the majority of them were and currently are educated in a special school setting. According to their experience, a significant proportion of inclusive school directors have the tendency to avoid establishing a disability-friendly school environment. The school directors point out a lack of financial resources to ensure a barrier-free setting, necessary devices, appliances and services of a special pedagogue resulting to “shift” children and parents to special schools. They identify a phenomenon of a “hidden avoiding” of the obligation to ensure the compulsory school attendance. “Supportive” institute is also the written doctor’s recommendation that the child’s health status doesn’t enable him/her to be educated due to certain reasons (§19 of the School Act). Because there are no existing limitations on the period the child should be absent from school (up to expiring of the reasons) it is practically possible to recognize a child’s health status as unfavorable for education for a very long time without ensuring any systematic educational place for a child.

The author and her team stress practical problems with the education of young persons with disabilities (primarily with mental disabilities) lying in the lack of possibilities to ensure vocational training (preparation) after finishing elementary school. She summaries the main reasons why up to now inclusive education has not been widespread in Slovakia:

- the historically rooted marginalization of persons with disabilities has a permanent impact on the present situation,
- the non- willingness and non-readiness of educational institutions,
- lack of available financial resources,
- insufficient awareness of general public to mainstreaming/inclusive education,
- lack of the good practice examples on “how to do it”,
- low motivation of a child and his/her family (“why I should do it?”) and a fear (“I am not able to do it”),
- non-readiness of teachers to work with pupils/students with disabilities (especially with mental disabilities),

²⁸ According to an opinion of the report authors, the cited research findings cannot be applied to pupils with other types of disability e.g. with visual impairment or mental disability etc.

- lack of teachers' assistants for performing their job in the inclusive schools related to lack of financial resources.

The author and her team summarizes that "... school integration is so rare because for implementation of the school integration the only legislative framework is not enough... about inclusive education we can speak in Slovakia only theoretically and there should be launched a discussion about its principles" (Misova et al., 2010, p.2).

Šmehilova maintains a critical position concerning the possibilities of inclusive education.

Research²⁹ undertaken by the author found that people with hearing impairments experience discrimination in access to inclusive re/training programmes. It is argued that these programmes do not take into account specific needs and therefore these programmes are not useful for the purpose of increasing employability.

3.5 Participation of young people with disabilities in different types of learning

Statistics

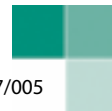
Statistical data on the involvement of children and young people with disabilities in pre-primary education, primary education and secondary education was discussed in section 3.2. Unfortunately, the number of young people with disabilities in tertiary education (at colleges and universities) is not statistically monitored. There is also no available statistical data on the participation of young people and adults with disabilities in further education, except data on the number of jobseekers with disabilities in training programmes provided by public employment services via the active labour market policy. In 2008, 463 jobseekers with disabilities took part in mainstream training programmes, representing 7% of the total number of participants in training programs.

Academic evidence

Research carried out by Hanzelová E., Kostolná Z., Reichová D., Repková K. (Nevidiaci a slabozrakí ľudia na trhu práce a v prístupe k celoživotnému vzdelávaniu (Blind and partially sighted people in the labour market and their access to life long learning, Institute for Labour and Family Research, 2006)³⁰ in the project managed by the Slovak Blind and Partially Sighted Union revealed the main inhibitors for visually impaired jobseekers to take part in training programmes.

²⁹ ŠMEHILOVÁ, ANNA. 2009. *Možnosti zamestnanosti občanov so sluchovým postihnutím po vstupe Slovenskej republiky do Európskej únie*. [Dizertačná práca]. Nitra: Univerzita Konštantína Filozofa v Nitre. Fakulta sociálnych vied a zdravotníctva, 2009. 225 s.

³⁰ <http://www.sspr.gov.sk/texty/File/pdf/2006/Nevidiaci.pdf>



The programmes provided by the Offices of Labour, Social Affairs and Family within the active labour market policy framework encounter problems stemming from the inadequacy of standard training courses for visually impaired jobseekers, their territorial remoteness and complicated transportation to the courses.



Section 4: Types of support for young disabled people in education and training (summary points)

At the majority of universities which prepare for a teaching profession, disability issues are included in the general curriculum via courses (named as e.g. integration of pupils/students with disabilities or special pedagogy addressed to concrete types of disabilities).

