



# COUNTRY REPORT OF SLOVENIA

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STAIRS – STAKEHOLDERS TOGETHER ADAPTING IDEAS TO READJUST LOCAL SYSTEMS TO PROMOTE  
INCLUSIVE EDUCATION



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# STRUCTURE OF EDUCATION

## Structure of the National Education System

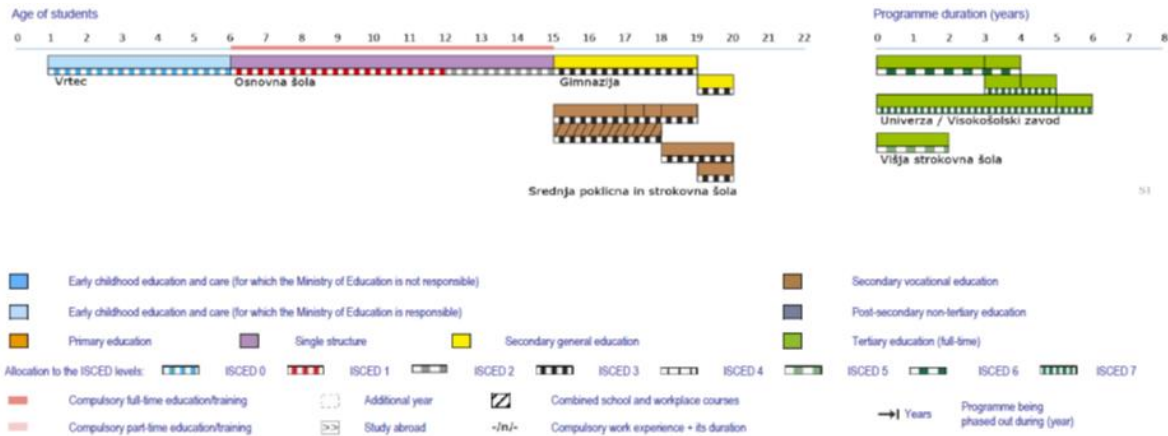


Figure #1: Structure of the National Education System. Source: [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/national-description\\_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/national-description_en)

Organisation and Financing of Education Act (1996) states that the education system in Slovenia among other aims shall aim at:

- guaranteeing optimum development to individuals regardless of their sex, social and cultural background, religion, national origin and physical and mental handicaps;
- educating for mutual tolerance, developing the awareness of the equality of rights for men and women, respect for human diversity and mutual cooperation, respect for children's and human rights and fundamental freedoms, and fostering equal opportunities for both sexes and thereby the capacity to live in a democratic society;
- guaranteeing equal educational opportunities in regions with special developmental problems;
- guaranteeing equal educational opportunities to socially deprived children;
- guaranteeing equal educational opportunities to children, youth and adults with special needs.

## Early childhood education and care (ECEC) (ISCED 0)

### ECEC 1 and 2 – Creche and Pre-school programmes (ISCED 0)

Kindergartens Act (1996) is carried out according to the following principles related to inclusive education:

- pluralism,
- equal opportunities for children and parents, taking into account the differences between children,
- the right to choose and to be different.

### Type of institution, main features, key data

- Pre-primary education is part of the education system. Pre-primary provision includes unitary centre-based childcare and education which is mainly public. Pre-primary institutions (kindergartens) are set up by municipalities. Attendance is optional. Children can attend pre-primary institutions from the age of 11 months until they enter compulsory education at the age of 6 (that is, from 5 years and 8 months to 6 years and 8 months).
- The percentage of children with SEN in the population of all children enrolled in public pre-primary schools has increased in recent years, from 1.2–1.3% between 2006 and 2011, up to 1.7% in 2015/2016. The inclusive trend is evident (Source: [FPIES – Slovenia Country Report, p. 23](#)).

#### **Specific issues on the inclusiveness on this level**

- Children with special needs have two options:
  - An adopted programme for Pre-school children and additional professional support (DSP), which means that the child is in the usual kindergarten department and is allowed to adjust the program according to the decision and guidance in the form of DSP hours.
  - Separated adopted programmes, known as departments for SEN children. These are departments within kindergartens, where are only children with special needs {small groups (up to 6)} and special rehabilitation teachers or teachers with special qualifications to work with them.

#### **Relevant measures in the past 10 years (successful or failed)**

- The education of learners with special needs is regulated by the Placement of Children with Special Needs Act (2000, 2006, 2007). The Act defines procedures for the placement of learners with special needs in all types of education, from pre-primary to upper-secondary education. Since January 2019 it is supplement with [Integrated Early Treatment of Preschool Children with Disabilities Act \(ZOPOPP\)](#).

## **Primary and secondary education (ISCED 1, 2, 3)**

### **General issues on the inclusiveness of the education system of Slovenia**

#### **Basic School Act (1996) defines the following goals related to inclusive education:**

- education for respect and cooperation, for accepting differences and tolerance, for respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms;

### **General education (ISCED 1 and 2)**

#### **Type of institution, main features, key data**

- It is compulsory education organized as integrated primary and lower secondary education. Nine-year basic school is attended by pupils aged 6 to 15 years.
- The Placement of Children with Special Needs Act (ZOUUP) regulates procedures for the placement of learners with special needs into the educational programme. Depending on the learners' psychological and physical status, the Act enables their inclusion in

education, based on the assumption that additional help from experts and adaptation of the implementation of programmes will help learners to achieve a comparable standard of knowledge. Learners with severe disorders can still attend special forms of education in schools for learners with special needs and institutions for the education and training of learners with severe developmental difficulties.

### **Specific issues on the inclusiveness on this level**

Specialised forms of education within mainstream schools:

- Education programmes with adapted provision and additional specialised assistance: aimed at SEN students for whom adaptations in the provision of the programme, which is otherwise identical to the mainstream primary curriculum, are sufficient.
- Adapted education programmes with equivalent performance criteria: these programmes include adaptations to the actual programmes for various groups of SEN students (e.g. deaf children); lesson organisation, assessment methods etc. are adapted. Additional specialised assistance is also provided.
- Adapted education programmes with lower performance criteria, aimed in particular at students with mild learning difficulties.
- Special education programmes for children with moderate and severe learning difficulties and other special programmes, and
- Education programmes aimed at students with behavioural and personality disorders.

The first two types of programmes are provided in mainstream schools, while the others are as a rule provided in specialised schools. An individual school can offer multiple programmes simultaneously, but in the case of lower performance criteria they are always provided in separate classes.

The school prepares an individualised curriculum for every student enrolled in one of the above programmes. It contains all the adaptations the student requires in order to participate equally in lessons and achieve optimal learning objectives.

### **Relevant measures in the past 10 years (successful or failed)**

- A five-step model for assisting students with learning disabilities is recognised from year 2008 and it is obligatory for schools from 2015.
- Minor changes to the The Placement of Children with Special Needs Act ZOUPP (e.g. since 2012 among recognized groups of learners with special educational needs are also pupils with autism spectrum. Since 2015 an educational programme with equivalent performance criteria is adapted to them).

### **Upper secondary education (gymnasium, Lyceum) (ISCED 3)**

General Upper Secondary School Act (1996) defines the following aims of gymnasiums related to inclusive dimension of education:

- educates for the responsible protection of liberty, for the tolerant, peaceful coexistence and respect of others;
- develops a willingness to build a free, democratic and socially equally state.

### **Type of institution, main features, key data**

- Upper secondary education is not compulsory and is provided by public upper-secondary schools. It takes 2 to 5 years.
- Learners can choose between two educational programmes: general education and vocational-technical education.
- Students may choose freely among general and vocational programmes. If the number of candidates exceeds the number of places, schools may limit enrolment in the first year and students can enrol regarding their grades in last 3 years of basic school.
- There are four types of VET programs (short vocational educational programmes, vocational educational programmes, vocational technical programmes and technical educational programmes) and two types of general education programs at this level.

### Short vocational education

#### Type of institution, main features, key data

- Short vocational upper secondary education (NPI, ISCED 353, SOK 3) lasts for two years and enables pupils who have completed compulsory schooling (nine years of regular schooling or schooling for special needs pupils) to later, after finishing the program with final exam, enrol in 3- or 4-year VET programmes or enter to the labour market for assistant type of places.

#### Specific issues on the inclusiveness on this level

- Educational programmes are generally designed for enrolment of SEN learners, who have completed compulsory education (nine years of basic education) but not achieved competences on level ISCED 2.

#### Relevant measures in the past 10 years (successful or failed)

- The problem is a narrow professional set of programs aimed primarily at boys, fewer girls.

### Vocational education

#### Type of institution, main features, key data

- In vocational upper secondary education (SPI, ISCED 353, SOK 4) can enrol anyone who has successfully completed primary school or short vocational upper secondary education and fulfils specific conditions if required.<sup>1</sup> Since school year 2017/18 onwards, students enrolling in this type of VET programmes can choose a school based or apprenticeship implementation.<sup>2</sup>

#### Specific issues on the inclusiveness on this level

- Similar to the primary level, the educational programme could be adapted to the SEN learners. Additional professional assistance (DSP) is also possible (The Placement of

<sup>1</sup> There is a special condition for entry into the geo-operator miner VET programme, i.e. psychophysical ability (call for applications for enrolment in upper secondary programmes in 2016/17).

<sup>2</sup> Professions are gradually available, so in school year 2019/20, there are 11 SPI VET programs prepared for apprenticeship form.

Children with Special Needs Act (ZOUPP)). But when adjustments in the mainstream schools are not sufficient for a successful inclusion, a learner with special needs is enrolled in the adapted or special programme, carried out by specific schools and institutes (e.g. CIRIUS Kamnik, Zavod za gluhe in naglušne).

#### **Relevant measures in the past 10 years (successful or failed)**

- Minor changes in legislation (ZOUPP)

### **Vocational technical education**

#### **Type of institution, main features, key data**

- After completion of a 3-year VET programme with a final exam, pupils can enter labour market or enrol in the vocational technical upper secondary education (PTI, ISCED 354). Those 2-year programmes target students who want to attain a higher level of education or want to increase their opportunities to enter tertiary education after passing the vocational matura.

#### **Specific issues on the inclusiveness on this level**

- The same as the vocational education; the educational programme could be adapted to the SEN learners. Additional professional assistance (DSP) is also possible (The Placement of Children with Special Needs Act (ZOUPP)).

#### **Relevant measures in the past 10 years (successful or failed)**

- Minor changes in legislation (ZOUPP)

### **Technical education**

#### **Type of institution, main features, key data**

- The entry conditions for technical upper secondary education (SSI, ISCED 354, SOK 5) are the successful completion of primary school or a short vocational upper secondary education programme and the specific requirements of some programmes. After four years, SSI programmes are completed with a vocational matura, young can enter the labour market or enrol in higher vocational education or higher education, but the choice is limited. It is possible to pass one additional exam (5th exam) from the general matura subjects, which enables student to enrol in some first cycle academic programmes.

#### **Specific issues on the inclusiveness on this level**

- The same as the vocational education; the educational programme could be adapted to the SEN learners. Additional professional assistance (DSP) is also possible (The Placement of Children with Special Needs Act (ZOUPP)).

#### **Relevant measures in the past 10 years (successful or failed)**

- Minor changes in legislation (ZOUPP)

### **General education**

#### **Type of institution, main features, key data**

- General upper secondary education (ISCED 345, SOK 5) lasts for four years. Pupils can opt from classic general or professional programmes. After completing with general matura, young can enter the labour market or enrol in tertiary education.

#### **Specific issues on the inclusiveness on this level**

- The same as the vocational education; the educational programme could be adapted to the SEN learners. Additional professional assistance (DSP) is also possible {The Placement of Children with Special Needs Act (ZOUPP)}.

#### **Relevant measures in the past 10 years (successful or failed)**

- Minor changes in legislation (ZOUPP)

### **Adult education**

#### **Type of institution, main features, key data**

[Adult education](#) is marked by its considerable diversity of programmes and institutions, supporting lifelong learning trend and policy. Adults can enrol in the same formal programmes as young people, but they have to pay tuition. Organisation and means of assessing knowledge are adjusted to suit an adult learner. Education market is full of non-formal programmes and some of them are considered as continuing VET, offered by public and private providers; regulation of provision of such programmes is not part of legislation. Anyhow in late 2018 first formal continuing VET programme was accredited. In the school year 2016/17, 5% of adult learners enrolled in general upper secondary programmes, while 95% enrolled in upper secondary VET programmes (61.3% in technical programmes, 33% in vocational programmes and 0.7% in short VET programmes). The national vocational qualifications (NVQ) system is intended for adults over 18 who would like to verify knowledge gained outside formal education. The system has been in place since 2000.<sup>3</sup>

### **Upper secondary non tertiary education**

#### **Type of institution, main features, key data**

Post-secondary non-tertiary education does not exist in Slovenia.

## **NATIONAL CONTEXT AND CURRENT RESEARCH**

### ***KEY ISSUES REGARDING SOCIAL INCLUSION***

The [White paper on Education in Slovenia](#) (2011: 14) place equity as one of the main principles of education in Slovenia, which should provide anyone the equal opportunities for success in life.

The equality of opportunities presupposes that everyone is treated in accordance with the classical rule of equity (equal must be treated equally and unequal unequally in line with their diversity). The concept of social justice as an equality of opportunity thus allows inequality in the achievements of

<sup>3</sup> Cedefop (2019). VET in Slovenia. In: Cedefop (2019). Spotlight on VET – 2018 compilation: vocational education and training systems in Europe. Luxembourg: Publications Office, pp. 62-63. <http://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2801/009>.

individuals, but only if they have equal opportunities to reach them, and this inequality of individuals' achievements is the result of their free choices, abilities, effort and risks assumed (White paper, 2011: 14).

