Material for the report on the implementation of the UNESCO Convention against discrimination in education for the years 2006–2011

Prohibition of discrimination in education

Universal protection against discrimination is laid down in article 12 of the Constitution of the Slovak Republic (the Constitution), which states that "People are free and equal in dignity and their rights. Basic rights and liberties are inviolable, inalienable, secured by law, and unchallengeable. Basic rights and liberties on the territory of the Slovak Republic are guaranteed to everyone regardless of sex, race, colour of skin, language, creed and religion, political or other beliefs, national or social origin, affiliation to a nation or ethnic group, property, descent, or another status. No one shall be harmed, advantaged or discriminated against on these grounds."

Under article 42(1) to (3) of the Constitution, everyone has the right to education School attendance is compulsory. Its period and age limit are defined by law. Citizens have the right to free education in primary and secondary schools and, according to their abilities and the available social resources, also in higher education. The establishment of schools other than state schools and teaching in them is permitted only under conditions laid down by law; in such schools a fee may be charged for education.

Under article 34 of the Constitution the children of citizens belonging to national minorities and ethnic groups have in addition to the right to learn the state language, the right to upbringing and education in their language. In the upbringing and education of children belonging to national minorities, the education authorities uphold and apply the democratic right of parents to choose a school's language of teaching.

Furthermore the Slovak Republic (Slovakia) is a state party to a number of international conventions and treaties on human rights and fundamental freedoms that have been ratified and promulgated in the manner laid down by law and which establish prohibitions on discrimination on various grounds. Under article 7(2) and (5) of the Constitution, these international treaties have priority over Slovak law. Furthermore, under article 154c of the Constitution, international treaties on human rights and fundamental freedoms that Slovakia has ratified and that were promulgated in the manner laid down by law prior to 30.06.2001 have priority over laws where they establish a greater extent of rights and freedoms.

These international instruments for protection against discrimination include the following the conventions:

- Council of Europe Convention for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms including its additional protocols; (Rome 1950)
- Council of Europe Framework convention for the protection of national minorities; (Strasbourg, 26 November 1987, notice no. 26/1995 Z. z.)
- The United Nations International convention on the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination; (New York, 21 December 1965, decree no. 95/1974 Zb.)
- UN international covenant on civil and political rights; (New York, 16 December 1966, decree no. 120/1976 Zb.)
- UN International covenant on economic, social and cultural rights; (New York, 16 December 1966, decree no. 120/1976 Zb.)
- UN convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women; (New York, 18 December 1979, decree no. 62/1987 Zb.)
- UN Convention on the rights of the child; (New York, 20 November 1989, notice no. 104/1991 Zb.)

– Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities (New York, 13 December 2006, notice no. 317/2010 Z.z.)

To ensure effective implementation of every person's right to equal treatment, Slovakia has adopted legislation to specify the principles of the prohibition of discrimination in certain areas regulated by law (social security, employment law, education, healthcare, the provision of goods and services). In July 2004 there came into effect in Slovakia act no. 365/2004 Z.z. on equal treatment in certain areas and on protection against discrimination and on the amendment of certain acts (the antidiscrimination act), as amended (the antidiscrimination act), which lays down the general framework for compliance with the principle of equal treatment in combination with the general provisions on equality laid down in the Constitution and other legislation with related content that the antidiscrimination act directly amended.

The original antidiscrimination act adopted in 2004 took over and transposed Council Directive 2000/43/EC implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin, Council Directive 2000/78/EC of establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation, and Council Directive 96/97/EC amending Directive 86/378/EEC on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women in occupational social security schemes.

Section 5(1) of the antidiscrimination act states that "in accordance with the principle of equal treatment discriminatory treatment of persons on grounds falling under section 2(1) is prohibited in social security, healthcare, the provision of goods and services and in education." and under section 2(1) of the antidiscrimination act "compliance with the principle of equal treatment involves the prohibition of discrimination on grounds of sex, religious belief or faith, membership of a national or ethnic group, disability, age, sexual orientation, marital status and family status, skin colour, language, political or other views, national or social origin, property, lineage or other status".

An amendment of the antidiscrimination act in 2008 allowed a competent state body to adopt temporary balancing measures in response to violations of the principle of equal treatment. Such balancing measures must be used to achieve equal opportunities in practice with a view to eliminating forms of social and economic disadvantage and disadvantage due to age or disability. Temporary balancing measures include in particular measures to increase interest in employment, education, culture, health care and services amongst members of disadvantaged groups.

Temporary balancing measures include the elimination of forms of social and economic disadvantage and disadvantage resulting from age and disability in order to ensure equal opportunities in practice. The amendment includes a demonstrative definition of temporary balancing measures as follows:

a) measures to support the interest of members of disadvantaged groups in employment, education, culture, health care and services,
b) measures to ensure equal access to employment and education, in particular through preparatory programmes for the members of disadvantaged groups or through the dissemination of information about such programmes or about opportunities to apply for jobs or places in education.

The amendment also stipulated that temporary balancing measures could be adopted only in the areas specified in the antidiscrimination act and that the measures could last only until the elimination of the inequalities that they were adopted to address (section 8a(3) of the antidiscrimination act).

Significant changes have taken place in the area of **upbringing and education** in the last ten years. In 2004 state administration in education was decentralised by the adoption of

act no. **596/2003 Z.z.** on state administration in education and school self-government and on the amendment of certain (as amended, act no. 596/2003 Z.z). The act regulates the competences, organisation and functions of bodies responsible for education at the level of the state, the municipalities and the self-governing regions, and school self-government bodies, and defines their powers in the performance of state administration in education and school self-government. It also regulated the financing of non-state primary art schools, language schools, nursery schools and school facilities. At the same time parliament passed **act no. 597/2003 Z.z.** on the financing of primary schools, secondary schools and school facilities (as amended, "act no. 597/2003 Z.z."), which regulates the financing of schools (primary and secondary schools including special schools) regardless of operator and special nursery schools, school facilities and school facilities operated by regional schools offices. In 2003 **national testing for pupils in the ninth year of primary schools** was introduced (*Testovanie 9*, Testing 9) based on centrally issued **standardised tests** and in 2005 **the external part and written form of the internal part of the *Maturita* school-leaving exam (***maturitná skúška*) were implemented on the national level.