At preschool, elementary and secondary school students with disabilities can be provided with personal help from a teacher's assistant or receive technical assistance by receiving special equipment/devices/appliances from the school they attend. This kind of support is funded from the state budget (Ministry of education of the Slovak Republic) Pupils/students can receive also some type of direct payments (e.g. for purchasing equipment/device and car) from the social assistance system. For students at universities, besides the direct payments mentioned, financial support to hire personal assistants is also available. They can also receive housing support and special services provided by co-ordinators for students with disabilities or by specialised centres. The financing of specialised measures that focuses on university studies for students with disabilities is ensured, among others, by the Fund for Support of Students with Disabilities (for details see section 4.1).

Finally we can point to the so called Information Centres of the Youth which provide young people (including people with disabilities after leaving school), with various types of information and help them in different living areas.

Vocational education and training of pupils/students with disabilities, (as mentioned in chapter 2), takes place via special secondary vocational schools, apprentice schools, practical schools and via individual integration in mainstream secondary schools within mainstream classes or integration in secondary school special classes that involve pupils/students with a certain kind of impairment. In terms of further vocational education and training of adult persons with disabilities, there is a system of active labour market policy measures provided by public employment services that ensures vocational education and training of persons with disabilities who are jobseekers. This education and training is provided by funding from the state budget and from the European Social Fund. Under this system, people with disabilities may participate in either mainstream (re)training programmes or special (re)training programmes designed to improve their employability e.g.:

- *(Mainstream) vocational education and training programmes* are provided within the national scheme of active labour market policy and aimed at providing new skills required to perform jobs, either in the protected or open labour market. Vocational education and training courses are ensured by the Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family. Persons with disabilities attend re/training courses along with non-disabled persons.

According to data from the Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (COLSAF) in the year 2008 a total of 463 job seekers with disabilities attended mainstream courses, which represent 7% of the total number of participants (Implementation of active labour market measures in the year 2008- internal document of COLSAF).

- *Job preparation of disabled persons (exclusively for persons with disabilities).* Job preparation of disabled persons is provided within the national scheme of the active labour market policy and the objective of improving the employability of disabled people. Job preparation is designed to teach professional skills and practical experience to disabled people in order for them to perform work in a new job. Courses are provided by Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family and last at most for six months. During job preparation a disabled person is entitled to reimbursement for their expenses related to food, accommodation and travel. In 2008, 64 job seekers with disabilities were prepared for work in a new job (Implementation of active labour market measures in the year 2008- internal document of COLSAF).
- *Training and job preparation benefit for disabled persons (exclusively for persons with disabilities).* Training and job preparation provides a cash benefit within the scheme of active labour market policy. The objective of the benefit is to support improvement in the employability of disabled job seekers. A disabled job seeker is entitled to a benefit during training and job preparation that lasts for more than one month. The benefit is provided monthly as a subsistence minimum for one adult person (€ 185.19).

There are no available and reliable data on effectiveness of training programmes and their financial costs.



Section 4a: Financial support

To support the university education of young persons with disabilities, schools have established a *Fund for the Support of Students with Disabilities*. They can utilise it for the creation of reasonable conditions for studies of young persons with disabilities. Financial resources from this fund can be given also directly to the student as a lump sum or, frequently as a scholarship. The student has to apply for this type of financial support, but the school decides who receives this support and how much support will be provided. The school evaluates the individual situation of each applicant. The money can be utilised for creating reasonable conditions for studying or for technical or material support for a certain student or for adapting the environment in the school setting to be accessible for all students. Financial resources for the fund come from different sources, e.g. a part of school fees´ return, donum/gifts, heritage and business activities of the school.

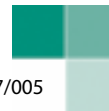
Another form of study support are *grants from structural funds*. They are administrated by the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic to support educational activities of persons with special educational needs.

In 2009 the ministry allocated for this purpose a total amount of € 8 mil. (information received up to request from the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic, April 2010).

Also some *private bodies* support the education of young persons with disabilities. For example, the Foundation Orange in the school years 2008/2009 supported 46 students from secondary schools and university settings with the total amount of € 28,380 with the aim of fulfilling their dreams and desires for a full-valued life and to better their future prospects.³¹

Finally we point out *direct payment for personal assistance* being paid directly to students with severe disabilities by the state administration (the relevant office is that for Employment, Social Affairs and Family) and financed from the state budget. The amount of the individualised personal assistance budget depends on the number of hours the student with severe disabilities needs to perform his/her daily living activities, including study activities. The amount is determined by a comprehensive assessment process performed by a specialised state administration (a cooperation of assessment doctors, social workers and student with disabilities). The rate for one hour of personal assistance is € 2.58 and the maximum number of hours for one person with disabilities can be 20 hours per day. There is no evidence about the number of direct payments for personal assistance recipients who utilise this type of financial support, particularly for the purpose of further education. This is because dependence on the payment is assessed universally and determined by the amount of hours for certain persons.