Inequality in the education is, when on one hand educational activities are conducted regardless specific (physical and/or mental) health and developmental, cultural, socio-economic and any other circumstances students may have and/or on the other hand when student's circumstances are to easily used as an excuse for not achieved educational standards although student would be able with relevant support to reach higher.

In terms of equity goals, Slovenia has some national policies and support in place for the disadvantaged students. The Slovenian education system includes several systemic mechanisms for disadvantaged groups (positive discrimination) to help reduce inequity (uneven starting positions) and help with an optimal development and successful integration in the education system for all students (e.g. for students from low income families, students with special needs, members of Roma community, etc.)

## **Characteristics by the level of education**

### **Early childhood education and care (ECEC) and transition to the compulsory education**

- Pre-primary education is part of the education system. Pre-primary provision includes unitary centre-based childcare and education which is mainly public. Pre-primary institutions (kindergartens) are set up by municipalities. Attendance is optional.
- Slovenia is one of the EU countries with the highest level of involvement of children in the formal pre-school education system for children up to three years old. Kindergartens help parents care for pre-schoolers and their holistic development through the implementation of childcare programs. This improves the quality of life of families and indirectly creates good conditions for economic and social development.
- In the school year 2018/19, 87,147 children were enrolled in kindergartens, which is 81.7% of all children aged between 1 and 5 years. In the last ten years the number of children enrolled in kindergartens increased by a third (from 65,966 in the school year 2008/09 to 87,147 in the school year 2018/19). Pre-school education was provided by 968 kindergartens and their units, 852 of them public and 116 private. A large majority of children (94.4%) were attending public kindergartens.
- The European strategic goal for education and training 2020 is 95% inclusion of children of that age in pre-school education. Slovenia has not yet achieved that goal but is coming closer each year. 39,753 children aged 4 and 5 years were enrolled in pre-school education, which is 95% of all children of that age. The enrolment rate of the youngest (1 and 2 years of age) increased as well from a half of the population in 2008/09 to 65.5% in 2018/19.

### **Primary school**

- Primary education is accessible to all residents due to its wide-ranging network of primary schools. Parents can choose whether their child will attend public or private elementary school or be educated at home.

- In the school year 2018/19, 186,328 children were enrolled in basic school program with regular and adapted curriculum, 5,000 more than in the previous year. The number of children in basic education continues to grow since 2010/11 when the population of pupils was the smallest in independent Slovenia (161,046). Smaller generations born 15 years ago are leaving for upper-secondary schools and bigger generations of 6-year-olds are entering. This year's generation of first-graders is a quarter larger (21,945) than the generation of ninth-graders (17,721).
- Children enter basic education at 6 years of age. However, lately more and more children enter at the age of 7. Five years ago there were 5.7% 7-year-olds among first graders. In 2018/19 the share was 10%.
- Compulsory basic education was carried out by 774 basic schools and their subsidiaries and by 48 basic schools with adapted curriculum and institutions for children with special education needs. In the largest school 1,108 pupils were attending classes, in the largest school branch 361 and in the smallest branch only 4. On average there were 342 pupils in independent and central schools and 54 in subsidiary schools.
- In the school year 2018/19 the average class had 19.1 pupils. This number varies depending on the organizational form of schools. In independent and central basic schools there were on average 20.7 pupils per class, and in subsidiary schools only 11 pupils per class. The average number of children per class also varies among statistical regions. The average number of children per class was the lowest in basic schools in the Koroška statistical region (15.9) and the highest in the Osrednjeslovenska statistical region (21.5).
- There were 1,692 repeaters in total (0.9% of all pupils). Most of them (355) repeated the 6th grade, followed by grades 8 and 7. The fewest pupils (21) repeated the 9th grade.
- In regular and adapted basic education programmes there were 9,948 children with special needs. Most of them (76.5%) were included in regular programmes with adapted implementation and additional professional assistance and represented 4.1% of all pupils in regular basic education programmes.
- In the school year 2017/18 basic school education was successfully completed by 17,116 pupils, 263 of them in basic schools with adapted curriculum.

### Upper Secondary education

- Upper-secondary education is not compulsory and is provided by public upper-secondary schools. Learners can choose between two education programmes: general education and vocational-technical education.
- In the school year 2018/19, 73 110 students were enrolled in the upper secondary education carried out by 144 public upper secondary schools, 6 private upper secondary schools and 5 institutions for special needs children. The number of upper secondary students continues to fall as the generations of young people currently in upper secondary schools are the smallest in the last 70 years. However, we expect this trend to turn since larger generations of 15-year-olds begin to enter upper secondary education.
- Among 19 735 first-year students 18 920 were new entrants, entering upper secondary education for the first time. Others were either repeaters or have changed their study programme.

- 91.2% of all young people between 15 and 18 years of age were enrolled in upper secondary education, 92.5% if we include those 15–18-year-olds who were enrolled as adults.
- In upper secondary general programmes 35% of all upper secondary students were enrolled, 61% of them girls. 46.2% of all students were enrolled in technical programmes (47% of them girls). In vocational education 18% of all upper secondary students were enrolled, 30% of them girls.

## Characteristics by the education system and governance

### Features of the education legislation

Schools are obliged to practice inclusion. According to national [Organisation and financing of education Act](#), the education goal of the Republic of Slovenia is to provide the optimal development of the individual, irrespective of gender, social background or cultural identity, religion, racial, ethnic or national origin, and regardless of their physical and mental constitution or invalidity. The importance of "equal opportunities and non-discrimination" and "fairness" of the public education system is highlighted also in the White Paper (1996, 2011).

To foster inclusion Slovenia has a range of mechanisms to support specific groups of children (e.g. minorities, Roma, special needs, immigrants). Several relevant documents (guidelines, strategies) have been developed at the national level:

- [Guidelines for the integration of immigrant children in kindergartens and schools](#),
- [Guidelines for the counselling service in schools](#),
- [Guidelines for the counselling service in kindergarten](#),
- [Strategy of Education and Training of Roma Children in the Republic of Slovenia](#),
- [Guidelines to the Kindergarten Curriculum in programmes with adapted implementation and additional expert support for children with special needs](#),
- [Supplement to the Kindergarten Curriculum in ethnically mixed areas](#), [Supplement to the Kindergarten Curriculum for work with Roma children](#),
- [Kindergarten Curriculum in the adapted programme for pre-school children](#),
- [Learning difficulties in school: concept of work](#),
- [Children with deficits in certain areas of learning: instruction for adapted provision of the basic school programme with additional expert assistance](#),
- [After-school classes and other forms of care in the nine-year school: the concept](#),
- [Programme guidelines for the work of class' teaching staff and class community in basic and upper secondary schools and pupil's dormitories](#).

For the basic school programme in ethnically mixed areas, there is a list of adapted syllabuses and the [Instructions for the implementation of the 9-year bilingual basic school](#). In addition, there are also adapted curricula for certain groups of SEN pupils (with hearing, sight or motor impairments)

and adapted curricula with lower educational standards. These documents are provided on the website of the Ministry<sup>4</sup>.

Beside the mechanisms (documents) listed above we highlight three domains regarding the inclusion: education of children and students with special needs (through The Placement of children with special needs Act), Italian and Hungarian minorities (The Act on special rights of members of the Italian and Hungarian national communities in education) and members of the Roma community (Roma community in the Republic of Slovenia Act).

The provision of Special Education Needs (SEN) in Slovenia follows a multi-track approach towards inclusion, which means that a variety of services are offered by mainstream education and by segregated settings. By following the principles of inclusion, most children with special needs are integrated into the mainstream schools, but the programmes are adapted to them and they also have additional support (The Placement of Children with Special Needs Act, 2011). Upon request, a special committee at National Education Institute Slovenia (NEIS) may grant learners a SEN status. A customised learning programme is then prepared that defines the learning forms and methods, additional professional support, physical help and necessary adjustments to the organisation, assessment, grading, progression and schedule. At the upper secondary level, learners with special needs are included in all types of programmes. When adjustments in the mainstream schools are not enough for successful inclusion, learners with special needs are enrolled in an adjusted VET programme<sup>5</sup> carried out by 6 specific schools and institutes.<sup>6</sup> Educational programs with adjustments should provide children with disabilities the opportunity to acquire the same standard of education as providing educational programs of primary, vocational and technical education and general secondary education. For children with special needs who, depending on the type and level of the disability, obstacles or disorders, cannot reach the educational standard according to the elementary education curriculum, there are personalized education programs with a lower educational standard and a special program for children with moderate, severe and a severe mental disorder.<sup>7</sup>

There are 15 institutions for young with special needs. On the level of basic education, there are 28 schools and 21 schools with at least one class for children with special needs. 31 kindergartens are taking care for youngest special need children. At the upper secondary level, students with special needs are included in the NPI and SPI programmes. But when adjustments in the mainstream schools are not sufficient for a successful inclusion, a child with special needs is enrolled in the adjusted or special VET programme, carried out by specific schools and institutes. Four public counselling centres

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[http://www.mizs.gov.si/fileadmin/mizs.gov.si/pageuploads/podrocje/os/devetletka/program\\_drugo/Programske\\_smernice\\_za\\_delo\\_ouz\\_in\\_os.pdf](http://www.mizs.gov.si/fileadmin/mizs.gov.si/pageuploads/podrocje/os/devetletka/program_drugo/Programske_smernice_za_delo_ouz_in_os.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Educational programs with equal educational standards, adapted for the hearing impaired, learners with speech disorders, physically disabled learners and for blind and partially sighted learners. In 2018 there were 5 NPI, 10 SPI, 3 SSI and 7 PTI programmes adapted.

<sup>6</sup> Source: Knavs, S.; Šlander, M. (2019). Vocational education and training in Europe – Slovenia. Cedefop ReferNet VET in Europe reports 2018, p. 26.

[http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/2019/Vocational\\_Education\\_Training\\_Europe\\_Slovenia\\_2018\\_Cedefop\\_ReferNet.pdf](http://libserver.cedefop.europa.eu/vetelib/2019/Vocational_Education_Training_Europe_Slovenia_2018_Cedefop_ReferNet.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Placement of Children with Special Needs Act - Zakon o usmerjanju otrok s posebnimi potrebami ZUOPP-1 (Uradni list RS, št. 58/2011, 40/2012-ZUJF, 90/2012). Published: 22. 07. 2011. Available at: <http://pisrs.si/Pis.web/pregledPredpisa?id=ZAKO5896>.

for children, young people and parents in country are providing additional help to all children, young and parents in distress, financed partly through the health care system.<sup>8</sup>

### Essential problems concerning the topic of the project

The experts observation opinion is that although various system level solutions are in place<sup>9</sup> (e.g. financial support for students with lower SES, expert order with instructions for inclusion of individual SEN students, program adaptation on national and individual levels, additional teachers for SEN students in school, reduced number of students in class when SEN students is included...), these do not ensure meeting quality education standards in the practice, e.g.:

- low SES students do not get additional educational support needed,
- teachers lack expertise for instruction classes with SEN students,
- classes can include SEN students with different kind of special needs,
- classes at EQF level 3 can have more than prescribed number of SEN students because schools do not have the capacities for smaller classes in some cases (merging different occupations into one class during general subjects),
- SEN teacher cannot be equipped for teaching students with different SEN,
- parents can insist in enrolling to the programmes not suited for SEN students,
- schools are motivated to enrol students based on per capita funding though can lower the educational standards (final exam is internal) ...).

Several data also show that (in)equality present a challenge of the Slovenian educational system with some issues specifically linked to VET {[Cankar et al., 2017: 15-18](#); [Šterman Ivančič and Štremfel, 2020-\(forthcoming\)](#)):

- Enrolment into an academically demanding secondary school in Slovenia is closely linked, not with achievements, but with the economic, social and cultural status of the families and environments from which students come. As result, students with lower economic, social and cultural status are mainly involved in vocational programmes and students with higher economic, social and cultural status are mainly involved in general programmes (gymnasium). E.g. PISA 2015 national results revealed that students from different educational programmes vary according to their reported socio-economic background: e.g. the index of socio-economic status for students in general gymnasium programmes has value of 0.53 (above the OECD average); the value of the index for students from vocational-educational programmes is -0.61 (below the OECD average).
- There is significant variance of achievements among secondary (general and vocational) schools according to the PISA results as well among primary schools according to national external examinations ([Gaber et al., 2012](#)). E.g. secondary analysis of the PISA national data (e.g. Šterman Ivančič & Puklek Levpušček, 2018<sup>10</sup>) revealed significant

<sup>8</sup> Source: website of education ministry.

<sup>9</sup> E.g. White paper on education (2011) list several measures to be implemented in this regard: implementation of a policy of positive discrimination for students from socially and culturally disadvantaged backgrounds, providing everyone with the same level of free education, facilitating the individualization of the school system and teaching, which gives each student an optimal opportunity to obtain quality education and formation in an autonomous individual; inclusion of special needs students in regular education in cases where it is more beneficial to them than would be if they were going to school in special schools, etc.).

<sup>10</sup> Source: Šterman Ivančič, K., & Puklek Levpušček, M. (2018) Individual and teacher-level predictors of student achievement : PISA 2015. Paper presented at the EARA 2018. Ghent: European Association for Research on Adolescence.

differences in achievement in all three domains (reading, math and science) according to the student's educational programme. Results of the secondary analysis demonstrate that, for example, students from general gymnasium programmes scored on average 584 points on the science literacy scale, students from technical VET programmes (ISCED 354) scored 499 points, and students from 3-years VET programmes (ISCED 353) scored 418 points. The difference in scores between students in general gymnasium and VET programmes is approximately 160 points, which corresponds to approximately five years of schooling.

- Among the socio-economically privileged students in Slovenia, expectations that they will complete schooling (only) with secondary school are four times lower than among socio-economically disadvantaged pupils, although they show the same level of knowledge.
- The results of PISA show that socially and economically disadvantaged students are more likely to repeat the class with a higher probability, even though they show the same knowledge in the external examination.
- In Slovenia, the percentage of so-called resilient students (those who are successful in learning, despite the poor family, social, cultural and economic conditions), are 5.9 percent, which is below the average of 6.4 percent of OECD countries (OECD, 2013: page 41<sup>11</sup>).

