The application of learning outcomes approaches across Europe – a comparative perspective
Country fiche Slovakia[1]

Dagmar Jelinkova

1 Policy and strategy

1.1 Presence and definition of the notion of learning outcomes in legislation and in education policy:

In this section we want to understand if the notion of learning outcomes is defined and used, if it appears in policy documents as well as in practice, if it is used for all sub-sectors of the education and training system of predominantly for some of them.

Please fill in for the overall system and each subsystem using the questions in the table:

Overall approach and policy level understanding of learning outcomes	Please fill in this section giving the term(s) used in the national language(s). If different terms are used in different sub-sectors please provide them. 1. What is the definition used of learning outcomes? Is there a single definition used for all levels, sub-sectors and frameworks? 2. Is the notion of learning outcomes present in national legislation? 3. Is the notion of learning outcomes present in national policy documents? 4. Is the notion of learning outcomes present in the planning documents and published tenders of national development programs? *5.* Has there been any major national debate on the use of learning outcomes in education and training? *(Under national policy we include the national level, and where relevant regional level and sub-sectors of education and training systems.)* 6. Is the notion of learning outcomes explicitly referred to in national/framework/core curriculum documents? (For example, how are curricula developed at national level and / or by institutions (schools, universities, professional networks)? Are there standards or protocols regulating the implementation of the curriculum, programme or textbook approval, sample curricula and/or teaching/learning tools where the learning outcomes approach is used, etc. 7. Is the notion of learning outcomes explicitly referred to in national assessment or examination documents? Do these documents systematically use the notion of learning outcomes? 1. No single definition is used for all levels, sub-sectors and frameworks. Even more, there is no single Slovak equivalent of the term learning outcomes. Several terms have been used in a scientific discourse and even in official translations of European documents. The term “výsledky vzdelávania” seems

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	to be dominant in translations, as it is used in final documents, like “Recommendations”, while the term “vzdelávacie výstupy” is used in many others, see e. g. ECVET documents [1] and [2]. There are also other terms used, e. g. “výsledky dosiahnuté vo vzdelávaní” [3] and “vzdelávacie výsledky” [4]. Nevertheless, the dominant term in translations of European documents, “výsledky vzdelávania”, is an equivalent of much more general term “results of education”. It is in fact the phrase used also in common speech and in earlier educational studies; it can be also found in other contexts not referring to “learning outcomes”. Similarly, there is no agreement reached among academics and diverse terms are still used in academic studies. It is also partly due to many contexts this term is used in the international discourse and partly due to individual researchers’ conceptualisation of the “pedagogical context” related to this issue. The equivalent of the term “learning outcome” is not used in laws in Slovakia, but one of its aforementioned equivalents, “vzdelávacie výstupy”, is used in bylaws and other communication of national authorities. Finally, the term “vzdelávacie výstupy” can be considered as the best equivalent of the term “learning outcomes” although it is not fully equal from the linguistic point of view. It corresponds to the term “educational outcomes” rather than to the term “learning outcomes”. Chaos in translation can be fixed by changing the terminology currently dominating in legislation. The term “výsledky vzdelávania” should be replaced by the term “vzdelávacie výstupy”. In contrast to this, disputes within an academic discourse will continue due to two reasons: pluriformity of this term and pedagogical tradition. - As already indicated the term “learning outcome” is used in many contexts in the international discourse. Five different contexts have been identified within an analysis of international qualifications systems and European documents carried out within the national ESF project “Development of the National Qualifications System” [5]: 1. meta-framework descriptor (EQF), 2. framework descriptor (NQF), 3. standards setting, 4. VET programming (learning objectives), 5. individual achievement. - The education system in Slovakia was, similarly to other continental European countries, strongly “input-based”. It traditionally worked with detailed state curricula with detailed descriptions of syllabi and was focused on “good practice examples” of educational processes in classrooms. 2. The term “learning outcomes” is not present in national legislation, the philosophy related to this is however embedded there in some way (see detailed explanation in paragraph 5 below). 3 & 4. As a rule, learning outcomes are not explicitly mentioned in policy programming documents. Nevertheless, a new philosophy related to a “shift to learning outcomes” is visible within policies set by these documents. A curricular reform based on the development of state and school educational programmes was included in the Government Manifesto 2006, innovation of state educational programmes and adjustment of graduates’ profiles in Bachelor studies were included in the Government Manifesto 2012 [6]. National Reform Programmes [7] reflect many policies interlinked with a “shift to learning outcomes”: - curricular reform in IVET (NRP 2006); - development of new curricular documents (NRP 2008-2010); - enhancing the level of key competences through lifelong learning (NRP 2010); - revision of state educational programmes putting more stress on acquisition of skills and competences useful for life, and a reform of accreditation of

	higher education programmes (NRP 2011-2014); - development of qualification and assessment standards within the development of the National Qualifications System (NRP 2012); and - progress in identification of occupational standards within an ESF project (NPR 2013). Two of rare cases of explicit mentioning of learning outcomes in national documents are the Action Plans to NRP 2012 and 2013. The task of defining learning outcomes in higher education and levelling respective higher education qualifications with regard to National Qualifications Framework has been identified in the Action Plan to NRP 2012 and "definition of educational results and their classification in the qualifications framework" in VET in the Action Plan to NRP 2013 (although the term "educational results" is used, learning outcomes are meant, as visible from the context.) Quite significantly, the most important policy paper a "Report on the Status of Education and Schooling in Slovakia" [8], elaborated by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport (further Education Ministry) in 2013, speaks about adjusting educational standards in state educational programmes when speaking about the need for innovation, and the term learning outcomes does not appear in this crucial document for transformation of education system in Slovakia. The problem with a "shift to learning outcomes" is only indirectly addressed by the criticism of insufficient preparation of schools for the development of school educational programmes (within which individual learning outcomes must be set by schools). 2007-2014 Operational Programme Education [9] is very important for this agenda even without explicitly speaking about learning outcomes in programming documents. Envisaged paradigm change refers to "competence based approach" and the need to pay more attention to the development of key competences. In individual projects aimed at facilitation of the development of curricular documents identification of learning outcomes is however addressed (see more in 3.6). 5. In the 1970s and 1980s setting of learning/instructional objectives influenced by R. Gagné, R. F. Mager, and the revised Bloom's taxonomy paved the way to a"shift to outcomes" change that was however not linked to "learning outcomes" vocabulary. This change was related to the term "standards" as a newly coined term for freeing schools by expressing national requirements to be achieved and letting schools and teachers to decide freely about the ways to achieve "national standards" as a political order. This change attacked communist-style unified schools and the obligatory content to be taught, and stressed obligatory goals without questioning the need to discuss the content and syllabi and educational process in effort to better understand the ways to achieve the desired goals (not necessarily explicitly set as identified learning outcomes). "Inputs" were seen comparably important as "outcomes", however not a subject of state prescription anymore. Gradually, under the influence of PHARE and later ESF, and in particular of Anglophone countries' experience, setting educational standards composed of performance standards and content standards started to influence programming of education fully changing the curriculum development vocabulary and practice. The change in secondary VET programming is the most visible (see more concerning individual subsystems below). Finally, the Education Act No. 245/2008 Coll. introduced a new programming of education based on standards setting. Although the term learning outcome has not been used in legislation the fundamental programming documents contain this term. The European definition explaining learning outcomes as statements of what pupils (student) "knows, understands and is able to do" is contained in state educational programmes (obligatory national requirements elaborated by the State Institute of Vocational Education for VET schools and the National Institute for Education for general education) and in methodological guides developed to facilitate the development of school educational programmes (curricula) by individual schools.