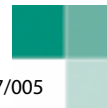
³¹ <http://www.changenet.sk/?section=adresar&x=96269&cat=14827>



The total number of recipients of direct payment for personal assistance was 6,634 persons with severe disabilities in December 2009.³²

Exportability of this type of direct payment is limited to a maximum of two months for Slovaks abroad. There is a similar type of entitlement available for visitors from EEA countries for permanent residence or temporary stay in Slovakia when working or studying. This is also available to non- EEA residents where a bilateral governmental agreement has been signed with the Slovakian authorities or for visitors receiving asylum in Slovakia.

³² http://www.upsvar.sk/statistiky/socialne-davky-statistiky/2009.html?page_id=10828



Section 4b: Personal assistance, equipment and adaptations

4.1 Practical assistance with learning

Practical support from an assistant of a teacher is available for any pupil/student with disabilities at preschool, elementary and secondary school. Disabled pupils/students and their families are not expected to make a financial contribution to receive this type of practical support. There are explicit qualification criteria for performing the teacher's assistant role.

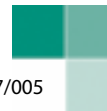
The assistant has to complete a university education (minimally a bachelor degree in specialised pedagogy) or secondary special education added to by a special course for an assistant of a teacher, which is about 160 hours in length (zákon č.317/2009 o pedagogických zamestnancoch a o odborných zamestnancov a o zmene a doplnení niektorých zákonov).³³ Teachers' assistants are employees of and paid by schools from the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic's budget according to the Regulation No. 16/2008-R from 18th December 2008 (Smernica č. 16/2008-R z 18. decembra 2008, ktorou sa určuje postup poskytnutia finančných prostriedkov zriaďovateľom škôl na mzdy a odvody do poisťných fondov asistentov učiteľa pre žiakov so zdravotným znevýhodnením alebo pre žiakov s nadaním).³⁴ For the year 2010, schools have been financed via regional school offices to a total amount of € 4,040,880 to cover 596 full time assistants of teachers' jobs (information received by request from the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic, April 2010). One assistant of a teacher can assist one or more pupils/students, depending on the needs of each child. The need for a child's assistant is assessed by the Centre of Special Pedagogic Counselling, which recommends this kind of support. The assistant of a teacher can help pupils/students in different ways, e.g. provide them with help in learning and the education process, help to overcome architectural barriers and barriers in communication (sign language or other form of communication). This type of practical support is available also to a disabled student from another country who is studying in our country, but it is not available to any Slovakian disabled student who is studying in another country.

In a university setting, some practical assistance for students with disabilities is provided by *coordinators to work with students with disabilities*. The coordinators are members of the faculties' staff, appointed by faculties' deans with the task of providing persons with disabilities and their families with initial information about studies and selection exams. They also mediate contacts and meetings with faculties or departmental managers, help by ensuring the most appropriate form of selection exam and offer assistance during the exam; and offer continuous assistance during the entire university course according to the student's needs.³⁵

³³ http://www.minedu.sk/data/USERDATA/Legislativa/Zakony/317_2009.pdf

³⁴ http://www.ksubb.sk/files/u19/16_2008_R_smernica_SRS.pdf

³⁵ <http://cezap.sk/informacie/pre-koordinatorov-pre-pracu-so-studentmi-so-zp/>



The National Program constitutes in Rule No. 6 (Education) a commitment to monitor the implementation of conditions for the studies of students with disabilities and to suggest, according to need, the establishment and financial support for *centres for support of higher education of students with hearing, physical and visual disabilities*. The *Supportive centre for visually disabled students* (Podporné centrum pre zrakovo postihnutých študentov)³⁶ started its activity as a pilot project in 1993. The centre was established within the TEMPUS JEP 2423 project “New Study and Vocational Possibilities for Visually Handicapped Students”. Since launching its activity, the aim of the centre has been to help students with visual impairment with their integration into university studying and life.

The help has been focused on:

- blind and visually impaired students who are not able to study without special compensational devices and supportive services,
- parents and teachers of the students who have an ambition to study at university,
- university teachers interested in the needs and possibilities of the student group.