Although schools have SEN teachers (professional expert's support) they are not present in the class regularly, therefore VET teachers are often alone having not enough competencies for teaching SEN students. For example, the national evaluation study showed that in terms of special needs it is necessary to strengthen the professional development of teachers in education (professional staff), even more so in vocational and technical schools ([Vršnik Perše et al., 2016](#)). On a similar note, another evaluation study showed that teachers of practical lessons in vocational and technical education are particularly in need of continuous professional development (Vršnik Perše et al., 2012<sup>12</sup>).

A number of new solutions at the system level have been prepared over the last twenty years, but they often lack stronger reliance on the expert findings and implementation practice, which should be the central guide for the design of further system solutions.

Currently, two year national evaluation study is planned, which aims at identification of the problems and good practice in the education of children with special needs and providing proposals for amendments needed in the field ([Educational Research Institute, 2019](#)).

## Teacher policy

The education required to teach at all age levels of education and training is regulated by the national legislation. The same is true for the teachers of learners with special needs and the professionals involved in counselling work in kindergarten, basic and upper secondary education (pedagogues, psychologists and social workers).

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<sup>11</sup> Source: OECD (2013) PISA 2012 Results: Excellence Through Equity: Giving Every Student the Chance to Succeed (Volume II). Pariz: OECD Publishing.

<sup>12</sup> Source: Vršnik Perše, T., Kelava, P., Kozina, A., Rutar Leban, T., Javornik Krečič, M.. (2012) Profesionalni razvoj strokovnih delavcev v poklicnem in strokovnem izobraževanju: evalvacijska študija - poročilo. Ljubljana: Pedagoški inštitut. Available at [http://193.2.222.157/UserFilesUpload/Porocilo\\_ES%20Prof%20razvoj%20strok%20del%20v%20poklic%20in%20strok%20izob\\_DOPOLNJEN.pdf](http://193.2.222.157/UserFilesUpload/Porocilo_ES%20Prof%20razvoj%20strok%20del%20v%20poklic%20in%20strok%20izob_DOPOLNJEN.pdf)

Teachers may obtain the required education and training at the three state universities. The Central Faculties of Education in Ljubljana, Maribor and Koper (University of Primorska) educate kindergarten teachers, primary school teachers and subject teachers. They also train professionals in the field of inclusive education and training of learners with special educational needs, specifically for the following disabilities or disorders: sight, hearing, speech, language, learning and emotional and behavioural impediments. The essential objective of this programme is to train future teachers for quality implementation of programmes and inclusive education and rehabilitation, enabling them to work with people who have special needs in different work situations.

There are some new requirements relating to the preparation for teaching children with SEN and children from other minority groups since academic year 2011/2012. The principle that all teachers should obtain certain knowledge of learners with special needs was incorporated, irrespective of the subject group of their study programme. Therefore on the first level of initial teacher training there are several academic subjects that cover some topics of the inclusion process. In addition, some new study programmes were developed with the emphasis on the inclusion process on the second level of the Bologna process at different faculties of education. For example, University of Primorska and University of Maribor provides specific programme Inclusive pedagogy. One set of the anticipated competences of students at the University of Primorska is related particularly on cooperation with the working and social environment:

- with other employees at school, other schools and institutions and experts in the field of education,
- with parents and other persons responsible for pupils and students,
- establishing partnerships and cooperation with other schools, institutions in the school environment and professionals in the field of education at local, regional, national, European and global levels,
- ability to evaluate or critically evaluate existing practice, policy and diversity in education and research ([University of Primorska, 2019](#)).

In addition to regular studies, the Faculty of Education in Ljubljana offers two programmes of in-service teacher training. First for working with a selected group of learners with special needs and a study programme of in-service teacher training for supporting learners (2.150 hours) and young people with learning and psycho-social impediments (530 hours). In this programme, teachers upgrade their professional education with specialised education knowledge and findings that are mostly practice-oriented.

Teachers may obtain additional knowledge in the field of inclusive education within several short (up to 24 hours) programmes of in-service training provided by the National Education Institute. (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, [2010](#); [2019](#), In-service teacher training catalogue “Katis”<sup>13</sup>).

## Social dimension

Slovenia as the EU member state follows the EU 2020 target, which states that until 2020 there will be 20 million less people at risk of poverty or exclusion in the EU. The specific national target in this

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<sup>13</sup> <https://paka3.mss.edus.si/Katis/Uvodna.aspx>

field is to reduce number of people in combined poverty for 40 000 until 2020. The EU statistics shows that Slovenia is approaching this goal by reducing number of people at risk of poverty and social exclusion in the period 2008 to 2018 for 34 000 ([European Commission, 2019a](#)).

According to the 2018 Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (SILC), the at-risk-of-poverty rate in Slovenia was 13.3%. This means that in 2018 about 268 000 people in Slovenia were living below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold ([SURS, 2019](#)).

Among the 268 000 persons below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold, 89 000 were retired (18.1% of all retired persons), 60 000 of them were women and 29 000 men, 52 000 were persons in employment (6% of all persons in employment), 31 000 of them were employed and 21 000 self-employed, 46,000 were unemployed (45.7% of all unemployed persons), 45 000 were underage children (11.7% of all children) and 36 000 were other persons (20.4% of all persons unable to work, homemakers, students, other inactive and unclassified persons) ([SURS, 2019](#)).

The risk of poverty and social exclusion among children in Slovenia is one of the lowest in the EU. In Slovenia, 15.2% of children were considered at risk of poverty or social exclusion in 2017. This is below the EU average of 24.4% in the same year. As of 2017, in Slovenia, 19.8% of single parents were experiencing material and social deprivation. This is below the EU average of 28.4% in the same year. The at-risk-of-poverty rate for children whose parents are citizens of a non-EU country was 41.5% in 2017. This is very similar to the EU average of 40.6% in the same year. This is due to the comprehensive and integrated strategies that combine support for children, families and work-life balance, as well as a horizontal redistribution of income in favour of families with children. A new Family Code was adopted in March 2017 to protect children more efficiently and effectively and underscores the focus on the child and protection of the child's benefits. A new Resolution on Family Policy 2018-2028 "The Society Friendly to All Families" was approved in February 2018. Its main aims include promoting a high quality of life for children and ensuring the protection of children ([European Commission, 2019b](#)).

## **TERMINOLOGY AND ITS NATIONAL CONTEXT**

### **Terminology in Slovenia**

#### **Diversity**

A multi-faceted concept that can contain many elements and levels of distinction, e.g. age, ethnicity, class, gender, physical abilities, race, sexual orientation, religious status, educational background, geographical location, income, marital status, parental status and work experiences. The OECD defines diversity as: 'characteristics that can affect the specific ways in which developmental potential and learning are realised, including cultural, linguistic, ethnic, religious and socio-economic differences' ([2010, p. 21](#)).

#### **Equality**

Equality in education may be understood to imply that everyone is treated in a way that guarantees access to the same educational opportunities. Equality is based on the value that all human persons are equal in fundamental potential and self-worth.

## Equity

Defining equity, the European Commission states that it is: ‘viewed as the extent to which individuals can take advantage of education and training, in terms of opportunities, access, treatment and outcomes’ (2006, p. 2).

The OECD, in the publication *No More Failures: Ten Steps to Equity in Education* (2007), highlighted two dimensions of equity in education – fairness, ‘which implies ensuring that personal and social circumstances [...] should not be an obstacle to achieving educational potential’, and inclusion, which implies ‘ensuring a basic minimum standard of education for all’. Fair and inclusive education is one of the most powerful levers available to make society more equitable.

According to the Council of the European Union:

*equality and equity are not identical and [...] education systems must move away from the traditional ‘one-size-fits all’ mentality. Equal opportunities for all are crucial, but not sufficient: there is a need to pursue ‘equity’ in the aims, content, teaching methods and forms of learning being provided for by education and training systems to achieve a high quality education for all* (2017, p. 4).

The Slovenian White Paper on Education (2011) points out that there are three basic interpretations of what is meant by educational justice. All three agree that individuals’ achievements may be unequal if they are the result of their choices – the effort they have taken and the risks they have taken – that they must all have the same opportunity to achieve them. The analysis of differences of different interpretations, however, points out those decisions taken to ensure greater equity in the school system must take into account the advantages and disadvantages of different conceptions of justice in the design of systemic solutions.

The concept of distributive justice emphasizes three conditions:

- firstly, everyone must have the right to a most comprehensive system of fundamental freedoms (education) compatible with a similar system of liberties for all;
- secondly, socially advantageous positions (higher education levels) must be accessible taking into consideration the principle of equal opportunities;
- third, income and wealth inequality (access to education) is justified if it can be shown to benefit those in the worst situation; in other words, if they encourage an increase of the entire social production, thus allowing more resources diverted to those most deprived.

## Inclusion

Inclusion is a concept that we have been able to accept from abroad rather than having time to do develop it. Although the process of inclusion is supported by the Ministry of Education and several professional meetings have been organized on the topic, and scientific and professional contributions and books have been published in the last decade, but the concept is still a source of amazement both in public and in school practice.

Inclusion replaces the notion of integration, which has already taken hold in the Slovenian school space. By integration we usually mean adapting an individual (a child with special needs) to the school environment. Inclusion should place greater emphasis on adapting the environment, not only to children with disabilities, but to each child. We also have Roma children in kindergartens and schools, and more and more children from other linguistic and cultural backgrounds, who also need

special adjustments to the learning process and learning environment if they are to be well-educated and successful in kindergartens and schools, even if by the law they are not considered students with special needs.<sup>14</sup>

## **Inclusive education**

The UNESCO IBE (2008) definition states that inclusive education is:

*... an ongoing process aimed at offering quality education for all while respecting diversity and the different needs and abilities, characteristics and learning expectations of the students and communities, eliminating all forms of discrimination (p. 18).*

The Agency views inclusive education as:

*... a systemic approach to providing high quality education in mainstream schools that effectively meets the academic and social learning needs of all the learners from the school's local community (European Agency, 2015, p. 2).*

*Inclusive education supposes a real change at both policy and practice levels regarding education. Learners are placed at the centre of a system that needs to be able to recognise, accept and respond to learner diversity. Inclusive education aims to respond to the principles of efficiency, equality and equity, where diversity is perceived as an asset. Learners also need to be prepared to engage in society, to access meaningful citizenship and to acknowledge the values of human rights, freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination (European Agency, 2017, p. 6).*

## **Special educational needs (SEN) or special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) etc.**

SEN is a construct that countries usually define within their legislation. These definitions are then used to identify, assess and make provision for learners with different needs – including recognised disabilities – in different ways (Watkins et al., 2014). Special or 'additional' needs should not be seen as the result of 'in-child' factors, but rather 'a discrepancy between what a system of schooling ordinarily provides and what the child needs to support their learning' (Rouse, 2008, p. 6, cited by European Agency, 2017, p. 22).

# **IDENTIFYING KEY LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS**

## **INSTITUTIONS AND PROFESSIONALS**

### **Institutional leaders**

According to Eurydice (n.d., a), the responsibilities and the tasks of institutional leaders in schools and school governance are specified in the [Organisation and financing of education Act](#). These apply to preschool education, basic and upper secondary schools.

Institutional leaders in schools are head teachers (*ravnatelj*). Their responsibility is two-fold: an educational leader and an executive manager. Heads are responsible for the execution of activities as

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[https://www.pef.upr.si/info\\_tocka/zanimivosti/2011050308395789/Kaj%20je%20inkluzivna%20pedagogika?/](https://www.pef.upr.si/info_tocka/zanimivosti/2011050308395789/Kaj%20je%20inkluzivna%20pedagogika?/)

specified by law and by the council of school. Schools at upper secondary level can be merged to establish school centre, where the director may assume the management and the head teacher of each school the pedagogical leadership.

Head teachers (management body) are rather autonomous in their function. The head teachers elaborate proposals of the development programme and annual work plan of the school, extra-curricular activities of the programmes and in VET so called open curricula of the VET programmes. The head teacher assumes responsibility for the programme implementation, exercise of rights and duties of children, pupils, students, apprentices and other interested parties; furthermore, the head teacher caters for the regularity of work; administers to the cooperation with parents, and acts as a representative of the institution.

Responsibilities of the head teachers are stipulated in detail in the article 49 of the [Organisation and financing of education Act](#):

- Organise, plan and manage the work at the kindergarten or school;
- Draft the programme of development of a kindergarten or school;
- Draft the annual work plan and be responsible for its implementation;
- Be responsible for exercising the rights of children and of rights and obligations of pupils, apprentices, upper secondary school or higher vocational college (HVC) students, and adults;
- Manage the work of the assembly of pre-school or school teachers and lecturers;
- Develop a proposal for above-standard programmes;
- Promote the professional education and training of education staff;
- Organise mentorship for trainees;
- Attend to the educational work of pre-school or school teachers, monitor their work and offer advice;
- Recommend the promotion of education staff to titles;
- Decide on the promotion of employees to higher wage grades;
- Supervise the work of counselling services;
- Attend to cooperation between institution and parents (parent meetings, parent-teacher meetings and other forms of cooperation);
- Inform parents about the work of the kindergarten or school and amendments to rights and obligations of pupils, apprentices and upper secondary students;
- Encourage and supervise the work of communities of pupils, apprentices, upper-secondary students or higher vocational college students;
- Decide on corrective measures;
- Ensure the execution of decisions adopted by the State authorities;
- Represent the kindergarten or school and be responsible for the legality of its work;
- Define the staffing structure of posts;
- Decide on the establishment of employment relationships and the disciplinary accountability of employees;
- Ensure cooperation between the school and school health-care services;
- Ensure and determine quality through self-evaluation and an annual report on the self-evaluation of school or kindergarten, and

- Execute other assignments in accordance with the law and other regulations.