	It can be said that in Slovakia a "shift to learning outcomes" is represented by setting standards in programming documents and by subsequent elaboration by schools of learning outcomes sticking to respective standards. A "shift to learning outcomes" imposing a new philosophy clashed with the tradition and resulted in criticism by theorists unsatisfied with an unclear message of a new philosophy concerning the classroom practice and in confusion of practitioners in schools "left alone" in achieving "standards" via "learning outcomes" without a sufficient infrastructure in support of translation of change into practice. The following is a comment of the interviewed general education expert explaining the atmosphere of the curricular reform within which learning outcomes were also introduced: "Furthermore, the curricular reform has been promoted as "the inevitable need for reduction of content" and as "the need to easing the high load put on pupils/students". Thus, a new paradigm related to a shift to learning outcomes was in fact less pronounced than changes in curricula. Now, this is the feeling about the result: "The content has been reduced, so pupils learn less and have less knowledge and skills. Thus, a dramatic worsening in PISA is also partly ascribed by some critical voices to the spirit of the curricular reform, although the pupils measured in 2012 did not belong to the reformed classes." Although not explicitly backed by legislation a "shift to learning outcomes" has been forced by new regional schooling policies. In contrast to regional schooling, a "shift to outcomes" has not been forced either by the Higher Education Act No. 131/2002 Coll. or higher education policies. Embedding learning outcomes into the Higher Education Act in future was announced in the 2009-2012 national reporting to the European Commission [10]. The following is the assessment of the interviewed higher education expert: "Learning outcomes issues are quite unknown for higher education teachers." The Act No. 568/2009 Coll. on Lifelong Learning does not mention the term "learning outcomes" either; it however reflects developments in IVET and uses the same vocabulary as used in programming of secondary VET. Qualification standards are defined as a set of knowledge, skills and competences and assessment standards are seen as a set of criteria and procedures for verifying and assessing "vocational capability" set in qualification standards. The Lifelong Learning Strategy preceding this law and also the newest strategy prepared in 2011 reflect philosophy of learning outcomes much more precisely. The Lifelong Learning Strategy from 2011 explicitly spoke about learning outcomes (using also the English term to avoid misunderstanding). It recommended to "create a unified concept for schools, higher education institutions and further education institution, and thus transform state educational programmes, study programmes, and further education programmes in a consistent format in terms of learning outcomes and therewith to establish a system of assessment and recognition of learning outcomes". [11] It also reflected importance of rising information of specialists as well as inhabitants about lifelong learning opportunities based on learning outcomes. Therefore, establishment of a specific communication platform "Komplat" (see part 3.1) was suggested. A detailed action plan was elaborated by the Education Ministry. It was however not adopted by the government and is only partly translated into practice. 6. The notion of learning outcomes is explicitly referred to in national curriculum documents for regional schooling (state educational programmes), however it does not play a central role in the curricular change *per se*. As explained above, the central terms related to the change are "standards" and performance standards can be seen as a "sort of learning outcomes". This term however occurs in school educational programmes and in methodologies assisting in their development. Textbook approval and teaching/learning tools delivery (e. g. digital contents and individual learning objects) are evaluated with regard to their compliance with educational standards set in state educational programmes.

	The Bologna transformation of higher education in Slovakia did not reflect a "shift to learning outcomes". Information sheets of individual courses of higher education study programmes (that can be seen as curricular documents) were not learning outcomes based. The change was introduced in 2013 (see more below). Adult learning programmes do not need to be accredited. If providers ask for accreditation they should include a graduate's profile describing knowledge and skills to be acquired after completing a respective training programme. 7. The term "learning outcomes" is, of course, not used in national documents referring to national assessment, as educational standards are considered as having a normative function. Thus, national testing, e.g. Testing 9 or national tests for ISCED 3A "maturita" school leaving examinations, refer to educational standards rather than to individual learning outcomes. Assessment at a school level can however refer to individual learning outcomes, as learning outcomes are expressed in their school educational programmes. It is also required to explicitly state criteria for assessment of individual learning outcomes within school educational programmes (as also visible in the example of school educational programme prepared by the State Institute of Vocational Education, see section on VET in part 2.1). To summarise: A "shift to learning outcomes" policy in Slovakia is bound to other terms - "standards setting" and achieving "competences". A national discourse among theorists and practitioners also refers to standards and competences rather than to "learning outcomes". This term occurs as subordinated and rather technical term replacing former educational goals within curricular documents elaborated by schools. Thus, it is only rarely visible in the highest level of policy papers. E. g., it is quite significant that this term does not appear in crucial laws in contrast to the terms "educational standards" and "qualification standards". *Sources:* [1] Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 June 2009 on the establishment of the European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET), Available from Internet: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/Notice.do?mode=dbl&lang=en&ihmlang=en&lng1=en,sk&lng2=bg,cs,da,de,el,en,es,et,fi,fr,hu,it,lt,lv,mt,nl,pl,pt,ro,sk,sl,sv,&val=497718:cs [cited 14.02.2014] [2] Proposal for Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council on the establishment of the European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET), Available from Internet: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/Notice.do?mode=dbl&lang=en&lng1=en,sk&lng2=bg,cs,da,de,el,en,es,et,fi,fr,hu,it,lt,lv,mt,nl,pl,pt,ro,sk,sl,sv,&val=468253:cs [cited 14.02.2014] [3] Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Improving competences for the 21st Century: An Agenda for European Cooperation on Schools Available from Internet: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/Notice.do?mode=dbl&lang=en&ihmlang=en&lng1=en,sk&lng2=bg,cs,da,de,el,en,es,et,fi,fr,hu,it,lt,lv,mt,nl,pl,pt,ro,sk,sl,sv,&val=474074:cs [cited 14.02.2014] [4] Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Supporting growth and jobs – an agenda for the modernisation of Europe's higher education systems. Available from Internet: http://eur-

	lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52011DC0567:EN:NOT [cited 14.02.2014] [5] Vantuch, Juraj (ed.) (2013). Analýza národných systémov kvalifikácií vo vybraných krajinách EÚ. Bratislava : ŠIOV. Available from Internet: http://www.tvorbansk.sk/files/AnalyzaNSK.pdf [cited 14.02.2014] [6] Government Manifesto 2006. Available from Internet: http://www.mosr.sk/data/files/793.pdf, Government Manifesto 2012. Available from Internet: http://www.vlada.gov.sk/data/files/2169_manifesto-entrans.pdf [cited 14.02.2014] [7] National Reform Programmes, website. Available from Internet: http://www.finance.gov.sk/Default.aspx?CatID=5197 [cited 14.02.2014], Action Plan to NRP 2013 (English version). Available from Internet: http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/nd/nrpactplan2013_slovakia_en.pdf [cited 14.02.2014] [8] Správa o stave školstva na Slovensku, website. Available from Internet: http://www.minedu.sk/sprava-o-stave-skolstva-na-slovensku/ [cited 14.02.2014] [9] Operačný program Vzdelávanie, website. Available from Internet: http://www.minedu.sk/1492-sk/programove-dokumenty/ [cited 14.02.2014] [10] National Report regarding the Bologna Process implementation 2009-2012 Slovak Republic. Available from Internet: http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/National%20reports/Slovakia.pdf [cited 14.02.2014] [11] MŠVVŠ SR (2011). Stratégia celoživotného vzdelávania 2011. Bratislava : MŠVVS SR. Available from Internet: http://old.minedu.sk/data/USERDATA/DalsieVzdel/VDOC/Strategia%20celozivotneho%20vzdelavania%202011.pdf [cited 14.02.2014]
Vocational Education and Training (VET)	Please describe if/how the notion of learning outcomes is reflected in VET policy, providing specific examples where possible. First impulses to a “shift to learning outcomes” can be traced back in mid-1990s and the PHARE programmes aimed at studying Scottish experience in VET, in particular, concerning modularisation of programmes. A “Scotvec” experience led to a discourse of identification of learning outcomes within secondary VET (although often using other terms, like objectives and goals). In the early 2000s the first important national document presenting a change in a curricular policy and emphasizing outcomes over inputs was elaborated by the State Institute of Vocational Education (“Standard of Secondary Vocational Education in the Slovak Republic” [12]) and adopted by the Education Ministry in July 2002 as a background document for elaboration of framework educational programmes (later state educational programmes). This paper presented a two-level approach to VET curriculum. Thus, secondary IVET became a first subsystem reflecting the national policy document for next 15 - 20 years “Millennium” [13], which suggested elaboration of state curriculum based on which detailed school curriculum should have been elaborated autonomously by individual schools. Educational standards for 22 fields of study were elaborated in a unified format expressing key competences, performance and content standards for general education component and performance and content standards for vocational component. Performance standards set in this document can be seen as a sort of learning outcomes, albeit this term is not used. According to the approach applied in this document performance standards were defined as elaborating specific goals of educational process. Nevertheless, the vocabulary of performance standards is similar to learning outcomes. On 6 June 2007 the government approved a “Concept of Two-level Model of Educational Programmes in VET” [14]. A state level curriculum should have set state education policy requirements within ISCED 2C, 3A, 3C, 4A, 5B state educational programmes elaborated under the leadership of State Institute of Vocational Education, while schools would have received the right to develop their own school educational programmes based on the respective state educational programme. School educational programmes should have been elaborated by respective schools in cooperation with regional players. State educational programmes came in force on 1 September 2008, legislatively backed by the Education Act No. 245/2008 Coll. These state educational