On 01.09.2008 there came into force act no. **245/2008 Z.z.** on upbringing and education (**the schools act)** and on the amendment of certain acts (act no. 245/2008 Z.z.), introducing a long-awaited fundamental reform of primary and secondary education including the application of a two-level model of education programmes provided through state education programmes (StEP), which are regulated by section 6 of the act, and school education programmes (SchEP), which are regulated by section 7.

Act no. 245/2008 Z.z. introduced a number of fundamental changes in the school system:

- Section 3 establishes new principles for upbringing and education e.g. equal rights to access to upbringing and education taking into account the educational needs of each individual and the individual's shared responsibility for his/her education; the prohibition of all forms of discrimination, in particular segregation; the prohibition of the use of any form of corporal punishment in upbringing and education; freedom of choice in education having regard for the expectations and potential of children and pupils and the capacities of the education system; preparation for a responsible life in a free society in a spirit of understanding and tolerance, equality of men and women, friendship between nations, nationalities and ethnic groups, religious tolerance etc.,
- section 2 incorporated a definition of a child or pupil from a socially disadvantaged background as "a child or pupil living in an environment whose social, family, economic and cultural conditions do not provide adequate stimulation for development of the mental and emotional characteristics and willpower of the child or pupil, do not support his/her socialisation and do not provide him/her with sufficient stimuli for the development of his/her personality,",
- section 4 defines the acquisition of at least two foreign languages and the development of the ability to know how to use them as objectives of education,
- section 16 harmonises the levels of education with the international ISCED classification.
- a two-level model of education programmes in which the state set the main part of the content of education in primary and secondary schools through StEP,
- SchEP, on the other hand, allow schools to develop their own profiles,
- nursery schools are integrated into the schools system (section 28); free upbringing and education in nursery schools for children in the last year before the start of compulsory school attendance is guaranteed (section 28(6) and (7)),
- regulates the education of foreigners in the territory of the Slovak Republic and creates the same conditions for their education as apply for Slovak citizens (section 146),

- the act established an internally differentiated vocational secondary school to cover all vocational education and training previously provided separately in vocational secondary schools, vocational secondary training centres and training centres (section 42),
- the name of schools for children and pupils with special educational needs was changed (section 120),
- upbringing activity in upbringing and education facilities is conducted according to upbringing programmes (section 8),
- the Curricular Council has been established as an expert, initiatory and advisory body to the minister of education for key areas in upbringing and education (section 159),
- a duty was set to keep a register of children, pupils and attendees (section 157),
- The National Institute for Certified Educational Measurements has been established to monitor and evaluate the quality of upbringing and education on the StEP level and to carry out international measurement in Slovakia for programmes that Slovakia is participating in (section 154(2)),
- a dual counselling system has been established through centres for pedagogical-psychological counselling and prevention and special education counselling centres (section 130 and following).

Act no. 245/2008 Z.z. also regulates obligatory school attendance for all children aged from 6 to 16 years. Under section 19(1) there are no exceptions from obligatory school attendance: “No one can be freed from the duty to fulfil obligatory school attendance.”

Under section 20(6) a legal representative has precedence when enrolling his/her child in a “local school” (in the same school district as his/her place of residence), if he/she does not decide to apply to enrol his/her child at another school. If the number of applicants is higher than the capacity of the school, the school’s operator shall assign the pupil to another school and the pupil shall be entitled to the provision of transport or reimbursement of travel costs by public transport if this is necessary.

Municipalities as operators of primary schools under section 6(3)(c) of act no. **596/2003 Z.z.** and self-governing regions as operators of secondary schools under section 9(4) are obliged to provide education for children and pupils with special educational needs in schools that they operate. Under these provisions it is not possible to exclude children with disabilities or weaknesses from the mainstream of education if the legal representative of the child does not decide to place the child in a special school. Children educated in special schools also receive education in accordance with the convention, i.e. education equal to that provided in mainstream schools with equal criteria for the same level of education; education is provided by university-qualified teachers who are specialised in the education of pupils with disabilities according to state education programmes.

Other legislation was passed developing the framework established by act no. 245/2008 Z.z. Act no. **184/2009 Z.z.** on vocational education and training and the amendment of certain acts, as amended (act no. 184/2009 Z.z.) laid down mechanisms that did not exist prior to its adoption to provide for the participation of employers in vocational education and training and also creates conditions for improvement in vocational education and training through the establishment of advisory bodies for vocational education and training (VET). It also established an auxiliary mechanism for coordinating VET with the labour market.

Act no. **317/2009 Z.z.** on pedagogical employees and specialised employees and on the amendment of certain acts, as amended (act no. 317/2009 Z.z.) provided comprehensive regulation of the status and activity of pedagogical and specialised employees, defined their rights and duties, set the conditions for the performance of pedagogical and specialised activities and introduced professional development, career levels, career positions, attestations for pedagogical and specialised employees and a system of continuing education.

With reference to the above acts, the government adopted regulations and other implementing legislation (decrees) regulating upbringing and education in specific types of schools and the **Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic** (the Ministry) issues each year in its ministerial regulations, the Pedagogical and organisational instructions for the current school year recommendations

- to implement the prohibition of all forms of discrimination and segregation in schools and school facilities,
- to eliminate the problems of pupils coming from marginalised groups that complicate the process of their placement in standard schools and school facilities, their integration into standard classes and the subsequent educational process,
- **to create suitable conditions for their education in schools and classes together with the majority population,**
- and measures for schools that teach children and pupils from a socially disadvantaged background (SDB) to improve attendance, behaviour and educational results, and to create appropriate individual conditions in the upbringing and education of such children and pupils.

The situation and level of upbringing and education for pupils from a social disadvantaged background

The State School Inspection has inspected the issue of discrimination primarily in the task *Situation and level of upbringing and education of pupils from a socially disadvantaged background*. **From school year 2007/2008 to school year 2010/2011** the task was implemented in full inspections of **1 358 primary schools** (PS).

During this period, the largest percentage of pupils from a SDB was found in schools in the Prešov region, in the Košice, Banská Bystrica and Nitra regions.

In the majority of the schools inspected, teachers created space and conditions for the individual development of pupils' personalities and to strengthen mutual solidarity and social feeling. Adequate attention was given to tracking regular attendance and the educational results of pupils from SDB. In the education process the teachers made use of individual and group forms of work, applied specific methods, an individual approach, learning through experience, games and entertaining forms of work and allowed pupils to express themselves in a variety of activities. Educational activities for older pupils were directed towards the development of their social and educational skills and abilities, gave more attention to involvement in out-of-school activities so that they spent as much of their free time as possible in an environment that could have a positive effect on the formation of their personality. Where more serious educational problems arose, pupils were given remedial teaching, the individual care of the school special education teacher and the school psychologist. The schools cooperated actively with centres for pedagogical-psychological counselling and prevention and special education counselling centres. Upbringing counsellors dealt with the educational problems of pupils in cooperation with departments of socio-legal protection and social rehabilitation of offices of labour, social affairs and family, and frequently also with the police.