The head teacher is appointed and dismissed by the council of kindergarten or school for 5-year mandate.

The National School of Leadership in Education (NSLE) was established in 1995 by the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for training and professional development of head teachers and candidates. Its activities include professional development, training and other educational programmes, publishing books, journals and proceedings as well as promoting research and experimental development in education.<sup>15</sup>

The governance body of a school, school centre and kindergarten is the council. It is composed of three representatives of the founder, five representatives of the staff, and three representatives of parents. The council of an upper secondary school or a public residence hall for students includes also two representatives of the students. If the founder of the school is the State, one of the founder's representatives in the council is a representative of the local community or several local communities. Council members are appointed or elected for a four-year term and may be reappointed or re-elected for a maximum of two consecutive terms.

The council of a public kindergarten or school appoints the head teacher; adopt the development plan, the annual work plan and its implementation report, the annual report on the self-evaluation; decide on introducing above-standard programmes; discuss reports on educational issues; as the second-instance body, decide on appeals regarding the status of apprentice, student or adult and on appeals regarding the rights, obligations and responsibilities of employees that derive from employment; discuss matters submitted by the assembly of teachers, school inspection, representative workers' union, council of parents, community of pupils, apprentices or students.

## Organisation of schools

Public basic schools are founded by municipalities. The role of the government is: the regulator, the property owner, the main provider of financing and the supervisor.

In addition to public basic schools basic education can also be provided by private schools (less than 1% of students attend private schools; Eurydice, n.d., b), educational institutions for children with special educational needs as well as accredited adult education organisations.

There is a well spread public network of basic schools. It secures a place at a public school for all children that reside in the catchment area of a specific school. To ensure good geographical accessibility, the system of branch schools is in place and transportation to school is provided.

A basic school may include kindergarten units or groups and/or classes with adapted programme; alternatively. In school year 2016/2017, there were 772 public basic schools (488 public and 5 private basic schools without branches, 317 public and 2 private basic schools branches, total of 780 basic schools).

Schools are responsible for the implementation of the basic school programme. The basic school programme consists of a compulsory part and an extended one. The compulsory programme includes compulsory subjects, elective subjects, as well as class discussion periods (form time) and

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<sup>15</sup> Source: <http://en.solazaravnatelje.si/index.html>.

the so-called 'days of activities' (e.g. cross-curricular projects, field work). The extended programme – pupils may decide not to take lessons of the extended programme – include after-school classes (grades 1-5), morning care (grade 1), remedial lessons, supplementary lessons, extracurricular activities, as well as non-compulsory optional subjects. All basic schools have to provide free of charge non-compulsory activities of the extended programme. Most schools also offer some activities implemented by out of school providers that need to be paid for (for example dance classes). The [basic school programme](#) is laid down by the curricula for compulsory and elective subjects. Outcomes for specific subjects and knowledge standards are laid down in the curricula.

VET schools can be merged to establish one school centre. In 2018, there were 57 schools and 31 school centres, together 88 VET schools. Legislation delivers 80% of the curricula of VET programmes, and the rest is a so-called "open curriculum", which should be designed by schools in cooperation with local employers and local communities in accordance with local specifics or needs. Beside compulsory subjects, elective subjects, extracurricular activities, and open curriculum, students also participate in practical training. There are two types of practical training. Schools organise practical training at school in their workshops as a part of the vocational module. The second type is practical training in a company or Work-Based Learning (WBL), which is part of the educational programme and takes place in a real working environment, in companies or partly at intercompany training centres (MIC). In the field of agriculture, it can also be carried out entirely on school premises. The share of practical training is defined in the programme and varies according to the type of the programme.

General schools are mostly single-type organisations; some are part of school centres with several organisational units. They are focused on attaining knowledge and skills needed to continue the education at universities.

## Actors

Counselling service are the specialists who - among other tasks - assist teachers and school to implement inclusion. Public kindergartens and schools must have counselling services employing professional counsellors. School counsellors may be psychologists, pedagogues, social workers, social pedagogues or SEN teachers (special and rehabilitation or inclusive pedagogues). The counselling staff shall hold at least a master's degree (or equivalent).

Larger kindergartens and schools may have more counsellors on the staff, but smaller ones must have at least one if only for reduced work hours. School counsellors perform three related and often entwined types of activities: support, development and prevention, and planning and evaluation. School counsellors do the pedagogical, psychological, and/or social counselling work. They provide support to children, pupils, students, educators, teachers, parents, and kindergarten or school management. They work together with all the stakeholders in everyday life and duties in the scope of learning and teaching (in kindergartens, playing and teaching), of the education institution's culture, education, overall climate and order, physical, personal and social development of children, pupils and students, training and vocational orientation (transition), and in the scope of socio-economic differences. They plan and apply individual support programmes for children with special needs.

The National Experts Council for General Education adopted [Guidelines for the counselling service in kindergarten](#) and [Guidelines for the counselling service in schools](#) to guide the work of the counselling service.

**In terms of academic guidance counselling service in schools:**

- plans, coordinates and guides the enrolment and admission procedure of children, forms class groups and helps pupils to integrate into school life
- gives expert opinions on repeating or skipping grades and school transfers
- improves learning methods and techniques
- organizes learning environments, assists in providing text-books and school supplies, organizes and coordinates additional assistance for pupils whose parents are unable to offer help, etc.

**In terms of Psychological counselling service in schools:**

- direct assistance and / or organize assistance and counselling for children and pupils with educational and disciplinary problems
- counselling and preventive work with pupils in programmes to promote physical, personal and social development (e.g. programmes for building self-esteem, for developing more effective communication skills, for effectively dealing with problematic situations, training pupils in social skills, for relaxation, for the prevention of drug addiction, maltreatment and forms of bullying, etc.), and
- counselling procedure (with prior consent).

School also collaborates with public health care centres and with four public counselling centres for children, young people and parents operating in the Republic of Slovenia. They help to resolve educational, emotional, upbringing, behavioural, psychosocial and psychiatric disorders and problems, and deal with psychological stress and trauma in children and adolescents. At the time of traumatic events (various accidents, physical, psychological or sexual violence, death or abandonment of a close person), a specialised team can offer psychological assistance to the affected individual or group.

The counselling service at school coordinates career orientation in basic and upper secondary schools. Pupils, parents and school staff can find exhaustive information on the web portal [Moja izbira.si](#), which can be helpful in deciding on further educational and training paths. The National Institute for Vocational Education and Training (CPI), Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia ([GZS](#)), Chamber of Craft and Small Business ([OZS](#)), and others also provide information about occupations and vocational education. Great source for career orientation is also Employment service of Slovenia and in recent years several career centres at Universities and adult education centres.

## **Parents**

It is the right of the parents to be informed about their child school performance. The communication goes via parental meetings and individual consultations, the on-line applications "E-asistent" and "Lopolis" are used in the communication. Both applications also offer view in grades, school lunch, timetables etc. Parents can be involved in the parents' council which makes proposals,

forms opinions and elects its representatives to the school council; has the right to give consent to the proposed extracurricular activities. Parents in the parents' council provide school bodies with recommendations and views. Parents can join local and national associations of parents. Parents are also involved where it comes to enrolment, transferring, gaining a provision for special needs etc.

## Role of identified stakeholders in the whole school approach

	missing - 1	low - 2	relevant - 3	strong and effective - 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>social workers</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>their main role, if they are involved: Centres for social work among other duties, are as well responsible for Treatment of children and adolescents with difficulties in growing up. E.g. Centres for social care formally cooperate with schools in the case of recognized violence in family environment. When school staff recognizes such violence, it should report it to the Centre for social care. The multidisciplinary team, consisted from representatives of Centre for social care, Regional coordination point, school, health centre, police and parents, is formed in order to provide a plan for resolution of the situation.</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>	1	2	3	4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>youth services and organisations</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>their main role, if they are involved: Local Youth Centres among other care for young people with fewer opportunities in society.</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>	1	2	3	4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>outreach care workers</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>their main role, if they are involved:</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>	1	2	3	4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>psychologists</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>their main role, if they are involved:</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>	1	2	3	4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>nurses and other therapists (speech and language)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>their main role, if they are involved: Healthcare centres, which provide formal basic school programme with a special curriculum for students permanently resident in these institutions.</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>	1	2	3	4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>child protection services</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>their main role, if they are involved:</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>	1	2	3	4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>guidance specialists</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>their main role, if they are involved:</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>	1	2	3	4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>police</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>their main role, if they are involved:</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>	1	2	3	4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>unions</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <i>their main role, if they are involved: Some local communities, provides financial support (e.g. scholarship) for socially deprived students.</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>	1	2	3	4

- **business** 1 2 3 4
  - *their main role, if they are involved: Employers have important role especially in inclusive work-based learning. E.g. There are companies with majority of employees who have special needs – Želva, SNEŽNIK SINPO, etc.*
- **intercultural mediators** 1 2 3 4
  - *their main role, if they are involved:*
- **migrants associations** 1 2 3 4
  - *their main role, if they are involved:*
- **NGOs and other community based organisations** from sports, cultural environment and active citizenship sectors 1 2 3 4
  - *their main role, if they are involved: The most visible NGOs, which support students social inclusion also by different forms of cooperation with schools is Slovenian Association of Friends of Youth (SAFY - Zveza prijateljev mladine). It is a voluntary, national association of societies of friends of youth, working for the benefit of children, young people and families. SAFY is also a humanitarian organisation working as a general, charitable organisation mostly in the area of social security. Among others, SAFY aims are:*
    - *to promote and implement the convention on the rights of the child,*
    - *to raise the quality of children, youth and family life,*
    - *to reduce social exclusion of children, youth and families,*
    - *to give opportunities to experience active spare time,*
    - *to promote voluntary work.*
- **Other:** 1 2 3 4
  - *their main role, if they are involved: National Education Institute plays a special role in special needs education. E.g. under the Placement of Children with Special Needs Act, the SEN Guidance Commission co-ordinates professional and administrative activities that qualify a child to be placed in an appropriate educational setting. The Commission prepares an expert opinion, based on the child's direct statement and an interview with the child's legal representative and on pedagogical, special pedagogical, social, psychological, medical and other documentation acquired by the relevant institutions in accordance with personal data protection legislation. The SEN Guidance Commission reports the professional statement to the National Educational institute, which issues an SEN Guidance Decision.*

## CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF NATIONAL INDICATORS REGARDING SOCIAL INCLUSIONS

## National indicators

**What kind of national indicators are collected on national / regional or local / school level regarding inclusive education in your country?**

[The Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia \(SURS\)](#) is the main producer and coordinator of national statistics in Slovenia. In line with the National Statistics Act SURS is a professionally independent Government service; head of SURS is autonomous as regards professional and methodological issues. The mission of the Slovene statistical office is to provide to users statistical data on the status and trends in the economic, demographic and social fields, as well as in the field of environment and natural resources. These data must be of sufficient quality, timely, comparable in time and internationally, and presented clearly and understandably.

MIZŠ collects many general data about the participants of education in Slovenia.

National education institute of Slovenia conducts procedures regarding the guidance of children with special needs at primary and secondary level. In doing so, it collects a wealth of information: for example, the number of guidance decisions issued based on the type of deficit, gender, age, type of educational program the child was targeted at, etc. This information is collected by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport (MIZŠ).

The National Examinations Centre (RIC) collects various information regarding the final exam in vocational education programs, with regard to the vocational matura examination in secondary vocational education and vocational education programs, and with regard to the general matura examination in general programs. RIC collects data such as data on success at the final exam, vocational matura examination or general matura examination at the level of an individual, department, educational program, school and country.

**Who uses these national indicators for what purposes? How good are these for examining the level of inclusiveness?**

Institutions under first point systematically collect a number of relevant data that can provide an excellent basis for examining the level of inclusiveness. At the decision-makers level, however, there seems to be no will to confront and deal with the facts.

**Who is responsible for improving inclusiveness and equity in education in your country? Are measures built on evidence?**

The Ministry of Education is the most directly responsible for improving inclusiveness and equity in education in our country. Indirectly, the Family Affairs Directorate of the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities is responsible for the creation, implementation and coordination of family policy, including the mainstreaming of children's policies and rights. The Directorate for Social affairs of the same Ministry is responsible for social assistance.

The new framework of identifying and ensuring quality in the field of education, approach to unite different existing (internal and external) approaches of monitoring and evaluating education institutions and system in united model. The new framework among others established so called "Coordination and analytical centre" of quality assurance at the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport (the Office for the Development of Education), which is responsible for preparing a joint

evaluation of the education system (partly – at the annual level and summary quality report, presumably for three years). It is foreseen that it will significantly contributed to a more systematic, better quality and more comprehensive planning of measures and development policies in the field of education on the basis of expert data and evidence (including from ILSA) (MIZS, 2017).

## RECOMMENDATIONS: LOCAL FOCUS

### Slovenian learning needs

Questions regarding **Low socio-economic status of students:**

- How do sharing countries deal with it on the levels of the student, his teachers, school heads, school as a whole, local community, government?
- How the whole school approach is implemented in practice?
- Are any multi-professional teams established for dealing with these students (how do they operate)?
- How do sharing countries support student`s educational, occupational and life aspirations?
- How do sharing countries support student`s motivation to learn?
- How do sharing countries support students in their career development? Are any special measures implemented for them in the framework of career guidance?
- How do sharing countries support student`s well-being (acceptance at school)?
- How do sharing countries prevent early school leaving of these students?
- How do sharing countries follow resilient students and their educational pathways?
- How professional development of teachers and other school staff for dealing with these students is organized?
- How do sharing countries measure inequalities and how do they integrate these data in policy and practice measures?
- When sharing countries introduced the changes, what was crucial for their success?

