

## **National statements of Commitment of the Slovak Republic**

### **Activities and commitments associated with Covid recovery**

The outbreak of the pandemic caused by the Covid-19 virus affected the society in almost all its areas. It did not avoid the field of school education or the field of socialization of the young generation, either. The Slovak Republic had to respond to the new situation in an appropriate way.

In the field of education, this required adequate methodical, technical, financial and personnel support, which the government of the Slovak Republic provided in cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic.

The Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic published guidelines aimed at distance education. On this occasion, the Ministry initiated the creation of the web portal: [www.ucimenadialku.sk](http://www.ucimenadialku.sk). This web portal was created in collaboration with several non-governmental organizations, experts, the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic and the National Institute for Education and Youth as a tool for official communication during the crisis situation caused by interrupted classes at schools and face-to-face teaching at universities during the coronavirus epidemic. The support continued even during the post-crisis situation after the return of pupils and students into the schools.

The Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic has also published an application aid for schools with a focus on supporting mental health in schools entitled How to handle emotionally challenging situations and tragic events.

Part of the measures taken by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic to mitigate the effects of the crisis period during the COVID-19 epidemic and to balance the differences in knowledge created during distance education was the implementation of projects called „Summer Schools“ during the summer holidays. Another project was „Smarter Together“, the goal of which was to expand the total number of students in the tutoring system and to provide support to as many students at risk of school failure as possible. The Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic also prepared a manual to support students in compulsory school attendance with the aim of preventing repetition of the grade.

The Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic has increased funding for regional education to meet the demands of schools for the increased costs associated with providing education in schools during the pandemic.

The EU countries' response to the consequences of the pandemic was the development and approval of a recovery and resilience plan. The Government of the Slovak Republic has prepared a recovery and resilience plan for the Slovak Republic. The Recovery and Resilience Plan sets out a comprehensive package of reforms and investments that will be implemented until 2026. The plan consists of investments and reforms that address the challenges identified in the context of the European Semester, especially in the recommendations of the European Commission for Slovakia. The Recovery and Resilience Plan of the Slovak Republic is also focused on the field of education, and in this field it represents the following obligations for the Slovak Republic.

Reforms in the amount of 892 million euros will help ensure the availability, development and quality of inclusive education, help provide students with an education that is adapted to the needs of contemporary society, increase students' literacy and skills necessary for life in a global and low-carbon digital economy and society, and increase the performance of Slovak universities, they will support their diversification, profiling, inclusion and cooperation with foreign countries, the public and private sectors while simultaneously preserving academic rights and freedoms, thanks to universities will contribute to strengthening the quality of human capital, social inclusion, innovation potential of Slovakia, higher competitiveness of the economy, and economic growth and sustainable jobs.

**Strategic principles of Statement on Transforming Education** focus on the whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach as well as addressing inequalities and disparities by engaging youth at the centre of transformation. Strengthening and transforming existing mechanisms and structures should be a key measure, it is advised to adapt and align these mechanisms and structures to fit for transformational purposes, not to build parallel ones.

The development of lifelong learning (LLL) policies in Slovakia is linked to the shaping of the renewed EU agenda for the promotion of adult education (AE) and lifelong learning since the 1990s. The preparation of the strategic document to support participation in lifelong learning in Slovakia under the title **“Strategy for Lifelong Learning and Guidance 2021-2030”** (hereafter referred to as LLLG Strategy) was carried out at the beginning of 2021 and is clearly aimed at addressing priority issues in adult education. The concept of LLL presupposes understanding of inclusion needs, and the LLLG Strategy stresses the critical importance of improving inclusiveness of education so as not to produce further generations of adults who leave compulsory school attendance with negative attitudes to learning and often with inadequate basic skills. A specific problem of inclusion is the position of marginalised Roma communities. In this area, LLL strategy links the proposed measures with the Strategy for Roma Equality, Inclusion and Participation 2030. The overarching objective of LLL strategy is to ensure that every citizen has lifelong access to learning opportunities to develop their skills and competences throughout their lives, “from cradle to grave”, at every stage of his/her life and taking into account individual needs and circumstances, so that everyone can realise his/her potential in the personal, professional and civic life.

Key principles for building a culture of LLL include a holistic understanding of lifelong learning, recognition of lifelong learning as a human right, a focus on supporting vulnerable groups, transformation of schools and universities into LLL institutions, access to technology and support for learning initiatives at local level. To support AE segment, several approaches have been identified for the main areas of intervention. Firstly, this is support for selected target groups (specific to low-skilled people); then support for selected skill areas (these relate to basic, digital, civic); and finally, support for participation and support for removing barriers to participation: introducing individual learning accounts, reducing barriers in formal education, enhancing basic and digital skills of adult population.

The first Action Plan for LLLG Strategy for years 2022-2024 was approved by the Slovak Government in April 2022. The Action Plan contains a roadmap of activities, based on the defined thematic areas of the Strategy and the actions proposed therein. Each measure includes a proposal for a set of activities aimed at achieving the objectives of that measure as well as the overall goals of the Strategy, output indicators, the institutions involved in their implementation and an indication of possible financial resources. The financing of the activities is planned to a

large extent from EU funds from the programming period 2021-2027 through the Programme Slovakia.

### **The Strategy for Inclusive Approach in Education until 2030**

Education in Slovakia is undergoing one of the most significant change in recent times. This is also due to the development and approval of a national strategic document called The Strategy for Inclusive Approach in Education until 2030. The strategy is a document aimed at improving the current state of education for all children, pupils and students in schools without distinction. The document presents the basic philosophy of inclusive education in kindergartens, primary schools, secondary schools and universities in the Slovak Republic, in the system of counselling and prevention, also with a focus on early age and lifelong learning.

The Slovak Republic is committed to implementing the strategy through action plans at three-year intervals.

Experts and representatives of a wide range of relevant institutions participated in the preparation of the strategy as well as the first action plan. The implementation of the individual goals listed in the action plans into practice will take place through concrete measures with the calculation of the necessary financial claims to cover them. Financing of the approved measures is ensured within the limits of the affected public administration entities for the respective budget year, from the Recovery and Resilience Plan of the Slovak Republic and from the Programme Slovakia covered by the EU funds for the period 2021 - 2027. Changes resulting from the implementation of the strategy may concern, besides other things, increased support for pupils and students during classes, ensuring sufficient funds or increasing the availability of comprehensive professional care provided by counselling and prevention facilities.

### **Addressing Educational Exclusions: The perspective of cultural and language minorities**

Children and pupils from national minorities and ethnic groups are guaranteed a right both to learn the state language and to be educated in their own language.