	programmes were elaborated by fields of study, e.g. Metallurgy, and levels of education, e.g. ISCED 3C. The practice confirmed that other approach is needed and now state educational programmes are elaborated for all levels in one document, e.g. Metallurgy, however educational standards are set separately for individual programmes, e.g. Metallurgist Operator, and not for a field of study as a whole. The other difference is that there are state educational programmes elaborated within separate documents for individual subjects of general education component of VET. State educational programmes in a new format came in force since 1 September 2013. (Curricular documents for secondary health schools are elaborated under the supervision of the Ministry of Health.) In March 2013 the national ESF project "Development of the National Qualifications System" was launched aimed at elaboration of qualification standards for 1,000 qualifications till October 2015. Apparently, qualification standards that should be based on learning outcomes and reflect occupational standards developed under the supervision of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (further Labour Ministry), should also influence VET programming and lead to reshaping both school and state educational programmes. <u>*Sources:*</u> [12] ŠIOV (2002). Štandard stredoškolského odborného vzdelávania a výchovy v Slovenskej republike. Bratislava : ŠIOV. [13] Rosa, Vladislav, Turek, Ivan, Zelina, Miron (2002). Milénium : Národný program výchovy a vzdelávania v Slovenskej republike na najbližších 15 až 20 rokov. Bratislava : Iris. ISBN 80-89018-36-X [14] MŠ SR (2007). Návrh koncepcie dvojúrovňového modelu vzdelávacích programov v oblasti odborného vzdelávania a prípravy v Slovenskej republike. Bratislava : MŠ SR. Available from Internet: http://www.rokovania.sk/Rokovanie.aspx/BodRokovaniaDetail?idMaterial=6443 [cited 14.02.2014]
Adult learning (formal and non-formal)	There is no national regulation on adult learning *per se*. Adult learning is market driven and it is fully up to providers of adult learning and inhabitants to agree upon delivery of appropriate learning opportunities. Only a specific case of adult learning is regulated by law. It is titled "further education" ("ďalšie vzdelávanie") and the respective regulation is Act No. 568/2009 Coll. on Lifelong Learning. The literal translation of the title should read Act on Lifelong Education and in fact this act really addresses lifelong education rather than lifelong learning (we will however stick to the official translation). This act offers legislative background for the development of the National Qualifications System (NQS) describing the so-called full and partial qualifications by qualification standards and assessment standards going beyond formal initial VET. On the other hand (quite confusingly), it does not reflect lifelong learning as a whole. This is most dominantly visible in two features: - it speaks about validation of "further education", meaning with this the assessment of "vocational capability" of individuals corresponding to respective qualification standards; - successful passing of assessment of vocational capability entitles for running a trade for which a certificate of apprenticeship is required, however, without recognition of equal level of education (and issuing a certificate of apprenticeship) compared to formal training in VET schools. Thus, achieving learning outcomes (qualification standards) does not lead to equal certification and is still sensitive to learning contexts in contrast to policy. Formal adult learning can be offered by VET schools (part-time studies for adults identical with IVET regulated by the Education Act No. 245/2008 Coll. and "further education" according to the Act on Lifelong Learning) and by providers of "further education" according to the Act on Lifelong Learning. Providers of "further education" can apply for accreditation of their programmes, but they can also offer non-accredited programmes. Accreditation procedure requires to elaborate a graduates' profile containing knowledge and skills, and it is recommended to reflect requirements listed in further

	education portal (http://isdv.fri.uniza.sk/Qualifications.aspx). This list of qualifications currently substitutes the National Qualifications System that has not been completed yet (and that should contain 1,000 qualifications till October 2015). Continuing VET regardless whether regulated by sectoral legislation or by individual enterprises varies in the extent of reflection of a learning outcomes based approach. There are some programmes fully based on learning outcomes (an outstanding example is training of nuclear energy specialists) and traditional input-based approach, e.g. driving schools instructor training. Training for the unemployed is regulated by Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services and in contrast to the early 2000s accreditation of programmes is not obligatory. It is fully up to individual job centres whether they require accredited or non-accredited programmes for the respective unemployed. *Sources:*
General school education	Although the 2008 curricular reform backed by the Education Act No. 245/2008 Coll. affected both IVET and general streams its impact differs. There are two explanations of this difference: - there are two different contexts of changes most visible in different conceptualisation of performance standards; and - two different institutions were responsible for elaboration of state educational programmes as well as for implementation of the reform. Within VET performance standards are seen as primary to focus on compared to content. It is a natural result of qualification requirements and labour market needs. In contrast to VET programming, documents for general education see performance standards as subordinated to content standards. A focus is on content standards while performance standards are seen as instrumental for achieving content standards, and explanations of the role of performance standards is very similar to the traditional explanation of importance of proper setting of educational objectives and goals. Operationalisation of goals is often mentioned [15] and active verbs of Bloom's taxonomy and its revision are stressed. The dominance of content standards over performance standards is visible in the history of programming documents developed by the National Institute for Education. Similarly to other subsectors the term learning outcomes is not used. A vehiculum of the reform is a shift from "syllabi" to "educational standards". Moreover, the notion of educational standards evolved during the time, as partly presented below. In the 1990s, as already mentioned above, calls for setting standards were linked to freeing schools and teachers from too tight regulation of state and reducing of content that was considered too extensive and "overloading" pupils/students and hampering teachers to adjust activities in schools to learners' real needs. At the end of the 1990s the importance of syllabi was weakened and the content was reduced, and educational standards (with content and performance "components") for primary and secondary schools were set. Interestingly, there was no agreement about a universal approach to standards setting and no agreement about functionality of standards. While content standards were seen as a sort of derivative of "syllabi", "performance standards" were not clear enough. This is why new standards were set with the so-called exemplification examples in the early 2000s. The following is an example from the educational standard with exemplification tasks for lower secondary Chemistry (ISCED 2), approved by the Education Ministry in 2002 [16]: A content component of educational standard is considered as defining content and at the same time as a "basis for formulating requirements for knowledge and skills". These requirements are however considered as not clear enough as it is explicitly stated in this document, and "therefore exemplification tasks were added to the currently valid standards. Exemplification tasks are based on the requirements for knowledge and skills of pupils

	according to the educational standard (not textbooks), and they more precisely define and specify the scope and depth of … requirements …". Even after the adoption of the Education Act No. 245/2008 Coll. the dominance of content over performance remained preserved and in many cases content and performance components of educational standards remained to be used despite the different terminology introduced by the Education Act. While the 2009 state educational programme for lower secondary Chemistry (ISCED 2) spoke explicitly about content standards and performance standards as required by law, the 2009 state educational programme for lower secondary Biology spoke about content and performance components of educational standards, and 2009 state educational programme for lower secondary Physics went in more detail, even beyond requirements of the law and identified content standards, performance standards and competences to be developed as a third category. A revision of state educational programmes in 2013 for primary and lower secondary education was aimed at rectification of identified mistakes, but quite surprisingly calls for substantial change in programming occur. It was suggested that content standards should be subordinated to performance standards. It can be said that with this "reverse approach" the essence of a "shift to learning outcomes" seems to be better grasped. Although identification of performance standards can be seen as reflection of a "shift to learning outcomes" and recent calls for reverse approach even more corresponds to the new philosophy, substantial changes in programming and curriculum development will need more time and a deeper discourse about its fundaments. *Sources:* [15] Janasová, Zdenka (2001). Vzdelávací štandard z občianskej výchovy pre 2. stupeň ZŠ s exemplifikačnými úlohami. Bratislava : ŠPÚ. Available from Internet: http://www.statpedu.sk/files/documents/nereformne_rocniky/zs/standardy/obcianska.pdf [cited 14.02.2014] [16] Siváková Mária, Adamkovič, Emil (2002). Vzdelávací štandard s exemplifikačnými úlohami z chémie pre 2. stupeň základnej školy. Bratislava : ŠPÚ. Available from Internet: http://www.statpedu.sk/files/documents/nereformne_rocniky/zs/standardy/vs_chemia_2_zs_exemplifikacne.pdf [cited 14.02.2014]
Higher education	The term learning outcomes does not appear in the Higher Education Act No. 131/2002 Coll. and a "shift to learning outcomes" based programming of higher education programmes has not been stressed. Higher education institutions were required to describe a graduate's profile when applying for accreditation, however, explicit identification of learning outcomes was not pronounced. The Education Ministry confirmed low attention paid to learning outcomes in legislation and announced amendment of Higher Education Act concerning this within the national reporting to the European Commission [10], in particular in its response to the question 4.1 asking whether learning outcomes are defined in national steering documents: "Partially in descriptions of study branches. Learning outcomes should be handled in amendment of the Act on HEIs and other steering documents within next year." This statement of the Education Ministry pertinently characterises the situation in higher education where the slowest progress in implementing learning outcomes based approach can be observed. In contrast e.g. to Poland higher education qualifications have not yet been referenced to the QF-EHEA. The progress in implementing learning outcomes is hoped in 2014 with regard to the comprehensive accreditation. In 2013, a decree of the Education Ministry [17] set a renewed form for description of courses (information sheets). These sheets must be elaborated for the purposes of accreditation of programmes and must be available for students. Identification of "main learning outcomes" ("hlavné vzdelávacie výstupy") is newly required. Thus, universities are forced to more specific descriptions compared to the previous practice, requiring descriptions of a graduate's profile allowing for more general formulations compared to regional schooling programming documents. It is required to describe "what student should know, understand and be able to do after successful completion of educational process". This formulation reflects European definition of

	learning outcomes, but at the same time it reflects the traditional approach by speaking about “educational process”. Sources: [17] Vyhláška Ministerstva školstva, vedy, výskumu a športu Slovenskej republiky č. 155/2013 z 21. mája 2013, ktorou sa mení a dopĺňa vyhláška Ministerstva školstva Slovenskej republiky č. 614/2002 Z. z. o kreditovom systéme štúdia, Available from Internet: http://www.minedu.sk/data/att/5517.rtf [cited 14.02.2014]

1.2 Strategies for implementing a learning outcomes approach

In this section we would like you to describe briefly the recent strategies developed (by which we mean plans of action designed to achieve the overall goals defined in the policy documents) for implementing a learning outcomes approach. This should include the relevant implementation tools/instruments that have been or are currently used. NB Implementation is dealt with in the section below.