Head teachers took effective and less effective measures against truancy and improve pupils' educational results. Assessment and follow-up reporting on pupils from SDB did not conform adequately with applicable legislation. Cooperation with the legal representatives of pupils did not improve significantly in the period covered by the inspections and there remains a need for increased attention from all school teaching staff.

The task was also carried out **from school year 2007/2008 to school year 2010/2011** in **285 secondary schools** [136 *gymnázium* schools and 149 vocational secondary schools (VSS)].

During the period concerned, the largest number of pupils from SDB were recorded in Košice, Prešov and Banská Bystrica regions.

They were given appropriate attention in particular as regards the systematic checking of school attendance and educational results. Any problems with performance, attendance or behaviour were dealt with by class teachers, upbringing counsellors, and in places by school psychologists, with assistance from teaching assistants and the school therapist teacher. Prevention of problems was not always effectively implemented. If deficiencies were identified, for the most part adequate measures were taken to rectify them, and schools also contacted specialists from a centre for pedagogical-psychological counselling and prevention, social workers and rehabilitation workers. Pupils from SDB studying at *gymnázium* schools usually achieved good or very good results. Pupils in VSS achieved significant worse results mainly due to an apathetic approach to the performance of duties and inadequate preparation for lessons. Head teachers considered regular and systematic school attendance a priority for the acquisition of a secondary education and therefore took measures to address not only gratuitous absences but also marked high levels of excused absence. Likewise they implemented a range of upbringing measures to strengthen discipline, especially in VSS, including reducing marks for behaviour. They took equal measures to reward success and provide positive motivation through praise. Schools attempted to strengthen pupils values by providing a variety of extracurricular activities together with other pupils; the *gymnázium* schools had more success in this area. Head teachers of VSS rated the interest of pupils' legal representatives in cooperation as positive in some areas. In other areas it was not possible to get their attention; there was no cooperation that could be helpful and beneficial in resolving problems of school attendance and education results.

Questionnaires where head teachers presented experience, including their personal experience, of pupils from SDB indicated that many were prevented from expressing their abilities by a lack of self-confidence and a pessimistic view of the future produced by their environment. Others, on the other hand, were characterised by a lack of self-control and strong apathy. Most pupils from SDB were modest and accepted in the group. Some schools needed to run awareness campaigns to combat expressions of concealed racism and discrimination to them and to make efforts to achieve their non-violent integration into the student body.

Quality education

The Ministry approves a state education programme for each level of education to establish simple criteria ensuring equal conditions in schools at the same level of education; the StEP includes a framework teaching plan defining the mandatory appropriation of teaching hours but provides for the specific needs of the school by leaving hours to be filled by the school education programme regulating the education process in the specific school.

A number of procedures are used to measure the quality level of the educational process, including:

- reports on educational activities, educational results and conditions in schools and school facilities which are prepared and published annually,
- published information on the employment of secondary school leavers in the labour market,
- external measurements of the knowledge and knowledge competence of pupils (testing of pupils in the fifth and ninth year of primary school, the *Maturita* exam) and international measurements (OECD PISA, PIRLS and TIMSS, pilot testing for OECD TALIS and IEA ICILS.

Private education

At the start of the 1990s, the Slovak Republic allowed schools to be operated other legal and natural persons besides the state to establish schools, including the officially recognised churches and religious communities. This was implemented through an amendment of act no. 29/1984 Zb. on the system of primary and secondary schools (the schools act), as amended by act no. 171/1990 Zb. This amendment was followed by further legislation regulating in more detail the procedure for establishing and operating such schools. This legislation included decree no. 536/1990 Zb. on the establishment and activities of church schools and decree no. 280/1994 Zb. on private schools, which remained in force until 01.09.2008 when the new schools act no. 245/2008 Z.z. entered into effect.

The establishment of non-state schools in Slovakia is regulated by act no. 596/2003 Z.z. Under section 19(3) of this act, a private school or private school facility may be established and operated by a natural person or legal entity that is duly registered in the Slovak Republic in accordance with applicable national legislation. A church school or church school facility may be established and operated by an officially recognised church or religious community. Education acquired in schools has equal value regardless of the operator.

Religious education and ethics

Under section 15 of act no. 245/2008 Z.z. religious education and religion is a compulsory optional subject with ethics as an alternative in primary and secondary schools. Schools determine **wishes** regarding the teaching of ethics or religious education in specific beliefs by means of written notice delivered to the legal representatives of pupils under 15 years of age or pupils themselves if they are over 15 years of age. The **relevant state education programmes** defining religious education and ethics fall under **the education area "Person and values"**, which is focussed on building and cultivating the intellectual, spiritual and social dimensions of young people. It helps them to gradually form their value orientation so that they will contribution to human society as adults.

The objective of the education area Person and values is to educate a personality with its own identity and values, in which respect for humanity and nature, cooperation, pro-social behaviour and national values hold an important place. It prepares young people for life in the sense that in future they will be able to contribute to the creation of harmonic and stable relationships in the family, in the workplace, between social groups, within the nation and between nations. The content of the education area Person and values is implemented in the compulsory optional subjects **ethics** or **religious education**. The main focus of the compulsory optional subject ethics is the cultivation of pro-social behaviour, which is reflected in moral attitudes and the regulation of pupils' behaviour.

The compulsory optional subject religious education aims to shape the person's religious thinking, conscience, religious beliefs and personal faith as a personal expression of religious thought and an integral part of the person's identity.

Rights of national minorities

The children of citizens belonging to national minorities and ethnic groups have in addition to the right to learn the state language, the right to upbringing and education in their language. In the upbringing and education of children belonging to national minorities, the education authorities uphold and apply the democratic right of parents to choose a school's language of teaching.

Act no. 596/2003 Z.z. allows councils, municipal schools councils and territorial schools councils to promote the interests of local and regional self-governing authorities,

parents and teachers in the area of upbringing and education, including teaching in the mother tongue.