Questions regarding **High ratio of students with special needs included in regular VET schools:**

- How do sharing countries support the student with special needs on the levels of the student, his teachers, school heads, school, local community, government?
- How the answers in the section above about low socio-economic status refer to SEN student in regular VET schools?
- How sharing countries identify SEN students (process, who decide, who starts the process, what students benefit from the process, how are parents and teachers involved, what are student`s, parent`s and teacher`s rights and responsibilities in the process)?
- What kind of system of allocating additional support for SEN student is in place and how is operated on different levels (student, family, school, employer etc.)?

### European learning perspectives

**Do you have any suggestions for measures or using structural indicators for inclusive systems in and around schools**

- **at national level, to be implemented by governments through strategic and cross-sector initiatives;**
- **at school level, to be implemented by schools and/or local authorities, in line with national strategic initiatives?**

There has been significant progress done regarding the development of structural indicators for inclusive education systems in the EU, mainly summarized in Downes et al. (2017).

Downes et al. (2017, 23) point out the importance of the “alignment between the structural indicators for the national level and for the school level, so that schools can be supported in implementing this agenda”. Structural indicators for inclusive systems can feed into whole school planning and to external evaluation processes and as such serve for improving feedback processes between schools and national level.

**Do you have any recommendations for improving school climate towards more of a learner-centred, safe and caring environment as part of inclusive education?**

Downes et al. (2017) point out the importance and benefits of whole-school approach for improving school climate. Different studies demonstrate the positive effects of positive school climate on reducing violence and bullying in schools and reducing early school leaving.

**Do you have any suggestions addressing teachers’ preparation for better understanding the holistic needs of students (emotional, physical, cognitive or social) and recognising their individual talents and ways of support?**

It is crucially important that initial and continuous teacher development programmes target not only teachers’ substantial expert knowledge, but as well development of their emotional, social and relational competences. These involves “a range of holistic, psychological approaches which emphasise awareness of emotions, caring, empathy and concern for others, positive relationships, making responsible decisions, impulse control, resolving conflict constructively and valuing the thoughts, feelings and voices of students” (Downes et al., 2017: 66) and positively contribute to positive classroom and school climate development.

**Do you have any suggestions for preventing discrimination, school bullying and violence at the system level with a particular focus on the differentiated needs of marginalised and vulnerable groups?**

Downes et al. (2017) propose different system level measures, which could positively contribute to preventing discrimination, school bullying and violence, including “Establishing national coordination structures for inclusive systems in and around schools and local cross-school cooperation structures”, “Overcoming socio-economic segregation in schools”, “Developing early warning prevention and intervention systems and data collection systems”, “Limiting early tracking and postponing academic selection”, “Avoiding grade repetition”, “Enforcing illegality under EU law of ethnic segregation in schools”, “Developing alternatives to suspension and expulsion”, Increasing the flexibility and permeability of educational pathways as part of cross-School and VET cooperation”, “Targeting priority zones/territories with higher poverty and socio-economic exclusion for additional funding”.

**Do you have system-wide experience of taking into consideration children’s voices or the active participation of parents in schools including marginalised families?**

In Slovenia, research study (Holcar Brunauer and Kregar, 2019<sup>16</sup>) demonstrates the positive outcomes of simultaneous work on raising student voices and formative assessment. It shows that “In terms of the student voice it is important to create learning situations which encourage students’ active learning, evaluation of the learning processes and allows them to search for new and different ways of learning.” “Within the context of formative assessment, students take responsibility for their own learning and, with the help of self-assessment, peer assessment and formative feedback, develop a self-regulative attitude towards learning.”

In Slovenia, parents can be involved in the parents’ council which makes proposals, forms opinions and elects its representatives to the school council; has the right to give consent to the proposed extracurricular activities. Parents in the parents’ council provide school bodies with recommendations and views. Parents can join local and national associations of parents. Parents are also involved where it comes to enrolment, transferring, gaining a provision for special needs etc.

**Do you have any suggestions for strengthening the range of actively collaborating professionals to address the complex, multifaceted needs of marginalised groups?**

Downes et al. (2017) expose multi-professional cooperation at the system level, as well in and around schools as promising measure to address the needs of marginalised groups. Different authors (in [Štremfel and Vidmar, 2018](#)) explain the complexity of factors influencing effective multi-professional cooperation at different levels, ranging from system level cross-sectoral cooperation to cooperation at the local community level and multi-professional teams in schools. These factors among others involves sufficient time, funding and resources as well task and relational competences of team members, adequate team composition, the required training of team members and the development of leadership expertise.

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<sup>16</sup> Holcar Brunauer, A. & Kregar, S. (2019) Glas učenca in formativno spremljanje = Student voice and formative assessment. *Vzgoja in izobraževanje: revija za teoretična in praktična vprašanja vzgojno izobraževalnega dela*, 50(2-3), pgs. 9-14.

# APPENDIX – STATISTICS

## ESL-rate

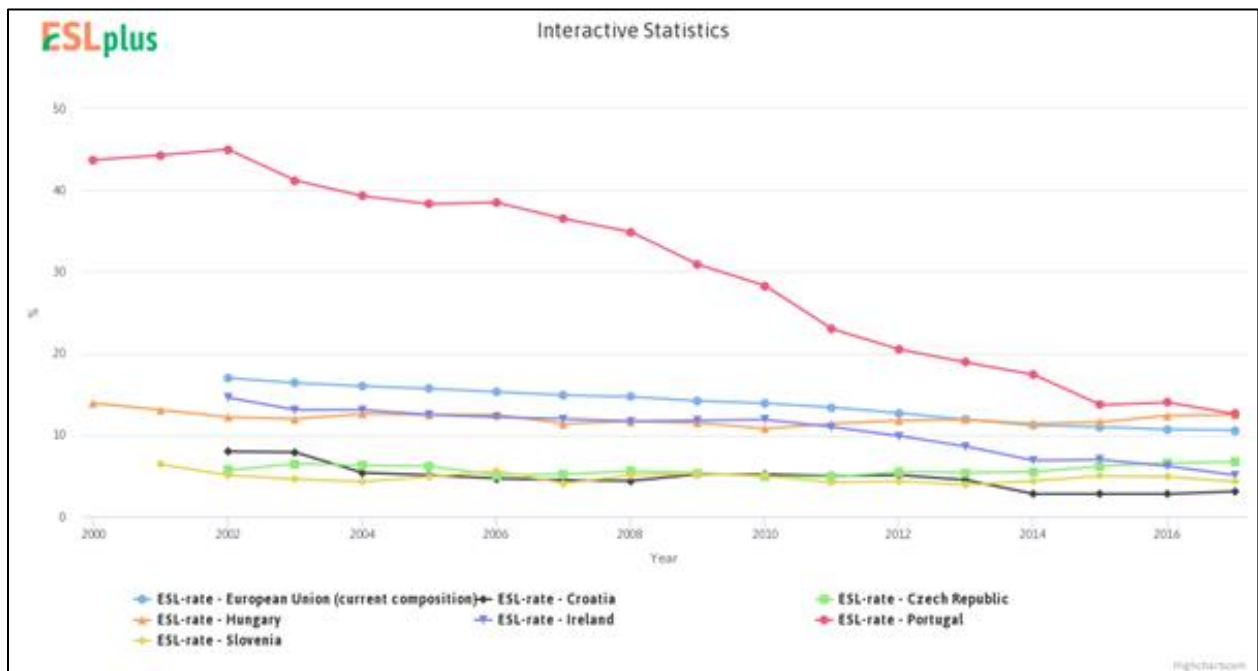


Figure #2: ESL-rate in selected European countries. Source: ESLPlus Database. <http://eslplus.eu>

## NEET-rate

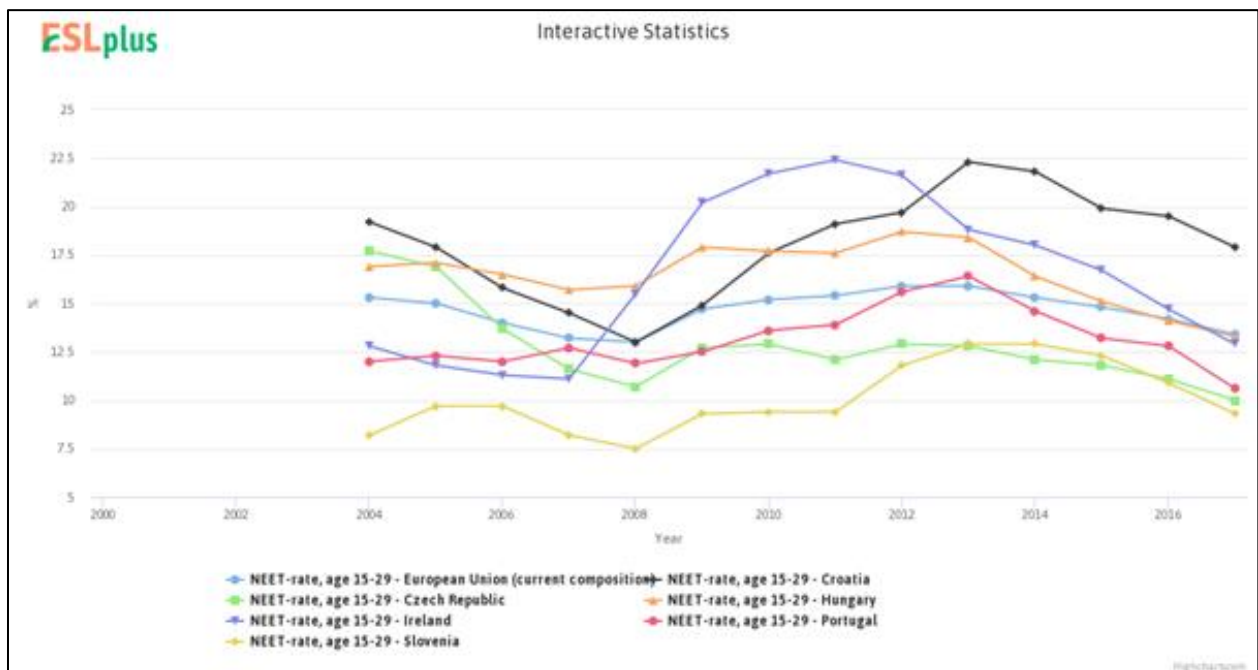


Figure #3: NEET-rate in selected European countries. Source: ESLPlus Database. <http://eslplus.eu>

## Participation rate in non-formal education and training

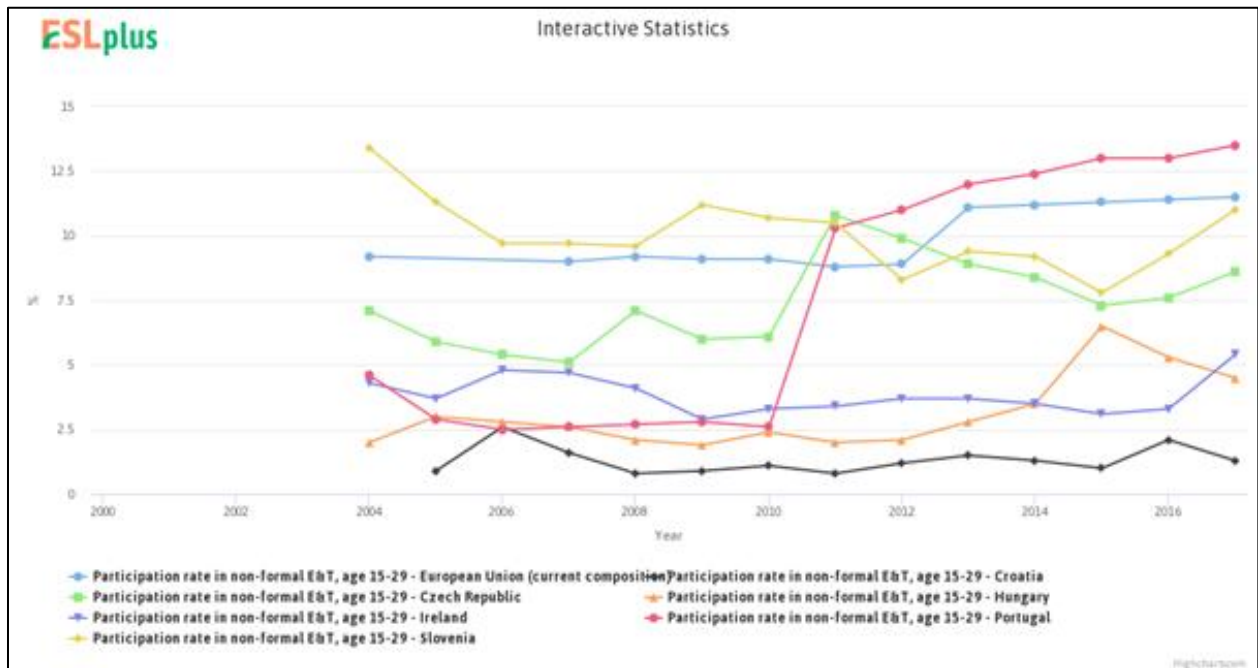


Figure #4: Participation rate in non-formal education and training in selected European countries. Source: ESLPlus Database. <http://eslplus.eu>