Overall approach	We would like to understand if/where strategies are different for different subsystems. Please include: 1. The government ministries, agencies, non-government bodies, stakeholders involved in the definition of the strategies. 2. Professional development to support implementation of approaches related to learning outcomes. Opportunities for teacher collaboration and peer learning to implement new approaches. 3. The importance of communication for explaining to stakeholders (e.g. employers) and to students and families what is meant by learning outcomes and their purpose. 4. The existence of incentives and supportive actions (development programmes, pilot projects, experiments, services, capacity-building actions, information campaigns, support for professional networks, publications, etc.) promoting the use of learning outcomes at institutional level. 5. The existence of national monitoring (e.g. targeted surveys, research programmes producing relevant evidence, policy evaluations, impact analyses) focusing on the use of learning outcomes and supporting the implementation of relevant national strategies 1. As explained in detail in part 1.1, implementing a “learning outcomes” approach is embedded into “setting standards” vocabulary and policies. It can be said that in Slovakia a “learning outcomes” approach materialised in - setting “performance standards” contained in educational standards; - identification of “qualification standards”; and - identification of “occupational standards”. 2. The main drivers of change were the Education Ministry and the Labour Ministry and the most important instruments of change were rather simple: adoption of laws and subsequent bylaws, followed by their translation into practice by governmental institutions and financially supported by pre-accession programmes and ESF.

	3. Legislation was preceded by adoption of different strategies or strategic papers, as a rule prepared in cooperation with expert groups consisting of different stakeholder and not only specialists. Furthermore, strategies and legislation were discussed by all active stakeholders within public discussions and within legislative procedures before their final adoption. Nevertheless, these papers and legislation are not necessarily in concord with each other; the strongest example being the 2007 Lifelong Learning Strategy and the Act No. 568/2009 Coll. on Lifelong Learning. [18, p. 42] 4. The most important incentive came from international projects. Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) and the earlier Socrates programme contributed to changes on practitioners' level, as schools and individuals were made familiar with the experience with other national systems. LLP priorities oriented people interested in projects to reflect an international discourse including learning outcomes. High attractiveness of international projects has therefore been an important incentive for schools and pedagogical staff. There were no specific incentives within domestic policies and the 2008 curricular reform *per se* has not been sufficiently prepared and promoted. On a systemic level ESF funding plays a dominant role, as visible from the other parts of this report. 5. In addition, implementing of policies is insufficiently monitored and detailed impact analyses are missing. Although policies are implemented and different projects completed a sustainable positive impact of change might be questioned. Furthermore, mainstreaming of positive examples, e. g. from LLP sub-programmes, is insufficiently supported as a consequence of top-down approach. Specific communication strategies, although discussed and planned (as explained later), were not finally used. Involvement of students and parents was not finally seen as substantial. *Sources:* [18] Vantuch, Juraj et al. (2010) A bridge to the future European policy for vocational education and training 2002-10 : National policy report – Slovakia, Bratislava : ŠIOV/SNO. Available from Internet: http://www.refernet.sk/images/news/files/Policy-Report_SK_2010_A%20Bridge%20to%20the%20Future_final.pdf, [cited 14.02.2014]
Vocational Education and Training (VET)	There were two different streams of development: - identification of occupational standards and development of National System of Occupations (NSO) under the supervision of the Labour Ministry, and - the curricular reform implemented by the Education Ministry, followed by development of the National Qualifications System and the National Qualifications Framework within the ESF project "Development of the National Qualifications System", launched in March 2013. The National System of Occupations is being developed within the national ESF project run by the private research institute Trexima Ltd. and financed by ESF. This project for the first time brought together social partners to discuss labour market requirements. Trexima Ltd. developed occupational standards for occupations complying with ISCO-08 classification, identifying required knowledge, skills and general abilities for each occupation. 1,400 occupations (out of total 1,800) should be completed at the end of the project in September 2015. In addition to the Register of Occupations containing occupational standards the NSO portal (www.sustavapovolani.sk) also contains the Register of Competences with the databases identifying relevant knowledge, skills, and general abilities for occupational standards (see

	more in [19, p. 40-41]), In 2014, the development of NSO should continue backed by a new ESF project aimed at completing NSO. In addition, the national ESF project "Development of the National Qualifications System" should also capitalise on this project. As already explained, performance standards were formulated within state educational programmes, and subsequently schools were obliged to elaborate learning outcomes within their school educational programmes (see examples in 2.1). Dissatisfaction of employers with both quality of VET school graduates and the skills structure of graduates with supply not corresponding to labour market demand led to criticism of VET programming. Some improvement is expected from three national ESF projects launched in Spring 2013 aimed at - introducing elements of VET in lower secondary education; - reshaping secondary IVET; and - development of the learning outcomes based National Qualifications System (NQS). Within the third project a "shift to learning outcomes" is a crucial agenda. Recent learning outcomes related practice, manifested in the curriculum development and occupational standards development, should be revisited. A strategy paper prepared within this ESF project [5] indicated an urgent agreement between the world of work and the world of education on further progress, identifying weak points of recent developments and suggesting changes on policies. *Sources:* [19] Vantuch, Juraj, Jelinkova, Dagmar (2013). Slovakia VET in Europe – Country report 2013. Bratislava : ŠIOV/SNO. Available from Internet: http://www.refernet.sk/images/news/files/2013_SK_CR.pdf [cited 14.02.2014]
Adult learning	A "shift to learning outcomes" has a limited influence on adult learning except the policies related to examination of people interested in starting business and not having a certificate of apprenticeship required by the Trade Licensing Act No. 455/1991 Coll. As there are no procedures for validation of non-formal and informal learning implemented so far, partly due to pending development of NQS, passing an exam testing "vocational capability" and shorter accredited courses in support of achievement of this capability are backed by the Act No. 568/2009 Coll. on Lifelong Learning. It must be stressed that this procedure does not lead to obtaining a certificate of apprenticeship, and neither graduates of courses nor applicants passing an exam are given a certificate equivalent to the ISCED 3C education level. Nevertheless, the aforementioned courses and examinations refer to a learning outcomes based list of qualifications preliminary substituting the NQS (http://isdv.fri.uniza.sk/Qualifications.aspx). *Sources:*
General school education	A "shift to learning outcomes" philosophy was more dominantly presented in VET and it also gradually influenced general education finally leading to adoption of the Education Act No. 245/2008 Coll. and the curricular reform explained elsewhere in this report. Although a sort of outcomes based philosophy was visible within general education in the 1970s and was more pronounced in the early 1990s, the context of discourse and policies was different. Thus, a "shift to learning outcomes" as presented in EU documents affected general education just under the influence of changes in secondary VET.

	Sources:
Higher education	As already explained in part 1.1, higher education has not been influenced by the learning outcomes based philosophy. Low attention paid to EQF and NQF is also visible from pending referencing reports. The Education Ministry did not work on referencing of three Bologna cycle qualifications to EQF, and debates on referencing the Slovak NQF to EQF that started in 2013 hardly touch higher education. A new strategy paper and substantial amendment of Higher Education Act No. 131/2002 Coll. has been announced by the Education Ministry, and as already indicated within the national reporting from the Education Ministry to the European Commission [10] a "shift to learning outcomes" should be addressed there. This intention can be confirmed by the aforementioned amendment of the 2013 decree [17] where for the first time higher education institutions are explicitly pushed to identification of learning outcomes within designing their programmes (see more in part 1.1, section on higher education). Requirements for accreditation of study programmes, adopted in 2013, include a criterion for defining a graduate's profile in terms of knowledge, abilities and skills a graduate of the study programme in a given study field must acquire. *Sources:*

2 Implementation of the strategies

In this section we are interested in understanding 'how it happens', how policy and strategy are implemented in practice:

- At subsystem level
- In institutions
- In the economic sectors (if relevant)

2.1 How are learning outcomes implemented in the subsystems?

In this section we would like you to describe how recent strategies are being implemented in practice. Please focus on each sub-sector providing the key information, including for VET/adult learning sector-based approaches should be included where relevant.