The centre offers services to transform study materials into accessible forms, provides training for utilising ICTs and consultations on study problems and daily living affairs related to attending university .

In 2009 the centre was changed to the *Centre of Support of Students with Special Needs*. Presently the centre extends its services for students with hearing impairments (sign language services), mobility problems (transport service), develops effort to remove barriers in university and students’ housing and informational barriers. In the last 3 years the centre has ensured the transformation of 450 materials into alternative communication forms, prepared grammar leaving exams, including transforming exams for pupils finishing compulsory school into accessible forms and transformation of graphic materials in tactile form. During the last 3 years, the centre has offered comprehensive services for ca 50 students of the Comenius University in Bratislava and for ca 30 students of other universities. Besides these services, the centre regularly organises educational activities (e.g. seminars to increase awareness of the wider public on disability related issues, courses or trainings) and carries out research projects focused on the education of persons with disabilities or ICT area (Mendelova, 2010).

Other practical assistance for young students with disabilities is available from the *Information Centres of the Youth* (including youth with disabilities), which provide them with different types of information and help in various aspects of life after leaving school.

³⁶ http://cezap.sk/o-nas/o-nas/view?set_language=sk

Examples of assistance are: citizenship and society, education and job opportunities in Slovakia and abroad, travelling, job counselling, psychological and sex counselling, leisure time. Activities of the centres are supported via state subsidies from the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic.

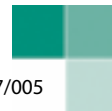
4.2 Equipment and accessibility for learning

Schools are obliged to provide their pupils/students with special educational needs with different kinds of special equipment (e.g. compensation, rehabilitation, didactic or audio-visual equipment) according the type and degree of their disability. Schools can also adapt or reconstruct the school environment to make it more accessible. The adaptation is aimed at removing different architectural barriers (e.g. access to entrance and classrooms, to toilets, modification of tables and chairs). Assessment is provided by Centre of Special Pedagogic Counselling, which recommends this kind of support to schools. There is no financial limit for each type of support but an amount of the entire budget being at the disposal to schools is limited.

After spending that budget in a certain school year, there is only the possibility to ask the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic for extra money. Money for equipment and adaptation of school environment goes out from state budget (the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic) via municipalities or regional offices or from the Fund for Support of Students with Disabilities at universities. The owner of this equipment is the particular school that receives it. This type of support is available also to a disabled student from another country who is studying in our country, but it is not available to a Slovakian disabled student studying in another country.

There is no available general data about number of supported students or about number of equipment and adaptations provided for this purpose. Relevant information is only collected by the schools which carry out the necessary reconstructions or adaptations.

Another possibility for gaining suitable equipment, devices, and appliances necessary for pupils/students with disabilities to study is through direct payment for purchasing devices or appliances. In this case a principle applies – devices or appliance received on the basis of a direct payment must be utilised not only in school settings or for educational purposes but for the wider social inclusion of the pupil/student to compensate for the social consequences of his/her severe disability in various settings (e.g. a PC used not only in school but also for communication at home or in a peer leisure time setting). Devices and appliances that are received as part of the compensational policy (part of the social assistance system) are individually based entitlements and the student's family has to make a financial contribution. Concerning the exportability of this type of direct payment (e.g. direct payment for purchasing a car or a device), there is no limitation on using them abroad.



There is a direct payment system available to visitors from the EEA with permanent residence or with temporary stay in Slovakia who are working or studying, as well as for non-EEA residents from countries that have signed bilateral governmental agreements with the Slovakian authorities and for visitors receiving asylum in Slovakia.



Section 5: Evidence of good practice

Good practice: Model of integration of people with visual impairments into mainstream training courses

An example of good practice in equality of educational and training opportunities for disabled people is the project SIZAR: Systém integrovaného zamestnávania a rekvalifikácie nevidiacich a slabozrakých ľudí (System of Integrated Employment and Retraining of Blind and Partially Sighted People)

The following information has been reproduced from their website <http://sizar-vision.unss.sk/>

Background of the SIZAR Project

One of the basic characteristics of the labour market position of visually impaired people is their low participation in employment. The inclusion of people with visual impairments into the labour market faces serious obstacles resulting from their limited mobility, limited access to information, lack of skills and experience in finding jobs, but also due to employers' biases. Labour market integration of visually impaired people requires comprehensive services such as social rehabilitation services, counselling services, training/retraining services and employment services to facilitate them getting a job and keeping it. Therefore the main goal of the SIZAR project was the establishment of a comprehensive system of guidance and re/training services for visually impaired people to facilitate their access to the labour market, to improve their chances of entering a career, to increase their employability and adaptability to the changing labour demand and to enhance their level of independent living. The SIZAR project was initiated and managed by the Slovak Blind and Partially Sighted Union.