## Low educated youngs age 15-19

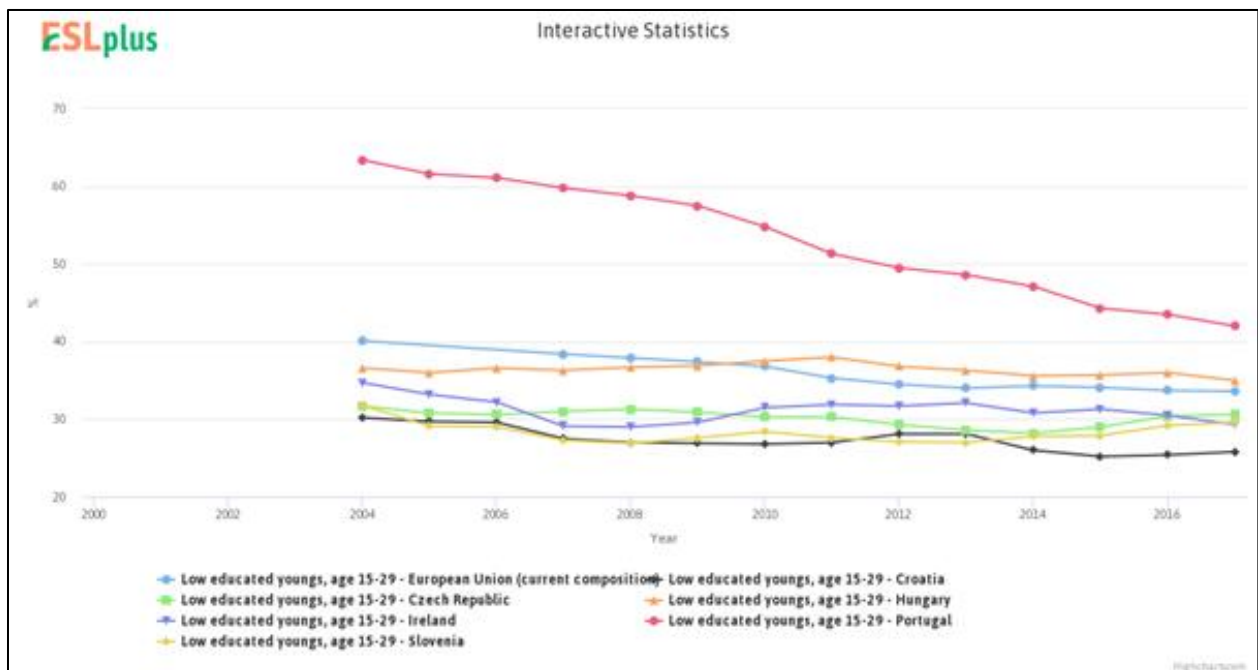


Figure #5: Low educated youngs age 15-19 in selected European countries. Source: ESLPlus Database. <http://eslplus.eu>

### Low achievers in reading (PISA)

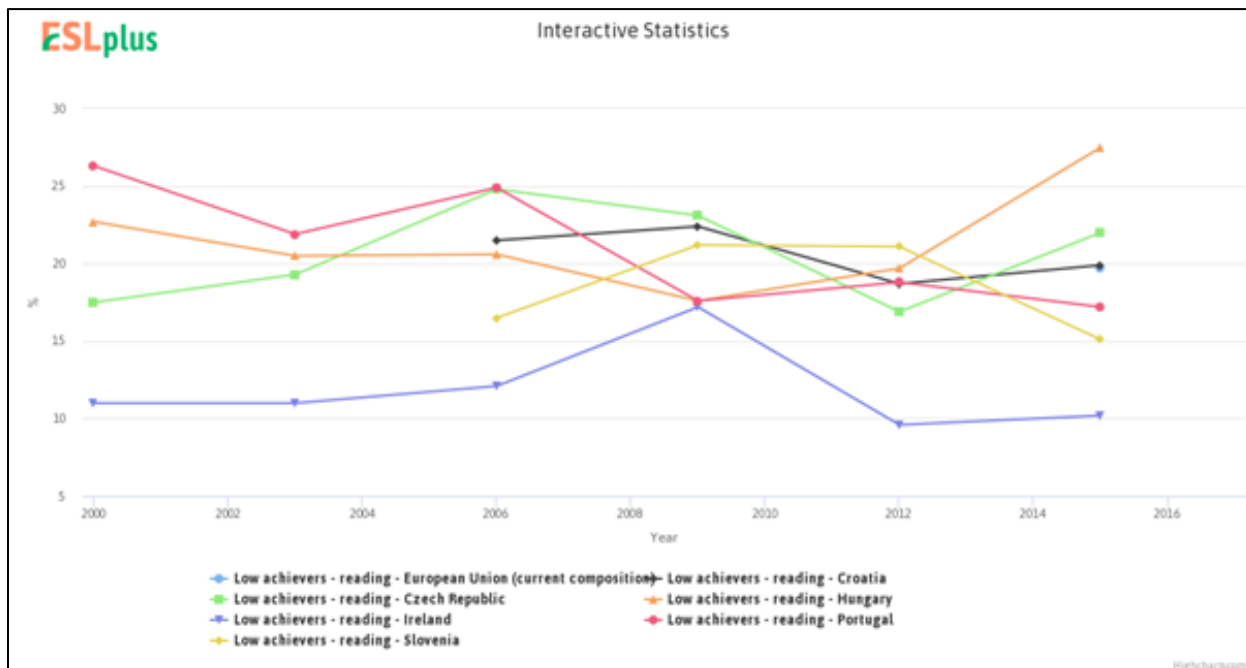


Figure #6: Low achievers in reading (PISA) in selected European countries. Source: ESLPlus Database. <http://eslplus.eu>

### Income below 60% of median

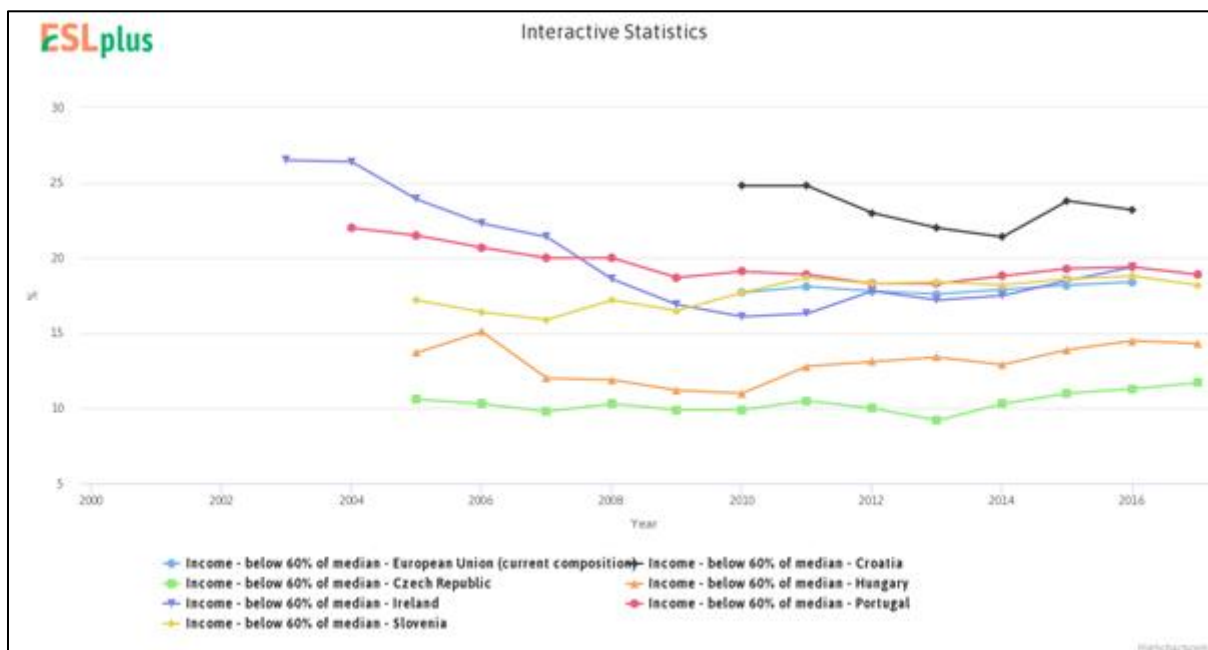
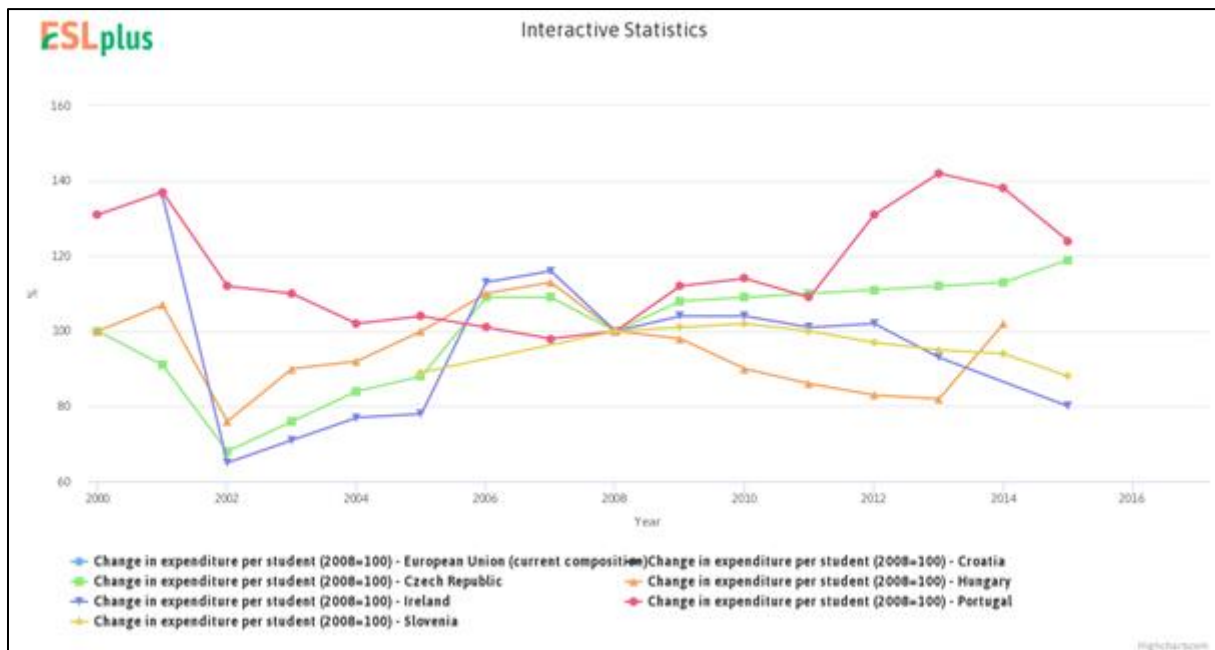
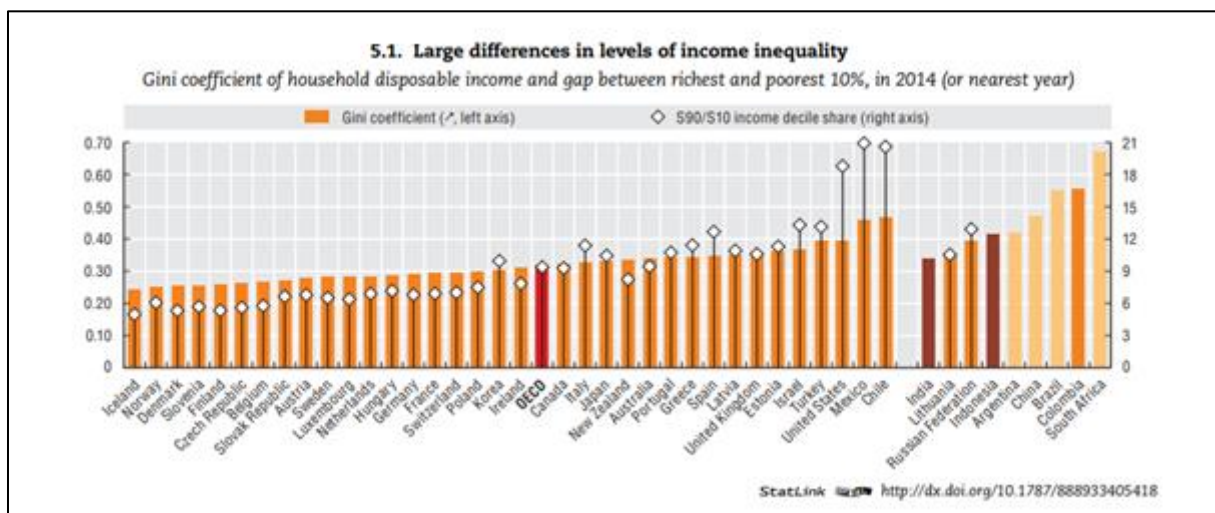


Figure #7: Income below 60% of median in selected European countries. Source: ESLPlus Database. <http://eslplus.eu>