Overall approach	1. Are there national competence standards that influence curriculum development and the definition of learning outcomes in curricula? Please give concrete examples for each subsystem. 2. Are there national development programmes supporting measures that are relevant from the perspective of learning outcomes (e.g. the development of curriculum standards, study programmes, qualification systems, validation systems for of non-formal and informal learning, assessment systems etc.). If so please describe briefly the relevant components either in planning or monitoring/evaluation documents. 3. Is there a national strategy for the recognition of prior learning and experience (competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning) or is it the domain of institutions. If there are relevant national strategies do they make references to learning

	outcomes? For each subsystem please provide one example of how learning outcomes are used, e.g. in a curriculum, programme, occupational profile, etc 1. There are national standards set in regional schooling for all respective educational levels corresponding to ISCED 97 within the so-called state educational programmes. The state educational programmes for ISCED 0, 1, 2, 3A general were elaborated by the National Institute for Education (www.statpedu.sk). The State Institute of Vocational Education (www.siov.sk) developed the state educational programmes for ISCED 2C, 3C, 3A VET, 4A VET and 5B. The National Institute for Education also developed state educational programmes for specific cases, e. g. basic schools of arts and conservatories. The Ministry of Health elaborated, in cooperation with its specialised institution, state educational programmes for secondary health schools. Examples of educational standards of state educational programmes are offered in sections on vocational education and training (VET) and general school education below. Methodologies (*inter alia* explaining Bloom's taxonomy revised by Krathwohl and Anderson) and model examples of school educational programmes were elaborated to assist schools in development of their own school educational programmes (see a model example in section on vocational education and training (VET) below). Finally, schools elaborated their own school educational programmes (see examples in sections on vocational education and training (VET) and general school education below). 2. Specific national development programmes are apparently not considered important to support measures relevant from the perspective of learning outcomes. There is legislation backing the development of educational standards (including performance standards interlinked with identification of learning outcomes) for regional schooling, and there is legislation backing the development of occupational standards and creation of the National System of Occupations. Finally, there is a legislation initiating the development of the National Qualifications System and qualification standards that should be learning outcomes based. The only subsystem not substantially affected by learning outcomes is higher education. As already mentioned identification of learning outcomes is embedded in the decree of the Education Ministry issued in 2013 (see section on higher education in part 1.1). As documented, a shift from content to outcomes is nationally supported in all subsystems, however the quality of the change differs. Changes in national policies and a new vocabulary of programming documents do not necessarily mean substantial changes in classrooms. Low quality of learning environment in schools resulting from a lack of teaching/learning tools (even textbooks) contradicts with new curricular policies. In general (however without evidence and research findings), it is believed that schools did not to manage to accommodate this changing paradigm due to insufficient support. It is visible also in the statement of the 2013 strategy paper elaborated by the Education Ministry. [20, p. 56] Therefore, national programmes better explaining how to manage the change and offering assistance to schools to concentrate on outcomes rather than teaching the content, and in particular exploiting opportunities offered by new technologies, would be welcome.

	Particularly important is a new ICT strategy in education (Digipedia 2020) that is in the pipeline and should be submitted to the government for approval in Spring 2014. Declining quality of performance documented by PISA and PIAAC points to the need to improve monitoring quality and strengthen assessment procedures. Although educational programmes contain standards and school leaving examinations should refer to the set performance standards (as regulated by the Decree of Education Ministry No. 318/2008 Coll. describing in detail requirements put on graduates that are based on performance standards), 2012 PISA results caused a shock due to an extremely low performance, partly attributed to the 2008 curricular reform. Although graduate's profiles of higher and further education programmes also contain some sort of required outcomes, the practice indicates serious problems, as visible from PIAAC. In reality, fighting for pupils and students to secure a budget sensitive to the number of pupils/students and a harsh population decline translated into lowering of standards. 3. There is no national strategy for the recognition of prior learning and experience. Although put on the table by the Lifelong Learning Strategy in 2007 and partly backed by Act No. 568/2009 Coll. on Lifelong Learning, genuine recognition and validation of non-formal is not yet possible in Slovakia. A detailed description of intentions of the Education Ministry is presented in the 2010 policy reporting of ReferNet, within which some risks for the future were indicated: "… E. g., the aforementioned qualification and assessment standards have not yet been set and the new NSQ created, and therefore, it is not clear to what extent competences acquired by prior experiential practice will be made valid and practice accepted as a substitution for both initial VET and accredited continuing education programmes. Currently, high limitations embedded in qualifications (at least ISCED 3C level of education by a dominant share of qualifications) by level education attained are applied." [18, p. 44] Unfortunately, the development of NQS envisaged in 2009 was delayed, and in 2014 it is still in its very start. Furthermore, the Act on Lifelong Learning does not allow to acquire a certificate equivalent to formal education through recognition of non-formal and informal learning either. Passing the exam at the end of accredited further education programme results in a certificate of attendance confirming compliance with qualification standards contained in a list of qualifications (NQS in the future). This is not equal to a certificate of apprenticeship gained after formal education in secondary VET schools. Additional examination is required for assessment of "vocational capability" entitling for running a trade, for which a certificate of apprenticeship is required. This again is not equal to a certificate of apprenticeship as it does not certify ISCED 3 level of education, but it can substitute a certificate of apprenticeship for the purposes of starting a trade where specific education was required by the Trade Licensing Act No. 455/1991 Coll. Completion of respective further educational programme is optional and must not be required for examination of "vocational capability". This is why the current regulation at least partly covers the agenda of recognition and validation of prior learning. Further progress is also partly hampered due to missing validation procedures and services not yet offered to applicants interested in recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning by tutors. The aforementioned recognition and validation of "vocational capability" is in practice based on passing examination similar to the final examination within formal education and the evidence of the required number of years of practice set by legislation.

	Sources: [20] MŠVVŠ SR (2013). Správa o stave školstva na Slovensku a o systémových krokoch na podporu jeho ďalšieho rozvoja : Príloha č. 1 : Popis vývoja a analýza hlavných problémov regionálneho školstva. Bratislava : MŠVVŠ SR. Available from Internet: http://www.minedu.sk/data/att/5252.pdf [cited 14.02.2014]
Vocational Education and Training (VET)	The state educational programme for ISCED 3C training branches in the field group Economics and organisation, retail and service II [21], elaborated under the leadership of State Institute of Vocational Education contains a graduate's profile including the description of key competences, general competences, and vocational competences defined in terms of required knowledge, required skills, and required personal predispositions, characteristics and abilities. The following are examples of formulations of vocational competences. Vocational competences: Required knowledge: A graduate is expected to - actively use economic terms and know the context; - be familiar with basic regulations and provisions of commercial, small trade, civil and labour laws; - … Required skills; A graduate can - implement in practice ethical and professional standards, principles of social behaviour; - apply basic practice of commercial activities and basic principles of marketing; - … Required personal predispositions, characteristics and abilities: A graduate is characterised by - manual skills in the activities relevant to his/her field, adaptability, creativity, availability and reliability, patience, consistency and accuracy, ability to work, self-discipline, mobility, ability to work in a team, building corporate image, positive contact with customers, working independently, … The state educational programme further contains performance and content standards defined for respective educational domains of general and vocational components of education. The table below brings examples of formulations included in the overview of performance standards in two domains – Economic education and Practical training.

Performance standards:

Economic education
The overview of performance standards: Within the domain Economics a graduate is expected to - use basic economic terms; - be familiar with legal provisions in business and characterize their basic features; - consider appropriate forms of business in his/her field, - …
Practical training
The overview of performance standards: Within the domain of practical training a graduate is expected to - work according to the principles of safety and health at work, in concord with the rules of hygiene of the given workplace; - apply the basic procedures for the handling of raw materials and goods; - use machines, equipment, fixtures and fittings; - …

Performance standards for other domains are formulated in a similar format.