Under act no. 597/2003 Z.z., the financing of schools with the teaching language of a national minority or with teaching of the language of a national minority is set in the breakdown of funds from the Ministry's chapter for the operators of state schools each calendar year according to standard volume of funding for each school operated by the operator. The standard funding for a school for the calendar year is determined according to the number of pupils it has and the standard volume of funding per pupil for the current calendar year. **Pay standards and standards for the educational process for a pupil in a school with a teaching language other than Slovak is 108% of the corresponding standard; in the case of bilingual study it is 125% of the corresponding standard. The Hungarian, Ruthenian, Ukrainian, German and Roma national minorities in Slovakia have exercised their rights to education in their mother tongue or the teaching of the mother tongue and literature of the national minority**.

As a rule, schools with the teaching language of a national minority use translations of Slovak textbooks and textbooks approved by the Ministry. The most needed and urgently needed textbooks, teaching texts and work books needed by schools with the teaching language of a national minority or with teaching of the language of a national minority are approved each year.

Under section 13a(3) of act no. 596/2003 Z.z. a school inspector must know the language of the national minority concerned in order to carry out his/her duties.

Under section 11 of act no. 245/2008 Z.z. in combination with section 4(3) of act no. 270/1995 Z.z. on the state language of the Slovak Republic, as amended (the State Language Act), all teaching documentation and other documentation in schools and school facilities must be kept in the state language. In schools and school facilities in which education takes place in the language of national minorities, teaching documentation is kept bilingually in the state language and in the language of the relevant national minority.

Under section 12 of act no. 245/2008 Z.z. the children and pupils belonging to national minorities and ethnic groups have not only the right to learn the state language but also the right to upbringing and education in their language subject to the conditions laid down in the act. In primary schools and secondary schools with a teaching language other than the state language, Slovak language and literature is a compulsory subject that must be taught in the extent necessary for a command of the state language.

Under section 13 of act no. 245/2008 Z.z., in accordance with the right of children and pupils belonging to national minorities and ethnic groups to education in their mother tongue, in textbooks, teaching texts and workbooks published in the language of a national minority, geographical names are used as follows:

a) geographical names that are established and used in the language of a national minority are used bilingually, first in the language of the national minority concerned and then in parenthesis or after a slash in the state language in the manner that was used in textbooks approved in the years 2002 to 2006,
b) cartographic works use the state language,
c) a glossary is inserted at the end of the textbook listing geographical terms in the language of the national minority and in the state language.

Under section 18 of act no. 245/2008 Z.z. education certificates are issued in the state language. In schools in which teaching takes place in a language other than the state language, they are issued bilingually in the state language and in the language of the national minority concerned; in schools in which upbringing and education are carried out under bilateral agreements, they are issued in both teaching languages or in the state language and in the foreign language.

State education programme

In schools with teaching in the language of a national minority or that teach the language of a national minority, the education process is conducted in accordance with the education programme. The content of the education area Language and communication is implemented through the subjects Slovak language and literature, teaching languages and foreign languages.

The lesson allocations set by the state education programme permit schools to allow for the language environment of the school and the language skills of pupils and to provide for differentiated and effective teaching of Slovak or the mother tongue in the conditions available to the school.

The teaching profession

Conditions for pedagogical employees are regulated by universally applicable legislation that creates objective, non-discriminatory and generally acceptable conditions for the performance of their work, in particular act no. 317/2009 Z.z. and act no. 552/2003 Z.z. on the performance of work in the public interest, as amended. The Ministry's regional education section is not aware of any cases of discrimination in the teaching profession. The pay of pedagogical employees depends on the level of education that they have achieved, the progress that they have made in their career and their relevant experience. The pay of state employees depends on the difficulty of the activity they perform and their length of service.
Basic pay rates are set in bands for each pay class as follows:

Level of education	Civil service (EUR)	Teacher (EUR)
Completed secondary education	322.50 – 490.00	410.00 – 543.00
First level of higher education	520.50 – 588.50	454.50 – 592.50
Second level of higher education	631.50 – 935.50	508.50 – 743.50
Third level of higher education	not taken into account	697.00 - 743.50

Rates of pay are increased according to relevant experience, or length of service in the case of state employees, up to 32 years of experience. Besides the basic rates of pay and experience-related increases in pay rates, both groups of employees can receive non-obligatory pay components – personal supplements and bonuses. Pedagogical employees who acquire credits in continuing education can also receive a credit supplement and if they perform the specialised activities of a class teacher or teacher mentor they can be paid a supplement for such activities.

In order to improve living and working conditions for pedagogical employees, Slovakia aims to increase their basic rates of pay and make commensurate increases in other pay components, in the credit system and the career system.

Equal educational opportunities for all for the purposes of achieving education

One particular weakness in the application of legislation regulating the implementation of equal opportunities in the education of pupils with disabilities in inclusive conditions is in its application at lower levels of management as the creation of conditions for the education of pupils with disabilities by municipalities as operators of primary schools and the head

teachers of mainstream primary schools often fails to take full account of their actual educational needs, often makes less than adequate material and staffing provision for the upbringing and education of such pupils, often fails to make use of all possible sources of multi-source financing for schools that can be used to ensure access to schools for all persons. The situation is improved by the activities of the State School Inspection and the performance of inspection by institutions at a higher level of management, but there is also a need to implement self-evaluation in individual schools with the possibility to make use of professional supervision to eliminate the identified weaknesses. Since the duration of school attendance required by law in Slovakia is ten years for all children and groups of children including those with special educational needs, legislative conditions have been laid down for the acquisition of primary and lower secondary education. The parents of pre-school and school age children also bear responsibility for compliance with the law. There are however certain groups of children who require special assistance to acquire the habits, experience, skills, information and knowledge that are common in our society but are sometimes not communicated through family upbringing.

Further information on the conditions for the upbringing and education of children and pupils from socially disadvantaged backgrounds in Slovak and English can be found on the Ministry's website at the address www.minedu.sk/regionálne školstvo/ďalšie úlohy plnené v oblasti regionálneho školstva/detské a ľudské práva.