## Change in expenditure per student (2008=100%)



## Society at a Glance



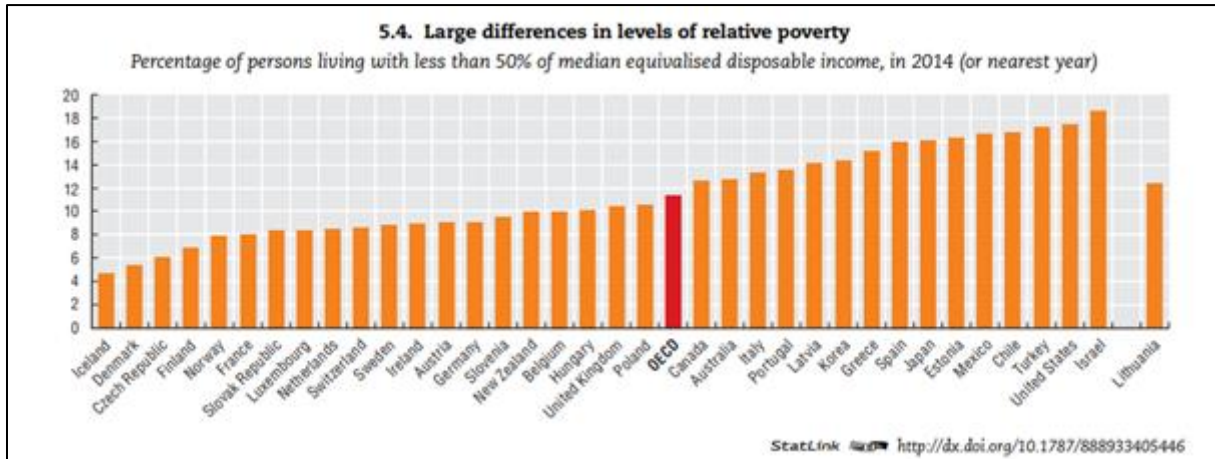


Figure #10: Society at a Glance. S Source: OECD

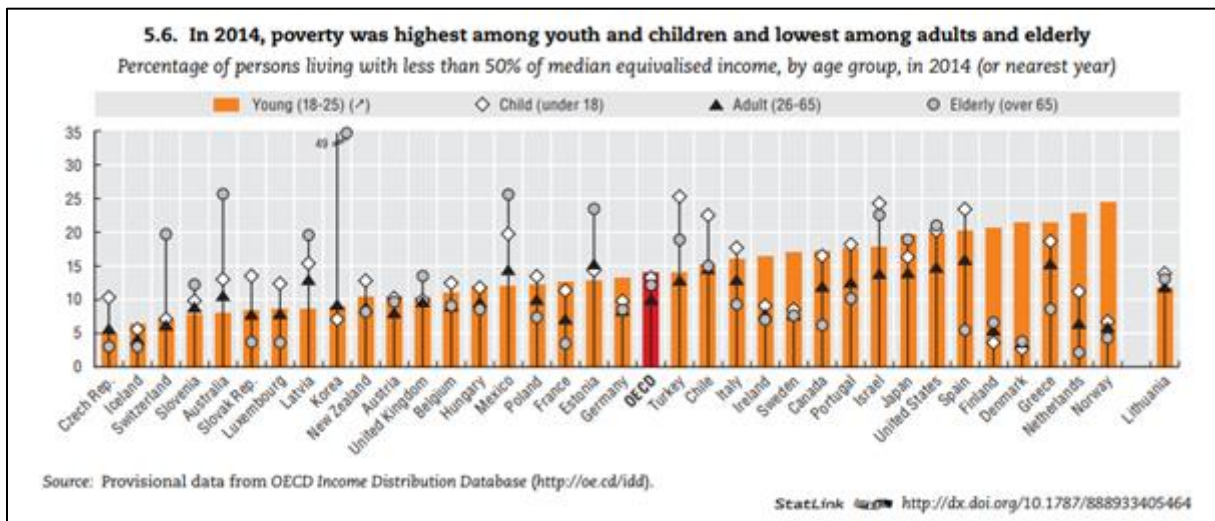


Figure #11: Society at a Glance. S Source: OECD

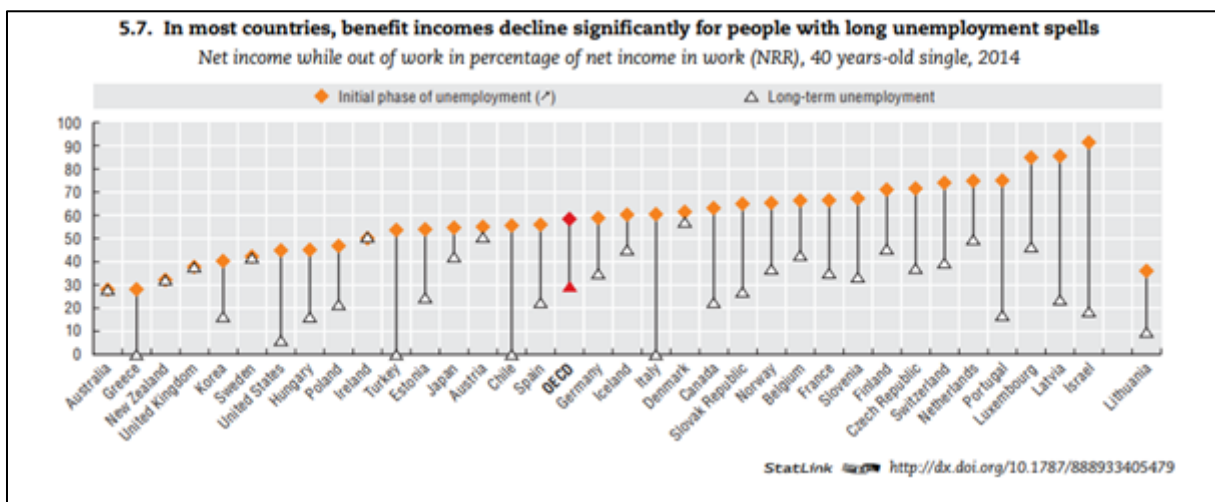


Figure #12: Society at a Glance. S Source: OECD

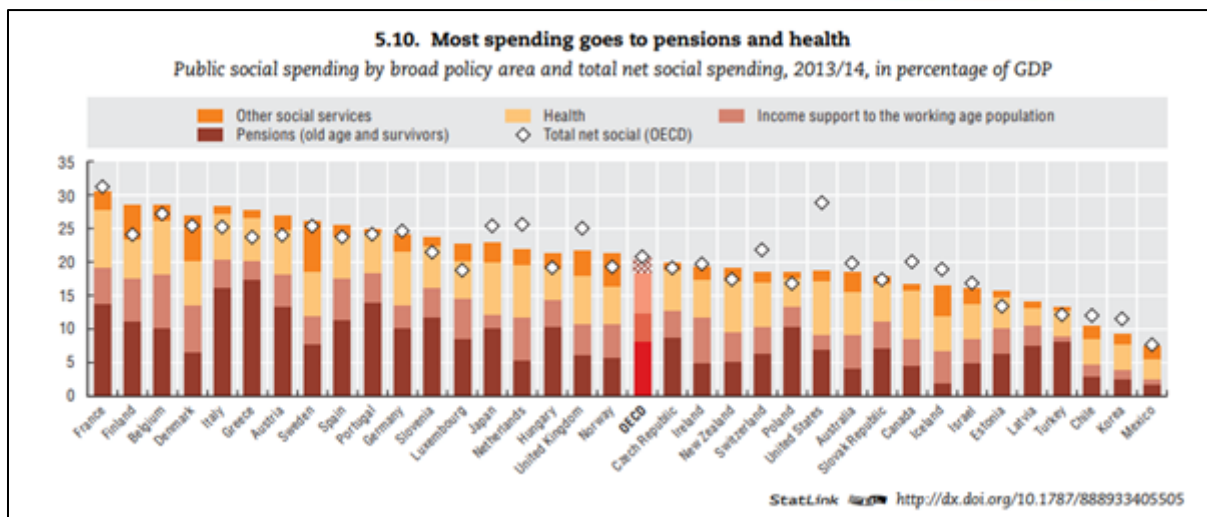


Figure #13: Society at a Glance. S Source: OECD

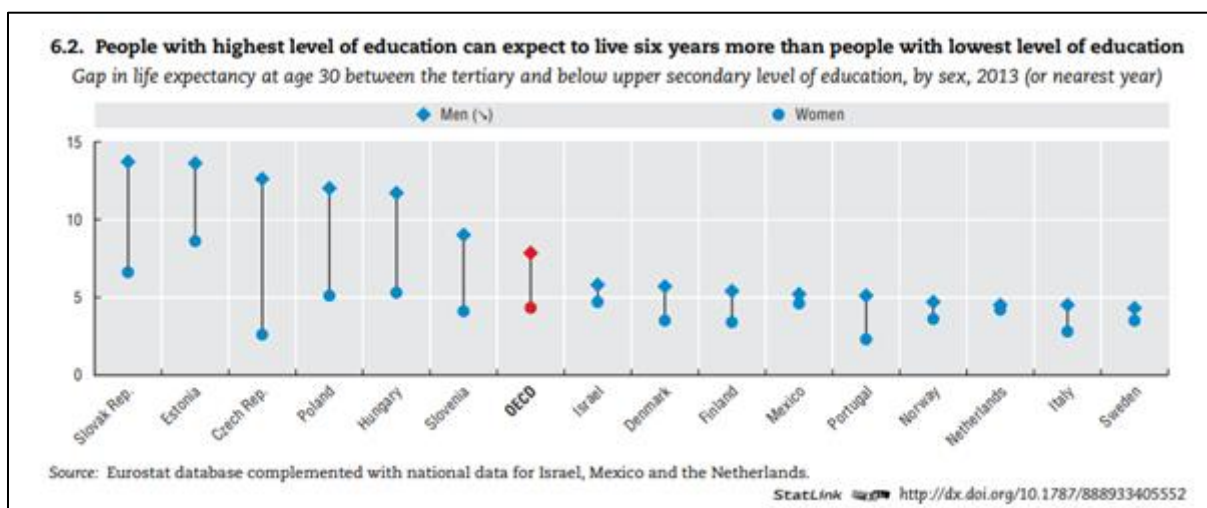
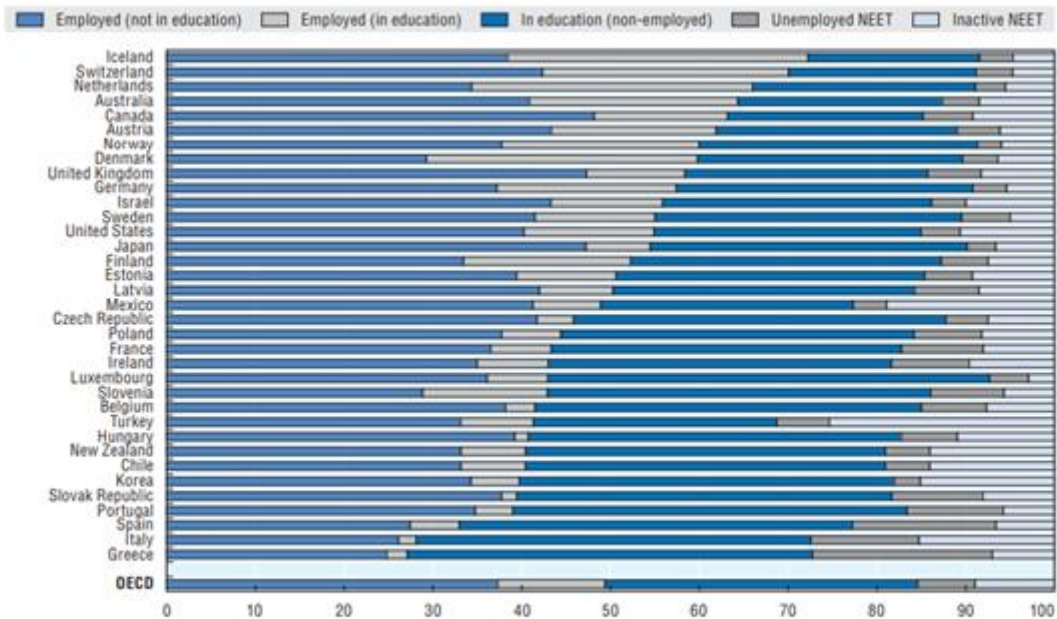


Figure #14: Society at a Glance. S Source: OECD

**Figure 1.4. In the best-performing countries, many young people combine work with education**  
Labour market status of young people, percentages, 2014



Note: Countries are ranked, from top to bottom, in order of youth employment rates. Data for Chile, Korea, New Zealand and Turkey relate to 2013.  
Source: OECD calculations based on national Labour Force Surveys and the OECD Education Database (Australia, Germany, Israel and New Zealand).