The Slovak Blind and Partially Sighted Union (UNSS) is the largest organization of the people with visual impairment in Slovakia. It currently includes 5,150 members and 69 affiliated branches throughout the country. For 20 years UNSS has defended the interests of people with a visual impairment with a particular emphasis on equal opportunities, equal treatment and on positive measures to overcome the consequences of a visual impairment. UNSS carries out a range of activities aimed at activating visually impaired people and creating conditions to develop their own skills and knowledge needed for independent social and working life.

The project SIZAR was implemented during the years 2005-2007 within the frame of the EQAL Community Initiative financed by the European Social Fund.

Intended purpose of the SIZAR project

The main idea of the SIZAR project is based on the belief that any visually impaired person can choose an occupation according to his or her interest and knowledge and can perform it just as well as a fully sighted person.



The integrated system of employment and retraining is designed as an innovative approach aimed to extend opportunities for visually impaired people to incorporate them into standard training programmes and into standard occupations. In accordance with this practice, the aims of the SIZAR project are:

- To promote an integration of visually impaired people into the labour market through dependent employment and starting one's own business;
- To increase employability of visually impaired people, through the training of specific abilities and the development of daily living skills, which are both essential for successful employment (also there is a special focus on people with multiple disabilities);
- To improve employment opportunities of visually impaired people by enabling them to participate in standard re-training and educational courses, mainly through computer skills improvement;
- To change occupations which are traditionally practised by visually impaired people in order to innovate and accommodate them to demand labour requirements.

In order to achieve the intended purposes, a national partnership was established, which linked together all relevant stakeholders e.g.:

- Visually impaired people;
- Providers of the social rehabilitation services represented by the Slovak Blind and Partially Sighted Union;
- Providers of the supported employment represented by the Agency for Supported Employment;
- Providers of integrated training and retraining courses represented by the National Agency for Development of Small and Medium Enterprises;
- Researchers represented by Institute for Labour and Family Research;
- Employers.

Model of integration of people with visual impairments into mainstream training courses

An important component of the project in terms of intended goals, was training of people with visual disabilities. The main purpose of this component was to equip people with visual disabilities with new skills via training courses aimed at self-employment and telemarketing.

The implementation of this component was checked by the new approach, consisting of the integration of people with visual impairments into mainstream training. Training courses were developed and implemented by the National Agency for Development of Small and Medium Enterprises (NADSME), which has extensive experience with training programs in business and telemarketing. For the inclusion of people with visual disabilities into mainstream training courses, the special model of integration has been developed, which consists of a number of successive steps:

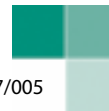
- *preparation for integration*, focused on recognizing and identifying the barriers (architectural, communication, teaching, technical) towards the inclusion of people with visual impairments into mainstream courses;
- *eliminating of barriers* aimed at an adaptation of teaching facilities, raising awareness of the authors of textbooks, adjusting textbooks for blind and visually impaired people, developing the profile of people with visual impairments for their tutors, lecturers' sensitization.
Within this step, all materials (registration for courses, invitations to the courses, textbooks, final tests, questionnaires of satisfaction) were prepared in electronic format to be applicable for reading and speaking software and also in Braille.
- *executing of the courses*, which included a nine-day training course for beginning entrepreneurs and eight-day training course for telemarketing. The training courses have taken place in three regions of Slovakia: Bratislava, Banská Bystrica and Prešov. A total of six courses were implemented.

Main outcomes of the training courses:

- In the mainstream training course 'For Beginning Entrepreneurs' 71 persons, including 24 visually impaired persons were trained.
- In the mainstream training course Telemarketing 31 persons, including 13 persons with visual impairments were trained.

The main outcome of the project was the model of integration of visually impaired persons into mainstreaming training programs designed by NADSME with close cooperation of the Slovak Blind and Partially Sighted Union.

This model has been incorporated into the State supported Programme of Counselling and Training provided by the National Agency for Development of Small and Medium Enterprises. The designed model (know how, guidebook, textbooks) were delivered by NADSME to regional training institutions to ensure its sustainability and usability throughout Slovakia.



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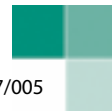
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