The **EUROPE 2020** strategy includes an indicator to **bring down the rate of early school leaving in EU Member States to below 10%**. The Slovak Republic has undertaken that **no more than 6%** of its population aged 18–24 shall have completed at most lower secondary education and not be continuing in further education. In the latest data published by the European Commission in February 2012 "**Education Benchmarks for Europe**" Slovakia is in the top three countries for the benchmark Early School Leavers. According to Eurostat data for 2000, the rate of early school leavers in Slovakia in 2000 was **6.7%**, in 2009 it was **4.9%** and in 2010 it was **4.7%**. Over a long period Slovakia has been one of the countries with **the lowest numbers of pupils who leave school and the education system early**. In our opinion, an important factor in reducing early school leaving in Slovakia is the **flexible and open system** for pupils who have not completed the education programme for primary school that is laid down by current education law. Research and non-research work carried out by the Research institute for child psychology and pathopsychology (VÚDPaP) focuses strongly on this area.

From 2006 to 2011 it carried out a number of research and non-research tasks focussing on the solution of problems in the education of pupils with special educational needs, in particular children from marginalised Roma localities, for example:

- **P-99/ P-113 Specific aspects of the cognitive development of Roma children** – longitudinal research, numerous publications; methodological material was also produced for the staff of counselling centres describing the possibilities and limitations of psycho-diagnostic instruments in the diagnosis of Roma children
- **P-101 Raising the educational level of Roma pupils from socially disadvantaged backgrounds using teaching programmes** – methodological manual and workbook: **How not to get lost in life. A handbook for beginners**, publication 2007
- **P-110 Test of readiness for school** – the task is in progress
- **P-118 Improvement in conditions for the education of Roma pupils** – creation and testing of teaching plans, curricula, materials and aids for Roma pupils educated in specialised classes in the elementary level of primary school, which serve as targeted support for the development of deficient areas to facilitate these pupils' integration into mainstream education processes before the end of the fourth year.

- **N-77 Roma children from the viewpoint of psychology (in the work of VÚDPaP)** – publication 2007
- **N-102 CEDEFOP study visit – Specifics in education of Roma and other socially disadvantaged children** – VÚDPaP organised a visit for 9 participants from various EU countries in cooperation with SAAIC SR and the Ministry, from 17 to 21 May 2011 in Bratislava. The programme included specialist lectures and discussions, presentations by the participants, practical activities and visits to a number of institutions. During these visits the participants viewed facilities and their equipment and familiarised themselves with the content of their work and its objectives; discussions provided additional information on the upbringing and education of Roma children in our country (children's home, primary school, clubs). In their final report the foreign participants evaluated the visit positively and said that the activities would benefit their work in their home country.
- In the period 2006 to 2011, two major international conferences were organised in cooperation with the Upbringing and education section of SK UNESCO that were held under the auspices and with the support of UNESCO:

- **in 2008**: Equal Access to Quality Education for Children from Socially Disadvantaged Settings
- **in 2011**: Respecting Cultural Diversities in Quality Education of Socially and other Disadvantaged Children

The resolution of the conference in Bratislava (29 June 2011), which was also presented during the session of the Education Commission at the 36th session of the UNESCO General Conference in Paris in November 2011:

The participants of the International Conference "Respecting Cultural Diversities in Quality Education for Socially and Other Disadvantaged Children - a special focus on Roma children" from the following countries: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Moldova, Slovakia, Slovenia, Switzerland, Ukraine and USA, who met in Bratislava on June 28-29, 2011:

a) greatly appreciate the important role that UNESCO, the Council of Europe, and other international and regional organizations play in further advancing the right to education for disadvantaged children with special focus on Roma children;
b) appreciate the efforts of organizers of this successful conference (VUDPaP and Section for Education of the Slovak Commission for UNESCO) and recommend that Bratislava should continue to periodically organize international conferences on Roma children education and education of other disadvantaged children, under the kind support of UNESCO;
c) concluding the fruitful discussion and shared experience of the experts in the conference, the participants recommend to UNESCO member states of Central, South and East European region, the following:

1. To further develop international cooperation in this field including the cooperation between UNESCO, IGO-s, NGO-s and other stakeholders.
2. The participants welcome the proposal from Slovakia to host a regional Centre for the Advancement of Roma children Education in Central and East European countries, possibly based in Bratislava, Slovakia.
3. The governments should make a priority in creating inclusive policies that respond to educational needs of all children and so respect the right to education for all children, established in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (articles 28-30).
4. The States and parents should take responsible and needed steps to ensure that all children attend school.

5. Preschool education is essential to the academic and personal development of all children, especially those like the Roma from marginalized communities. The State is responsible to ensure that high quality preschool is available to all families and subsidized for those who cannot afford to pay.
6. To provide the necessary and adequate physical resources and equipment to ensure better conditions for quality education, especially in disadvantaged localities. The governments should have clear criteria to map those localities and target them as a priority.
7. To adapt existing curricula to the diverse needs of disadvantaged and Roma learners to make their education more relevant. To revise the textbooks and make references to the Roma history and culture.
8. To reorient in-service and pre-service education of teachers and educational personnel to provide them with experiences and knowledge that will lead them to become effective teachers in addressing diversity in the classroom.
9. The governments should avoid the misplacement of Roma children in special schools and in "special classes" in mainstream schools. Testing, where it exists, should promote inclusion and not exclusion of Roma children from mainstream schools.
10. To facilitate parents-community-school cooperation by creating mechanisms for bringing parents into schools and schooling into the community, and improving the living conditions of disadvantaged families.

During winter 2011–2012 a **project to improve preschool education for Roma children in the CEE region** was developed under the title "Through Teachers and Mothers to Roma and other Disadvantaged Children: Focus on Quality Pre-School Education"; this project was awarded first place of projects form Slovakia and was sent for support from the UNESCO participation programme.

Respect human rights and fundamental freedoms

The problem of education and the application of human rights in schools and in the family is addressed through the approved Plan for human rights education in the school system for the years 2005 to 2014, which includes a project Effective system for monitoring and evaluation of the scope and quality of human rights teaching. This project is implemented by the Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education in cooperation with the State Pedagogical Institute and the State School Inspection.

Year 2006:

Application of human rights in primary and secondary schools

The aim of the national representative survey was to map the legal awareness of pupils of primary and secondary schools, to identify the rate of participation of schools and family in human rights education, to map cooperation between schools and families in human rights education and in the application of human rights, and also to analyse the application of human rights in families (possible deficiencies in compliance with human rights standards, the reasons for which children were punished and methods used, the overall atmosphere).

Year 2007:

Education and application of human rights in schools and families

The objective of the survey of pupils and follow-up surveys of pupils' parents was to map the application of human rights in schools and families as seen by pupils themselves and their parents and to analyse relations and opportunities for cooperation in the application of and compliance with human rights standards. The results of the research were compared with the research findings from 2006 in order to identify trends in development in the studies areas.