StatLink <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933404835>

Figure #15: Society at a Glance. S Source: OECD

**PISA Low-Performing Students**

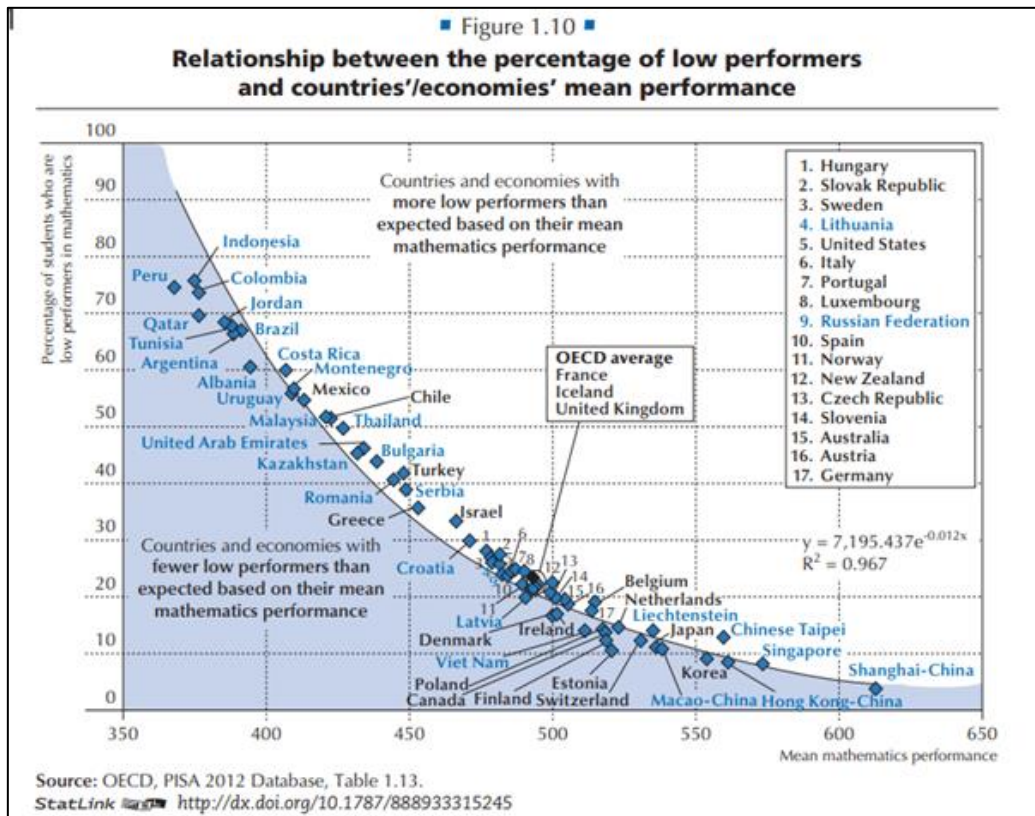


Figure #16: PISA Low-Performing Students. S Source: OECD

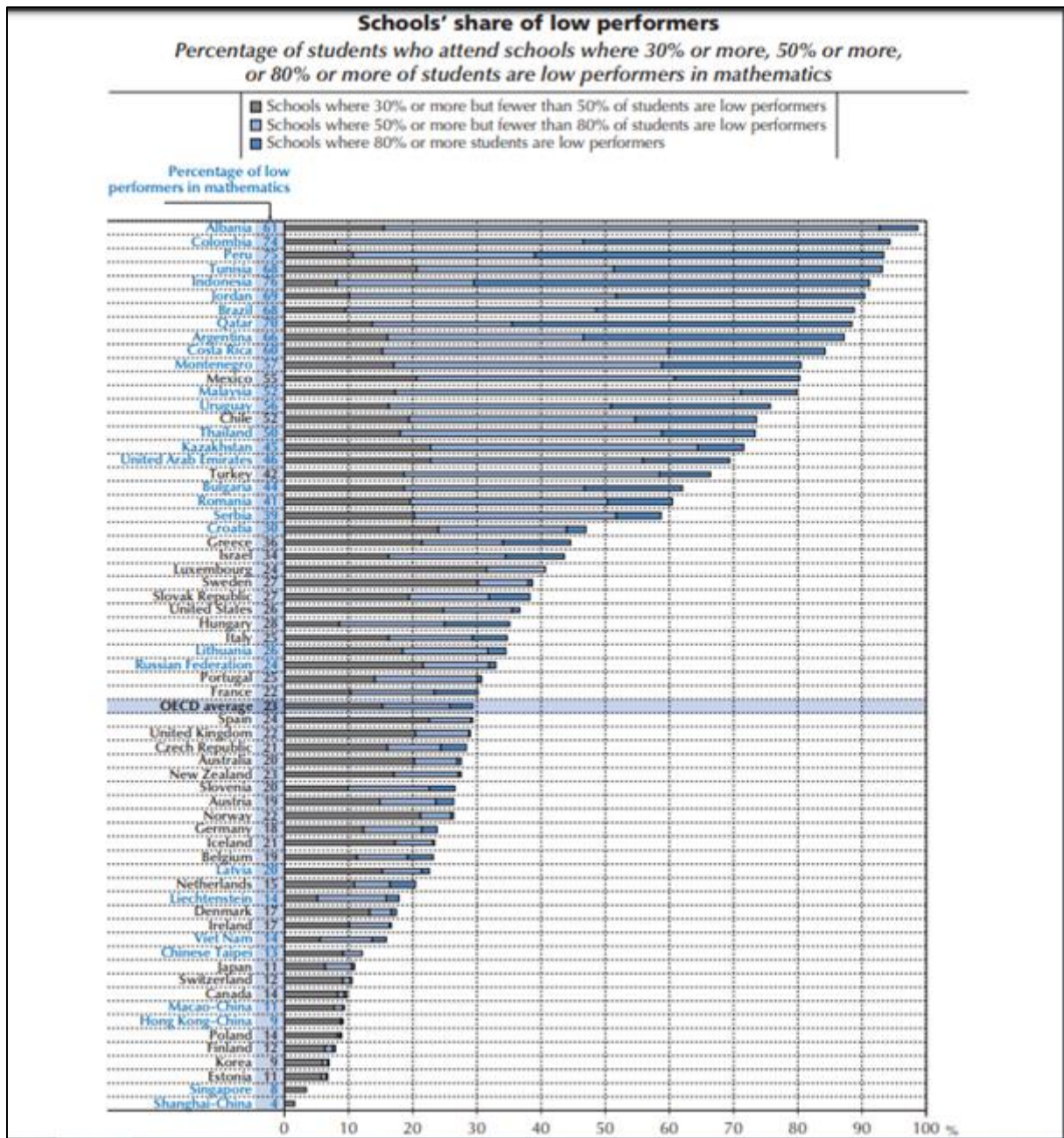


Figure #17: Schools' share of low performers. Source: OECD, PISA 2012 Statistics

Socio-economic profile of schools by proficiency levels in mathematics Schools' mean value on the PISA index of economic, social and cultural status

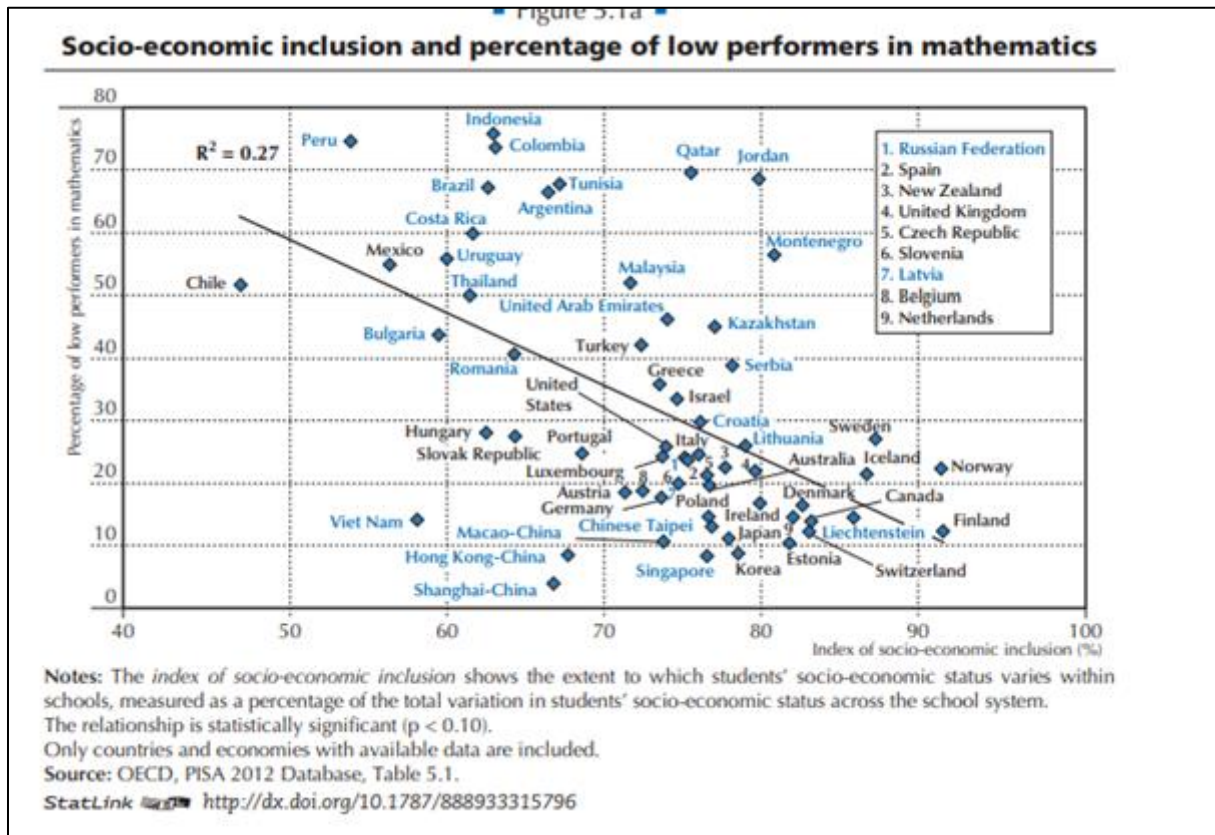


Figure #18: Socio-economic profile of schools by proficiency levels in mathematics Schools' mean value on the PISA index of economic, social and cultural status. Source: OECD.

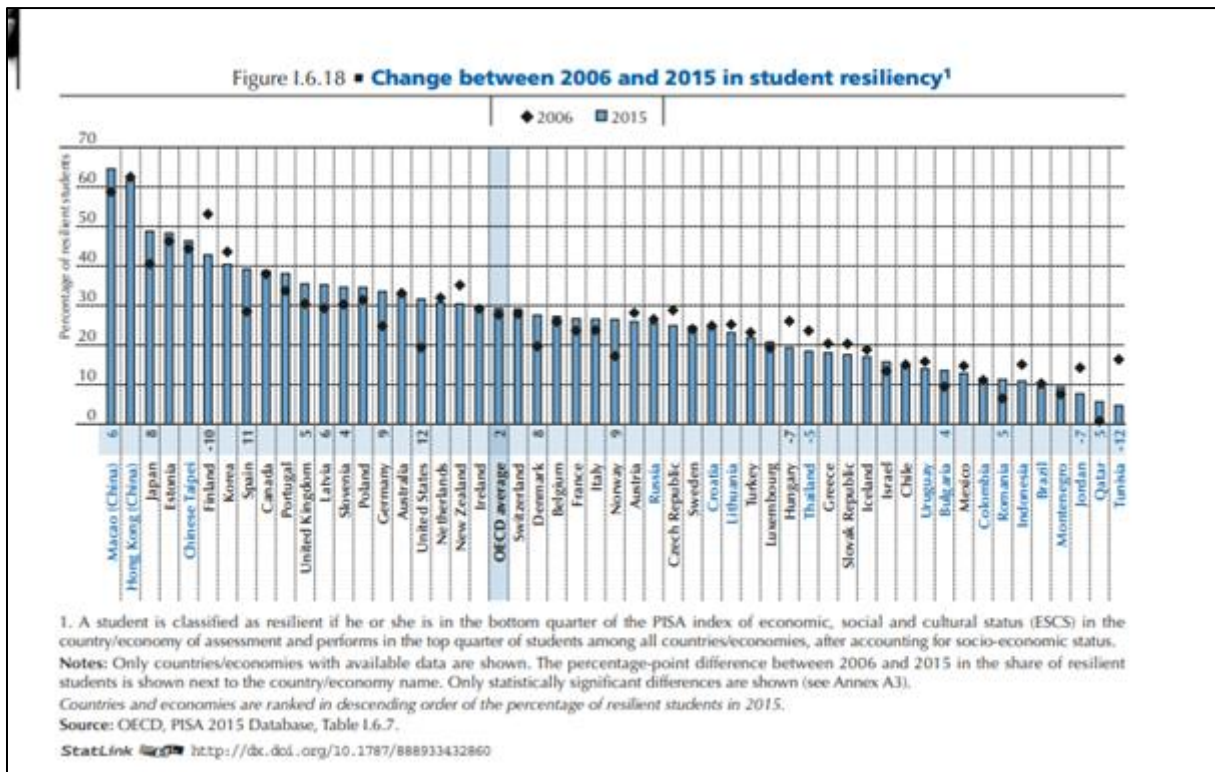


Figure #19: Change between 2006 and 2015 in student resiliency. Source: OECD, PISA 2015 Statistics.

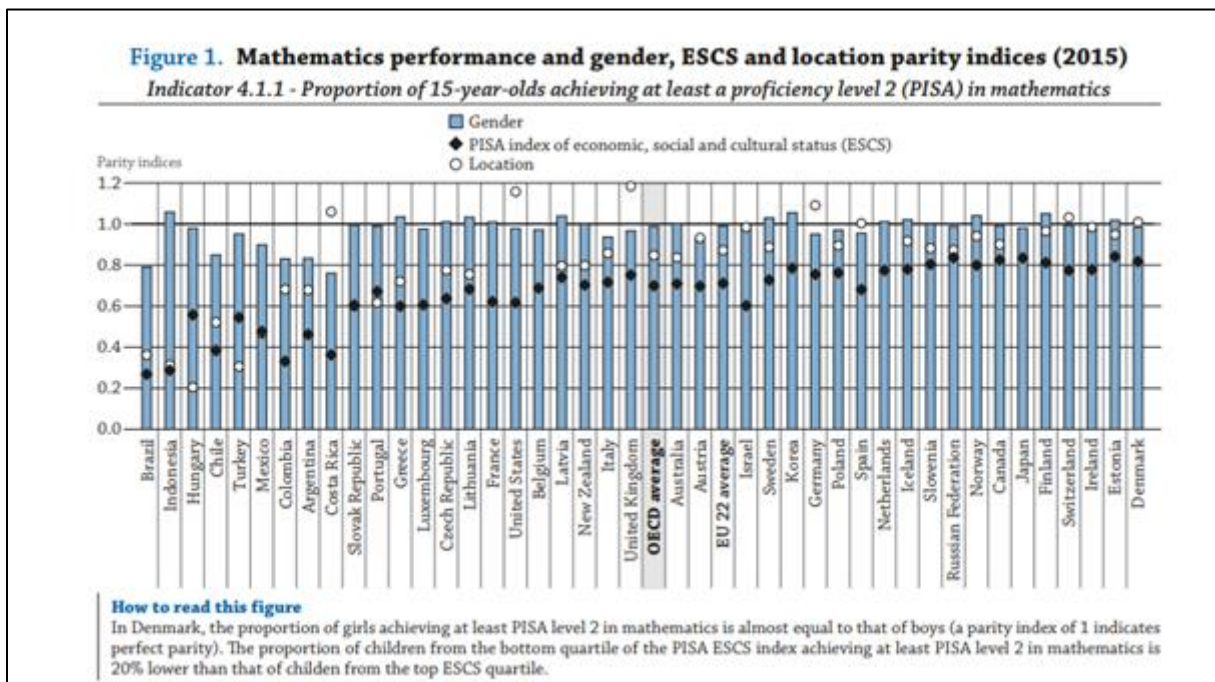


Figure #20: Mathematics performance and gender, ESCS and location parity indices. Source: Education at a Glance, 2015, OECD