The State Institute of Vocational Education prepared a model school educational programme [22] to assist schools in developing their school educational programmes. This model programme focuses on the ISCED 3C training branch "Waiter, waitress". It contains a model graduate's profile including the description of key competences, general competences, and vocational competences defined in terms of required knowledge, required skills, and required personal predispositions, characteristics and abilities.
A graduate's profile is elaborated based on the graduate's profile and performance standards of the aforementioned state educational programme, nevertheless it also includes formulations specifically linked to this training branch, in particular with regard to vocational competences. The following are examples of formulations of vocational competences specifically linked to this training branch:

Vocational competences:
Required knowledge:
A graduate is expected to
- have knowledge on food, beverages and technology of their production, display and sale;
- demonstrate knowledge of the rules concerning techniques of serving meals;
- …

Required skills:
A graduate can

- work with HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points) regulations concerning receipt and distribution of goods, and claims;
- get acquainted with new technologies and products;
- work with a cash register, process payments for guests, account income;
- apply techniques for serving meals and beverages, prepare basic types of mixed drinks;
- …

Required personal predispositions, characteristics and abilities:
A graduate is characterised by
- shot-term memory, practical and independent thinking, division of attention;
- …

In edition, the model programme contains examples of the syllabi for general and vocational subjects, with subjects' descriptions that include specifications of the content and identification of respective learning outcomes. They are based on content standards of the state educational programme and are in concord with the graduate's profile. The following is the extract from the model description of the subject Food and Nutrition contained in the syllabi for vocational subjects.

Grade: 3

Subject description: Food and Nutrition				**1 hour per week, a total of 33 lesson hours**		
Title of thematic unit	**Hours**	**Cross-curriculum relations**	**Expected learning outcomes**	**Learning outcomes assessment criteria**	**Assessment methods**	**Assessment tools**
Meat	**4**		**Student is expected to**	**Student**		
• Composition of meat and types of meat	1	• Technology of preparation meals from slaughter meat • Beef, veal, pork	• Explain the term meat and types of meat • Name components of meat • Characterize the quality attributes of meat • Present preserving of meat	• Explained properly the term meat and types of meat • Named components of meat • Characterize the quality attributes of meat • Presented preserving of meat	Frontal oral examination	Oral answers
• Pork	1		• Characterize pork • Name individual	• Characterized properly pork	Oral examination Written	Oral answers Didactical test

			parts of pork • Divide individual parts of pork into classes	• Named individual parts of pork • Divided properly individual parts of pork into classes	examination	
• …						

Other themes are described in a similar format.

The school education programme for the training branch "Waiter, waitress" developed by the Secondary Specialised School in Horný Smokovec [23] contains a graduate's profile with the description of key competences, general competences, and vocational competences defined in terms of required knowledge, skills, and personal predispositions, characteristics and abilities. Formulations stick to the state educational programme. It also brings the syllabi with subject descriptions. The following is the extract from the description of the subject Food and Nutrition for Grade 2, which includes examples of learning outcomes and learning outcomes assessment criteria.

Subject description: Food and Nutrition
Grade 2, 1 hour per week, a total of 33 lesson hours

Title of thematic unit including themes	**Cross-curriculum relations**	**Expected learning outcomes (LO)**	**LO assessment criteria**	**Assessment methods**	**Assessment tools**
Meat and meat products Number of hours: 23 hours • The composition and division of meat • Slaughter meat …	Technology Practical training …	- Explain the term meat and types of meat - Name components of meat - Characterize the quality attributes of meat - Present preserving of meat - Explain defects and diseases in meat - Indicate the characteristics of each type of meat - Divide meat parts into	He/she - Explained the term meat and types of meat - Named components meat is composed of - Presented preserving of meat - Explained defects and diseases in meat -Indicated the characteristics of each type of meat - Divided meat parts into classes	Written examination …	Didactical test …

			classes …	…		

Other themes are described in a similar format.

Sources:

[21] MŠ SR (2008). Štátny vzdelávací program 64 Ekonomika a organizácia, obchod a služby II pre skupinu trojročných učebných odborov, Bratislava : MŠ SR. Available from Internet: http://www.siov.sk/ext_dok-svp-isced-3c-64/11669c [cited 14.02.2014]; MŠ SR (2010). Štátny vzdelávací program pre skupinu trojročných učebných odborov 64 Ekonomika a organizácia, obchod a služby II : Stredné odborné vzdelanie ISCED 3 C. Bratislava : MŠ SR. Available from Internet: http://www.siov.sk/2139-ext_dok/12001c [cited 14.02.2014]
[22] ŠIOV (2008). Vzorový školský vzdelávací program Stravovacie služby : Brána poznania : učebný odbor 6444 2 čašník, servírka. Bratislava : ŠIOV.
[23] Stredná odborná škola Horný Smokovec (2012). Školský vzdelávací program 6444200 (6444 H) čašník, servírka. Vysoké Tatry : SOŠ Horný Smokovec. Available from Internet: http://www.sousmokovec.sk/files/64442.pdf [cited 14.02.2014]

Adult learning

Qualification standard – 5132 bartenders, set according to the Act No. 568/2009 Coll. on Lifelong Learning [24]

Professional/vocational knowledge	**Professional/vocational skills**
Bartender knows: - the principles of health and safety at work; - principles of personal and operational hygiene, HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points) regulations; - principles of social behaviour; - principles of work in entertainment centres – beer pubs, cafés, wine bars; - principles of working on special occasions – banquet, buffet, cocktail; - technical terminology typical for the profession; - basic knowledge of food and beverages; - types of soft drinks, their characteristics and how they are properly stored; - principles in preparing and serving alcoholic and non-alcoholic mixed drinks;	Bartender is skilful in: - using properly work procedures, preparing the work area, using machines and other equipment and their routine maintenance; - using professional terminology, applying knowledge, terms and principles in the workplace; - applying ethical principles in communication with guests and co-workers, and maintaining confidentiality; - applying basic ways of sensory testing concerning the quality of goods, the receipt, storage and distribution of goods, and lodging complaints; - taking and handling guest orders; - working with a cash register, processing properly payment for guests, applying forms and methods of payment, accounting income using the ICT; - solving ordinary and extraordinary situations when working with

	<table><tr><td>- gastronomic rules for compiling the beverage menu; - … and other 12 items.</td><td>guests (communication in a foreign language); - … and other 12 items.</td></tr></table> The following is the example of formulations contained in the description of re-training course offered by the educational agency PLUS in Bojnice. [25] As explained in the description, the course was developed in compliance with the qualification standard – 5132 bartenders, and graduates acquire a bartender qualification. **A graduate of a training program - BARTENDER** - knows the principles of health and safety at work, HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points) regulations, principles of social behaviour, principles of work in entertainment centres, principles of work on special occasions; - knows professional terminology, characteristics and types of beverages, technological processes for preparing mixed drinks and other hot and cold drinks, gourmet rules; - knows how to process properly payments, knows forms and methods of payment, accounting income; - is able to use machines, compile a beverage list according to the culinary rules, solve ordinary and extraordinary situations when working with guests. *Sources:* [24] MŠVVŠ SR. Kvalifikačný štandard – 5132 barmani. Bratislava : MŠVVŠ. Available from Internet: http://isdv.fri.uniza.sk/Documents/Competences/Barman.rtf [cited 14.02.2014] [25] Rekvalifikačný kurz – Barman, website. Available from Internet: http://www.vzdelavaciaagentura.sk/kuchar-casnik.php [cited 14.02.2014]
General school education	Upper secondary general education: The ISCED 3A state educational programme brings a graduate's profile including description of key competences. [26] The ISCED 3A state educational programmes for individual subjects set subject oriented content and performance standards. The following is the extract from state educational programme for Biology, which uses terms content and performance components instead of content and performance standards. The example refers to one of themes within one of thematic units (Structure of living organisms). [27] <table><tr><th>Content component</th><th>Performance component</th></tr><tr><td colspan="2">2 Structure of living organisms (15 hrs.)</td></tr><tr><td colspan="2">2.1 Cell (5)</td></tr><tr><td>• cell theory; • cell size and shape; • basic cell structure (cell surface,</td><td>• explain the fundamentals of the cell theory; • describe the prokaryotic cell structure on an example of bacterial cell; • know the general structure of eukaryotic cell;</td></tr></table>

membrane and fibrous structure); • cell types (prokaryotic, eukaryotic, plant, animal). Terms: prokaryotic, eukaryotic cell, plant, animal cell, cell surface (cytoplasmatic membrane, cell wall), cytoplasm, membrane structures, (nucleus, mitochondria, plastids, vacuole, lysosome, Golgi apparatus, endoplasmic reticulum), fibrous structure of a cell (cytoskeleton, mitotic apparatus, chromosomes, flagella, cilia), ribosomes, non-living components of cells	• know the importance of the cell surfaces; • identify intracellular structures using figures; • name membrane structures and know their importance for the cell; • name fibrous structures and know their importance for the cell; • know the differences in prokaryotic and eukaryotic cell structure; • know how to distinguish a plant and animal cells; • give examples of the different types of plant and animal cells, explain the relationship between form and function of specialized cells.