Year 2008:

Monitoring of education and the application of human rights in schools and families

This research task comprised two separate outputs as follows: Education and application of human rights in primary and secondary schools and Education and application of human rights in primary and secondary schools from the viewpoint of teachers. The research focused on education in the area of human rights, the analysis of the legal awareness of pupils of primary and secondary schools and the application of human rights within schools, mapping of relations in schools and the possibility to achieve redress for human rights infringements. The research followed up from research conducted in 2004–2005, which made it possible to identify developments and changes in the studied area.

Analysis of selected school documents and proposals for changes in content from the perspective of teachers in primary and secondary schools

The task analysed how up-to-date are selected documents of primary and secondary schools with reference to the need to apply human rights (identification of deficiencies, proposals for solutions) from the viewpoint of teachers.

Year 2009:

Application of human rights in schools and families

The objective of the representative survey of the application of human rights in schools and families from the viewpoint of pupils of primary and secondary schools, teachers and parents was to map the legal awareness of pupils, to analyse the source of information on human rights (representation of school and family), to map the level of cooperation between schools and pupils' families in human rights education and the rate of parents' participation in children's human rights education and to identify deficiencies in compliance with human rights standards in schools and families. The results were compared with the results of previous surveys, in particular the survey in 2007 and trends in the studied phenomena were identified. The results were incorporated into a comparative study of human rights and the publication "Monitoring of the application of the human rights of pupils in primary and secondary schools" and "Monitoring of the application of the human rights of pupils of primary and secondary schools from the viewpoint of parents".

Year 2010:

Application of the human rights of pupils of primary and secondary schools

The research task was carried out under the National plan for human rights education for the years 2005–2014 and as part of the project Effective system for monitoring and evaluation of the scope and quality of human rights teaching. Because the Ministry's funds allocated to activities in the National plan for human rights education for the years 2005–2014 were reallocated for other purposes, the national representative surveys of the opinions of primary and secondary school pupils and teachers were not carried out. The task was replaced by the survey **Pupils' opinions on human rights teaching**. The objective of the survey was to analyse the opinions of pupils of primary and secondary schools on the issue of human rights education and to compare the results with the results of the survey of pupils' opinions in 2008, **Opinions of head teachers on human rights teaching**, with comparison of data with the results of the survey in 2006 and **Opinions of teachers on the teaching of human rights** and comparison of the results with findings from 2007.

Year 2011:

Application of human rights and multicultural education in primary and secondary schools

The objective of the national survey of the application of human rights and multicultural education in primary schools and all types of secondary schools carried out as part of the project Effective system for monitoring and evaluation of the scope and quality of human rights teaching, was to map the opinions of pupils on compliance with human rights standards

in schools, to analyse the quality of human rights teaching, the effectiveness and applicability of acquired knowledge and the level of legal awareness in the area, and to analyse pupils' opinions of multicultural education in schools. The task also included identification of developmental trends on the given issue (years 2005, 2008 and 2011).

Application of human rights from the viewpoint of teachers

The survey analysed the opinions of primary and secondary school teachers regarding compliance with human rights standards in schools and multicultural education for pupils. The results were compared with the results of previous surveys and recommendations were made for management practice.

The research findings in the studied area can be divided into two separate parts, firstly the views of primary and secondary school teachers and secondly the views of primary and secondary school pupils. The results in each part can be summarised as follows:

- **Opinions of primary and secondary school teachers on human rights education and compliance with human rights standards**

A comparison of the results obtained in 2005, 2008 and 2011 found that human rights teaching had undergone positive developments in the period under review. It has gradually moved away from direct teaching in lessons, despite the fact that this remains the most widespread form of human rights teaching and has even grown to some extent compared to the result for 2008. Teachers are adopting more active forms of education, as could be seen particularly in seminars on human rights topics and the involvement of pupils in various contests in the area. Although the latest results show a slight reduction in active forms of human rights teaching compared to 2008, in the long term there is a positive trend towards active, applied forms of human rights education for primary and secondary school pupils.

The results of the 2005 and 2008 surveys again confirmed the positive trend in adopting more applied forms of human rights teaching. Although teaching is most frequently based on textbooks for the subject supplemented by specialised material, more and more primary and secondary school teachers are using a variety of materials on individual themes (2005 14.9%, 2008 15.4%, 2011 19.0%) and also draw on a variety of information from the internet, visits, seminars, contests, model situations etc.

The following table comparing rates of satisfaction with the form of human rights education in schools in 2005, 2008 and 2011 indicates on the one hand a reduction in teachers' satisfaction with human rights teaching despite the improvement in the situation and on the other hand an increase in the percentage of those expressing both complete satisfaction and also complete dissatisfaction. It is striking that in 2011 as many as 15.5% of teachers were unable to assess the situation and that this was the highest rate in the whole period.

Rates of satisfaction with human rights teaching – data comparison

	2005	**2008**	**2011**
satisfied	57.0	48.9	52.4
neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	26.4	31.1	21.4
dissatisfied	9.2	8.5	10.7
unable to judge	7.4	11.5	15.5

Besides mapping the rate of infringements of teachers' rights by pupils and pupils' rights by teachers, we also made a general survey of the types human rights infringements that primary

and secondary school teachers encountered in school. Teachers who answered the question positively mentioned **157** specific types of human rights infringements in schools. Percentage rates were calculated for the following categories: discrimination, inability to express one's opinions, corporal punishments, mental punishments, unfair grading, offering, selling or using drugs, infringements of the rights of another person, bullying, truancy and other. The overall analysis of respondents' responses found that 57.5% of contacted primary and secondary school teachers did not answer the question, from which it was concluded that no human rights infringements took place in their schools.

A comparison of the results for the studied years (2005, 2008 and 2011) found the best situation in 2008, when 85% of contacted primary school teachers expressed the opinion that human rights infringements did not take place in their school. Based on the 2011 results (57.5%), current opinion is almost the same as that indicated by the results for 2005 (56.2%). When mapping the types of human rights infringements, we also inquired about methods for achieving redress for human rights infringements in schools. The majority of contacted primary and secondary school teachers (52.2%) resolved problems with the assistance of the school management and 39.2% relied only on their own ability to solve problems. Approximately a third of teachers (34.2%) contacted parents when solving problems. There was little cooperation between teachers for this purpose. Just under ten per cent (9.2%) would cooperate with other teachers to deal with human rights infringements in schools. This form of cooperation is the least frequently used method of dealing with problems.

When the results for 2011 were compared with those for 2005 and 2008 it was found that although the order of the preferences for dealing with human rights infringements in schools was the same, there were certain differences. Teachers had become less likely to deal with problems independently and were more likely to involve the school management, psychologists and also parents, although in this case there was a slight reduction compared to 2005.

- **Opinions of primary and secondary school pupils on human rights education and compliance with human rights standards**

Teaching plans in primary and secondary schools do not define human rights as the topic of a specific subject. In primary schools human rights issues are covered mainly by the subjects civics, ethics and religious education. At the secondary level, depending on the type of school it is incorporated in civics or social studies as well as in ethics and religious studies. The total 1844 respondents who were pupils at primary and secondary schools gave 2863 responses to question on subjects incorporating human rights issues. 92 pupils (5.0%) said that they did not learn about human rights (in any subject) and one pupil did not know how to answer the question. More than half of pupils mentioned civics as a subject dealing with human rights issues (65.0%). Other frequently mentioned subjects were ethics (23.9%), history (20.1%), religious education (14.9%) and social studies (12.0%). Other subjects were mentioned by less than 10% of respondents including Slovak language and literature (4.4%), another subject (3.4%), natural sciences (2.1%) and class hours (1.8%). Four pupils (0.2%) said that mathematics concerned human rights and 59 (3.2%) mentioned economics.

In addition to mapping primary and secondary school pupils' theoretical knowledge of human rights, we were also interested in their information sources. By analysing the source of pupils' knowledge of the existence of the defined rights of the child we were able to find whether school was pupils' main source of information or whether other sources such as the media or the family played a more important role in the acquisition of information on the existence of the rights of the child. 8.0% of the primary and secondary school pupils in the sample (2001 – 1844 respondents) said that no one had informed them of the existence of the rights of the child. The sources most frequently mentioned by pupils were teachers, the media and parents.

Many respondents mentioned the internet, which achieved the same percentage as the internet. It is therefore clear that in the present time advanced information technology has become an equal partner with parents in the acquisition of knowledge and information. The information sources least frequently mentioned by pupils were siblings, friends and other sources.

Comparison of the results for 2005 and 2011 (the issue was not studied in 2008) confirmed significant changes. The penetration of the internet and modern information technology into the life of society and the individual has brought about a significant increase in the knowledge of primary and secondary school pupils and a corresponding fall in the influence of other sources. Together with an analysis of knowledge and information of the issue of human rights acquired in the teaching process and through lectures and seminars with experts, the survey inquired about pupils' interest and participation in these activities organised by the school. 68.8% of the contacted primary and secondary school pupils said that they would attend such activities only if they were compulsory and 31.2% confirmed their participation even if they were optional.

Comparison of the results for pupils' participation in school events connected with human rights from 2005 and 2011 shows that pupils' real interest in extending their knowledge in the area of human rights is continuing to fall. The respondents to the present survey were less likely than the previous respondents to attend an event that was not compulsory. Even though pupils say they are interested in learning about human rights issues, in most cases they are only willing to attend events that are compulsory. This could be connected with the overall burden on pupils and the consequent lack of free time for rest and recreation. In 1996 the Human Rights Olympics project was established in Slovakia for secondary schools as a way to develop and evaluate knowledge of human rights. The survey asked how interested the pupil respondents were in participating in the project. 68.9% of respondents from secondary schools did not know whether their school took part in the Human Rights Olympics project. This alarming result shows the low awareness that pupils have of events taking place in their school and also shows the low level of interest that secondary school pupils have in school activities. Although 16.0% of pupils claimed that they did not take part in the Olympics, they did at least know that their school was involved in the project and 3.5% of the secondary school pupils surveyed confirmed their personal involvement. Just under twelve per cent of respondents (11.5%) said that their school did not participate in the project and therefore its pupils could not take part. Only 17.8% of the pupils who said their school took part in the Human Rights Olympics project in 2011 actively **participated** themselves. **Comparison with other results** in the studied period confirmed on the one hand a fall in schools' participation in the Human Rights Olympics since the last survey in 2008 but a slight increase compared to 2005. Although pupils' participation is higher in some years and lower in others, it can generally be said that the Human Rights Olympics have found their place in the life of secondary schools and their pupils. Of the 1844 primary and secondary school pupils surveyed in 2011, 36.3% had not encountered an infringement of human rights at school and 8.0% of the pupils could not answer the question. The pupils gave a total of 1371 responses. The most frequent human rights infringement was the bullying of pupils, a smaller number of respondents mentioned infringements of the right to one's own opinion, discrimination in school and the selling, offering and consumption of drugs. Other types of infringements of human rights that were mentioned included corporal and mental punishments, unfair grading and infringement of the rights of another person, in particular a teacher, truancy and other infringements of human rights not specified in detail. The commonest types of infringement of rights in primary and secondary schools are bullying and inability to express one's opinion. A **comparison of the types of infringements of rights in schools** in the current survey (2011) and the results of surveys in 2005 and 2008 shows that the dominant type of human

rights infringement in schools throughout the period has been bullying though it has shown a falling trend. The overall results show a falling trend in all the presented types of human rights infringements in schools. The only increase is in the percentage of pupils who were unable or unwilling to give an opinion. Infringements of human rights in schools are most frequently dealt with by the school management, specifically the head teacher or a deputy. Nearly a third of respondents for 2011 confirmed this in their answers. After the school management, other people mentioned as being involved in dealing with human rights infringements are upbringing counsellors, teachers, the school council and the school psychologist. It is surprising that only 4% of pupils mentioned the school council as an agent for dealing with infringements of human rights. **Comparison with other results in the studied period** shows that although the school management and the upbringing counsellor continue to have the dominant role in dealing with infringements of human rights, the position of the school council, pupil self-government, psychologists and educators has got stronger. On the other hand the influence of the school management, upbringing counsellors and teachers has got weaker. It is therefore clear that the new self-government bodies in schools (the school council, the pupils' school council) are taking over responsibility for dealing with these issues from other stakeholders. It is shocking that increasing numbers of pupils are convinced that no one in the school deals with human rights infringements. According to the responses of pupils of primary and secondary schools in 2011, teachers are most likely to deal with human rights infringements and every third pupil would seek his/her assistance. Other preferred contacts are a parent (mother) and friends. Approximately one respondent in ten said that they would seek the help of a classmate or the head teacher to deal with a human rights infringement. Just under 9% said that they would seek their father's assistance to solve a problem. Other proposed sources of assistance in dealing with human rights infringements (a sibling, a partner, another family member, a confidential helpline, another person or institution) were mentioned by fewer than 5% of respondents. Despite the low percentage score for confidential helplines and human rights institutions, it was found that 33 pupils in the sample had contacted a helpline regarding a human rights infringement and 11 pupils had contacted another institution.