A model school educational programme for ISCED 3A education prepared by the National Institute for Education to facilitate schools in developing their own school educational programmes reflects the terminology set by the state educational programme for Biology when setting standards for this subject (i. e. content and performance components). [28]

The following is the example of the ISCED 3A school educational programme developed by the Grammar School in Gelnica. It includes a graduate's profile containing description of key competences, and the syllabi for all subjects with descriptions of content and performance standards. The extract below refers to one of thematic units in Biology for Grade 2. [29]

Thematic unit **Hours**	**Content standard**		**Performance standard**	**Assessment tools**
	Theme	**Terms**	**Capabilities**	
2. Structure of living organisms (15 hrs.)	2.1 Cell (5 hours). • cell theory • cell size and shape • basic cell structure (cell surface, membrane and fibrous structure) • cell types	prokaryotic and a eukaryotic cell, plant and animal cells, cell surface, cytoplasm, membrane structure, fibrous structure of a cell, ribosomes, non-living components of cells	• describe the prokaryotic cell structure • know the general structure of eukaryotic cells • be able to identify intracellular structures • know the membrane structures and their importance • identify differences in prokaryotic and eukaryotic cell structure	Presentation Written test Oral assessment

Standards are based on ISCED 3A state educational programme for Biology, nevertheless the terminology content and performance standards and not content and performance components is used to secure compliance with the terminology used within the document. Other themes are designed in a similar format.

Primary education:
Similarly to general upper secondary education the ISCED 1 state educational programme brings a graduate's profile including the description of key competences and the ISCED 1 state educational programmes for individual subjects set content standards and performance standards. The National Institute for Education prepared a model school educational programme to assist schools on developing their school educational programmes.

The ISCED 1 school educational programme of Primary School in Mníšek nad Hnilcom [30] includes a graduate's profile containing description of key competences, and a summary of objectives and content of education for all subject and grades structured around thematic units identified within respective subjects and elaborated based on the state educational programme for ISCED 1 and state educational programmes for respective subjects. The content standard, performance standard and relevant competence are set for each thematic unit.
E.g. within the subject Slovak language and literature for Grade 4, the thematic unit Direct speech is structured as follows:

Thematic unit	**Hours**	**Theme**	**Content standard**	**Competence**	**Performance standard**	**Transversal themes**
Direct speech	10	- Introductory clause - Semicolon - Quotation marks	- definition of direct speech; - writing quotation marks in direct speech; - punctuation in direct speech (semicolon, comma, question mark, exclamation mark); - ...	Pupils can apply subject matter concerning direct speech in different communication contexts.	A pupil is able to - identify direct speech in text; - use direct speech in his/her writing; - correctly use punctuation in direct speech; - …	… - Environmental education; - Safety and health protection; - Presentation skills; ...

Content and performance standards and competence comply with the standards set in the ISCED 1 state educational programme for the Slovak language and literature. [31] Other themes are designed in a similar format.

	Sources: [26] ŠPÚ. Štátny vzdelávací program pre gymnázia v Slovenskej republike ISCED 3A – Vyššie sekundárne vzdelávanie. Bratislava : ŠPÚ. Available from Internet: http://www.statpedu.sk/files/documents/svp/gymnazia/isced3_spu_uprava.pdf [cited 14.02.2014] [27] Ušáková Katarína, Višňovská Jana (2009). Štátny vzdelávací program Biológia (Vzdelávacia oblasť: Človek a príroda) Príloha ISCED 3. Bratislava : ŠPÚ. Available from Internet: (http://www.statpedu.sk/files/documents/svp/gymnazia/vzoblasti/biologia_isced3.pdf [cited 14.02.2014] [28] ŠPÚ. Vzorový Školský vzdelávací program ISCED 3A – gymnázium. Bratislava : ŠPÚ. Available from Internet: http://www2.statpedu.sk/buxus/docs/kurikularna_transformacia/vzor3.pdf [cited 14.02.2014] [29] Gymnázium Gelnica (2012). Školský vzdelávací program Kľúč k vzdelaniu, brána k výchove, cesta k úspechu. Učebné osnovy (biológia). Gelnica : Gymnázium Gelnica. Available from Internet: http://www.gymgl.sk/files/skvp/skvp3a/BIO/BIO%20ISCED3A%201-3roc.pdf [cited 14.02.2014] [30] ZŠ Mníšek nad Hnilcom (2012). Školský vzdelávací program : Štvorlístok. Mníšek nad Hnilcom : ZŠ Mníšek nad Hnilcom. Available from Internet: http://zs-mnisek.edupage.sk/files/SkVP_ISCED1_Stvorlistok.docx [cited 14.02.2014] [31] Mancová, Marta, Šteffeková, Kamila (2011). Štátny vzdelávací program Slovenský jazyk a literatúra (Vzdelávacia oblasť: Jazyk a komunikácia) Príloha ISCED 1. Bratislava : ŠPÚ. Available from Internet: http://www.statpedu.sk/files/documents/svp/1stzs/isced1/vzdelavacie_oblasti/slovensky_jazyk_isced1.pdf [cited 14.02.2014]
Higher education	Expert groups affiliated to the Slovak Rectors' Conference were assigned a task to elaborate the so-called descriptions of study programmes corresponding to the list of study fields. These descriptions were accepted by the Education Ministry as well as by the Accreditation Commission affiliated to the government as an agreement of leading experts on obligatory requirements to be achieved by all study programmes eligible for offering higher education. Consequently, sticking to respective descriptions of the fields of study is required by the Accreditation Commission within the accreditation procedure. The interviewed higher education expert indicated that these characteristics could be considered as learning outcomes based: "Formulations included in these characteristics are close to formulations in terms of learning outcomes." The following is an example of requirements set for programmes awarding teacher qualification for academic subjects, e. g. Chemistry: Study field 1.1.1 Teaching academic subjects [32] Definition of graduate's professional profile (Second cycle - Master level) A graduate of a second cycle programme in a study field "Teaching academic subjects" is qualified for teaching subjects corresponding to his/her specialization within lower and secondary education. He/she masters the core content of disciplines related to his/her specialization and principles of its structure; he/she is familiar with the methodology of designing the content of the programme and its wider cultural and social contexts. He/she can tackle this content as a product of human (scientific) activity, and is able to design it in concord with educational aims and purposes. In addition to mastering the teaching skills (design, implementation and reflection of classroom instruction) he/she is able to participate in the development of methodological materials for teaching. He/she also has adequate knowledge of research and development methods in pedagogy in his/her field of study.

	Theoretical knowledge of a second cycle programme graduate; a graduate - is familiar with the current theoretical models of cognitive socialization and education of a human; - knows the basic content, methodology and epistemology of disciplines concerning his/her subject specialization; - knows the theoretical and practical aspects of "pedagogy" related to respective specialization, in particular with regard to the design of instruction in classrooms; - knows the ways of using ICT in education. Practical skills of a second cycle programme graduate; a graduate - independently designs and implements the teaching of particular subjects in lower and upper secondary education; - can adapt educational programmes in respective disciplines to the specific conditions of students, school classes and types of schools; - is able to support the development of students' information literacy; - able to analyze and assess alternative programmes in secondary education; - can effectively communicate knowledge related to education and respective field with the wider environment of laic and professional community. Additional skills and abilities of a second cycle programme graduate - Development of methodological materials applicable in broader contexts; - E-learning; - Knowledge of the legal, economic and ethical aspects of the work in his/her field. This example presents requirements in terms of graduate's profile, theoretical knowledge, practical skills and additional skills and abilities. In addition to these at least partly outcomes oriented items, there are also some content-related formulations (core knowledge) contained within these documents. *Sources:* [32] AK. Študijný odbor 1.1.1 učiteľstvo akademických predmetov : Identifikácia študijného odboru. Bratislava : AK. Available from Internet: http://www.akredkom.sk/isac/public/odbory/1/1.1/1.1.1.doc [cited 14.02.2014]

2.2 How are learning outcomes implemented in institutions?

In this section we would like to understand the role of institutions in interpreting policies and strategies on learning outcomes into practice. The information should come from official documents and/or reports.

For the different types of institutions (schools, colleges, universities, centres, etc.) we would like to understand briefly:

- **Autonomy**: What level of autonomy do institutions have to adapt the curriculum?