Comparison of data for 2005, 2008 and 2011 shows that although the preferred order of persons that pupils would contact for assistance remains unchanged (1. teacher, 2. mother, 3. friend), the influence of the school, its management and the teaching staff in dealing with rights infringements is increasing. This clearly indicates that problems are becoming more and more school matters, although mothers, friends and classmates continue to have important roles to play. There has been a slight fall in the numbers of persons who would keep a problem to themselves. More than one in ten pupils of primary and secondary schools admitted that they had discussed a rights infringement with no one. The results also confirmed an increase in the percentage of pupils reporting a human rights infringement in school. While in 2005 approximately a third of pupil respondents said that they had not encountered human rights infringements in school, in 2008 the proportion had increased to nearly half (42.3%) while amongst current respondents it is 38.6%. In the present survey, there was a fall in the percentage of pupils who denied any infringement of human rights in school and therefore the number of pupils admitting contact with human rights infringements increased. The previous information documents who pupils can contact if they encounter a human rights infringement and who they prefer to talk to. Our survey also asked whether pupils had the possibility to report rights infringements within the school anonymously. The responses indicate that most pupils in primary and secondary schools know of a box for anonymous reports of human rights infringements in their schools and a fifth of pupils said that they do not have the possibility to report human rights infringements in the school anonymously. Approximately one respondent in three was unable to answer the question. Only 5.1% of primary and

secondary school pupils mentioned other anonymous ways of dealing with human rights infringements, the most frequently mentioned being writing a letter and putting it in front of a teacher's door, sending an anonymous letter to the head teacher, writing a name on a paper when something happens, sending an email to the student council and so on. If we look at trends in results during the studied period, we find that the possibilities for submitting anonymous reports are worst in the present. At present a complaints box in the school or another means for reporting human rights infringements was reported by only 36.6% of respondents compared to 44.9% in 2008 and 41.8% in 2005. At the same time there has been a significant increase in respondents who were unable or unwilling to answer the question. Of the 1259 pupils in primary and secondary schools who reported they had encountered infringements of human rights, more than one third were unable to answer questions on how the human rights infringement was dealt with. Of those who expressed a degree of satisfaction with the handling of a human rights infringement (26.8%), 8.4% of pupils were entirely satisfied and 18.4% of pupils were more satisfied than dissatisfied. Just under a quarter of respondents adopted an ambiguous position, neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. 213 pupils (11.4%) said they were dissatisfied with the handling of a human rights infringement, of whom 11.4% were more dissatisfied than satisfied and 5.5% were entirely dissatisfied. **Looking at the overall results for the 2005 to 2011** period there is a continuous fall in the number of pupils of primary and secondary schools expressing satisfaction with the handling of human rights infringements in schools. There is also a fall in the number of pupils adopting an uncertain attitude without satisfaction or dissatisfaction. On the other hand there is a strong increase in those who are unable to give an opinion. A third of respondents chose to answer "I don't know". At the same time, the number of pupils expressing dissatisfaction has risen since 2005 but the value is not so high as in 2008.

On part (iii) Higher education:

The Slovak government has made great efforts to ensure the exclusion of discrimination, as shown by section 55(2) of act no. 131/2002 Z.z. on higher education institutions and on the amendment of certain acts, as amended (the act on HEI) which states that "the rights laid down by this act are guaranteed equally to all applicants and students in accordance with the principle of equal treatment in education established by the relevant act, the antidiscrimination act). In accordance with the principle of equal treatment all discrimination is prohibited on grounds of age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status and family status, race, skin colour, disability, language, political or other opinions, membership of national minority, religion or belief, trade union activity, national or social origin, property, lineage or other status."
Under section 56(1) of the act on HEI "the basic condition for acceptance in bachelors' study or study for the combined first and second level of higher education is the acquisition of complete secondary education or vocational secondary education." A higher education institution or faculty, where a study programme is provided in a faculty, may set additional conditions for acceptance for study in order to ensure that successful applicants for study have the necessary abilities and potential. The set conditions and the method for testing their fulfilment must allow the selection of applicants who show the strongest capacity for study. A higher education institution must not make acceptance for study conditional upon any financial payment other than fees for material arrangements for admissions proceedings (section 57(1) of the act on HEI).

On the part relating to lifelong learning:

The strategy for lifelong learning, the Action plan for implementation of the strategy and all ordinances of the Ministry in the area of continuing education make it their objective to ensure that every citizen has equal access to high-quality lifelong learning after completing school attendance, during work and in retirement. To this end, it has taken measures to ensure that citizens have adequate information about continuing education, information about the knowledge, skills and competences required by the labour market and space for vocational and recreational education that enriches the personal development of the individual. The priorities of the education system in this area are as follows:

1. To build an attractive system of lifelong learning
2. To provide flexible education that is relevant to the labour market and participation in society
3. To create an accessible career advice and guidance information system
4. To eliminate obstacles to lifelong learning.

Slovakia has adopted the following measures to promote equal access to education:

1. Increasing the attractiveness of lifelong learning
   - Information for citizens on educational opportunities, conditions in the labour market, job vacancies and the required competences
   - Introduction of recognition of the results of education regardless of how they are acquired (in progress)
   - Creation of a system for certifying skills
2. Increasing the relevance of lifelong learning
   - Facilitating connections between the labour market / employers and their requirements and education institutions
   - Introducing standards for the provision and appraisal of qualifications
   - Measurement of the results of education and identification of deficiencies in the education system and the provision of key skills
3. Increasing transparency in lifelong learning
   - Creating opportunities for high-quality and accessible careers advice (in progress)
   - Connecting information databases to provide adequate information on opportunities for career development
   - Increasing the accessibility of lifelong learning
   - Creating financial assistance instruments for lifelong learning (in progress)
   - Supporting online education and self-study by people making use of modern technology.

All measures supporting employment and the continuing education of citizens are based on the principle of non-discrimination and support for communities that are vulnerable to the risk of losing work or significantly worsening living conditions.