- **Curriculum design and adaptation**:
    - Is there any data available (e.g. in monitoring reports) about the capacity, in general, of institutions to design curricula, learning environments and assessment tools? Do they have access to external services (e.g. consultancy, training) that support these? Do institutions have access to development resources that they can use to revise their study programmes?
    - How are learning outcomes used in teaching and learning approaches, i.e. in pedagogy? For example are there manuals and/or other teaching tools; examples of 'good practices' of teaching scenarios, sample assignments, online tools, assessment rubrics, videos explaining implications of learning outcomes approach for changes in teaching, learning and assessment, etc.
    - What is the impact on institutions of development programmes/measures/interventions supporting the development of curriculum standards, study programmes, qualification systems, validation systems, assessment systems etc.? What kind of support do institutions receive from these programmes? Please illustrate briefly and example of successful approaches.
- **Assessment**: How are learning outcomes integrated into assessment systems at institutional level? Have assessment approaches changed as a result of learning outcomes approaches, and if so, how? (For example, are they criterion-referenced, i.e., linked to specific criteria or do they still reflect norm-referenced approaches? Is formative assessment used?)
- **QA:** Are there formal quality assurance procedures (QA frameworks, institutional level evaluation, programme accreditation standards, of external qualitative school evaluation or inspection related with teaching and learning, etc.)? Do they refer to learning outcomes?

Vocational Education and Training (VET) schools and colleges /apprenticeship centres / other relevant institutions	*Autonomy*: VET schools are fully autonomous in development of school educational programmes – the ultimate curricular document. *Curriculum design and adaptation:* Curriculum design is only limited by the state educational programme and sticking to educational standards contained there. A model school educational programme was elaborated [22] by the State Institute of Vocational Education and study field specialists from the State Institute of Vocational Education assist schools with methodological advice, if required. A special national ESF project focused on pedagogical staff training and development of methodological manuals. Within this project run by the State Institute of Vocational Education not only VET schools but also grammar schools and primary schools were covered. In manuals developed for VET schools, grammar schools and primary schools (ISCED 1 and 2) a special attention was paid to taxonomies, in particular revision of Bloom's taxonomy by Krathwohl and Anderson. [35] *Assessment*: Assessment criteria are aligned to each of identified learning outcomes (see the example of school educational programme and column LO assessment criteria in part 2.1). Assessment is criterion-referenced and even national testing (Grade 5, Grade 9 at primary schools and an external "maturita" school-leaving exam). National testing is criterion-referenced, according to official statement of the National Institute for Certified Measurement. *QA*: Quality assurance is a weak point and rather traditional. The State School Inspection (SSI) is responsible for checking compatibility of a school educational programme with a state educational programme. The annual report of SSI contains information on results of checking compliance in visited schools. There is no national quality assurance programme and it is fully up to individual schools whether they adopt

	or develop their own quality assurance programme. There are some schools (in particular VET schools that participated in international programmes) that have received an ISO 9001:2000 certificate. There are also some schools with some experience with self-evaluation programmes (drawing from the Scottish experience), but there is no evidence about interlinking quality assurance procedures with respective learning outcomes. *Sources:*
Secondary schools - general education	*Autonomy*: The same applies as for VET schools: Grammar schools are fully autonomous in development of school educational programmes – the ultimate curricular document. *Curriculum design and adaptation*: Similar applies as for VET schools: the National Institute for Education plays the same role towards general education as the State Institute of Vocational Education plays towards VET schools. The most important difference is that the aforementioned ESF project covering regional schooling was run by the State Institute of Vocational Education, thus it assisted also general education schools within this project. *Assessment*: Similar applies as for VET schools: the way how assessment criteria are manifested within a school educational programme depends on individual schools and also on methodologists from the National Institute for Education responsible for individual domains/subjects. One of the examples speaking briefly only about assessment tools is in the example in 2.1 above. *QA*: The same applies as for VET schools: Quality assurance is a weak point and rather traditional. The SSI is responsible for checking compatibility of a school state educational programme with a state educational programme. The annual report of SSI contains information on results of checking compliance in visited schools. There is no national quality assurance programme and it is fully up to individual schools whether they adopt or develop their own quality assurance programme. There are some schools that have received a ISO 9001:2000 certificate. There are also some schools with some experience with self-evaluation programmes (drawing from the Scottish experience), but there is no evidence about interlinking quality assurance procedures with respective learning outcomes. *Sources:*
Higher education institutions: universities/ technical and further education colleges/ other post-secondary HE institutions	*Autonomy*: HEIs are fully autonomous, only limited by the so-called descriptions of study programmes developed autonomously by academic experts (see the section on higher education in part 2.1) corresponding to the list of study fields and to accreditation procedures. Respective components of HEIs (faculties) are regulated by internal documents issued by a rector to achieve coherence in programming documents and the documents required by the Accreditation Commission affiliated to the government for accreditation procedure. *Curriculum design and adaptation:* Schools are fully autonomous and the level of coordination varies. For each programme an experienced high ranking professional, the so-called guarantor, must be identified responsible for compliance of the programme with formal requirements, but also with the state-of-the-art knowledge in the respective discipline. In contrast to regional schooling there are no assistance programmes offered. There are however opportunities, in particular within international projects and ESF projects, to learn

	from the international experience. There is no nation-wide evidence about applying learning outcomes as a result of national monitoring. There are however research studies aimed at explaining learning outcomes based philosophy and its translation into practice in examples of programmes. A good example is the publication from Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra [33] that can facilitate application of learning outcomes. See also [34] below. *Assessment*: There were no national requirements set with regard to learning outcomes based assessment criteria. It can also be documented by the fact that an explicit requirement to identify learning outcomes within programming documents (see part 1.1 concerning information sheets) was only set by legislation in May 2013. There are however universities that paid more attention to identification of learning outcomes regardless the national policy. An ESF project run by Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra was aimed at the development and piloting a system of assessment of programmes based on learning outcomes. The project was focused only on social science and humanities programmes delivered at Constantine the Philosopher University. [34] *QA*: Quality assurance is substantially more pronounces in higher education compared to regional schooling. HEIs are obliged to develop the quality assurance system by legislation (§ 87 of the Higher Education Act No. 131/2002 Coll.). Implementation of the internal system of quality assurance is a subject of evaluation by the Accreditation Commission affiliated to the government. The so-called comprehensive accreditation started in 2013 to classify HEIs into research and education oriented ones (universities) and HEI focusing on education (higher education institutions and professional higher education institutions). Therefore, all HEIs work hard on development of internal quality assurance systems. The extent of interlinking internal quality assurance systems with learning outcomes has not yet been monitored national-wide. The aforementioned change in legislation from May 2013 will put this agenda on the table. *Sources:* [33] Čerešník, Michal, Verešová, Marcela (2013). Výsledky vzdelávania a ich implementácia do študijných programov. Nitra : UKF. Available from Internet: https://www.ukf.sk/dokumenty/projekty/Vysledky-vzdelavania_publikacia_projekt.pdf [cited 14.02.2014] [34] Verešová, Marcela (Ed.) (2013). Hodnotenie kvality informačných listov predmetov vybraných študijných programov študentmi v kontexte implementácie výsledkov vzdelávania : zborník záverečných vedeckých štúdií. Nitra : UKF. Available from Internet: https://www.ukf.sk/dokumenty/projekty/Hodnotenie-kvality-inf-listov-predmetov-vybranych-stud-programov-studentmi_2013.pdf [cited 14.02.2014]
Adult learning centres / professional training	*Autonomy*: As already explained, there is no regulation of provision of adult learning *per se*. If interested in accreditation providers must stick to accreditation procedures. *Curriculum design and adaptation*: Curriculum development is only limited by qualification standards and accreditation procedures required in case of provision of training according to Act No. 568/2009 Coll. on Lifelong Learning (as explained in more detail elsewhere). There is no specific assistance offered to providers. There is a competitive market in this segment and curricula are seen as internal know-how.

	Assessment: In the case of accredited programmes the Accreditation Commission of the Education Ministry and the Education Ministry focus on compliance with formal requirements and have only limited opportunities to assess provision of learning *per se*. In other cases assessment is fully up to individual providers. *QA*: In the case of accredited programmes, similarly to higher education, guarantors of the quality of programmes are required. The Accreditation Commission of the Education Ministry usually checks only compliance with formal requirements. There are no specific instruments of quality check of the provision of programmes. Interlinking with learning outcomes is not monitoring and little is known about the influence of learning outcomes approach, if applied in practice. *Sources:*

3 How do learning outcomes contribute to lifelong learning?

In this section we would like to understand if/how a learning outcomes approach has affected (positively or negatively) strategies for lifelong learning. The role of the different stakeholders should be described in this section.

3.1 Systemic level

In this section we would like to understand briefly:

1. Does the use of learning outcomes in education subsystems favour lifelong and life-wide learning and mobility (between sectors, employment fields, countries)? How / why (not)?
2. Is there a national or sector-based or informal system of recognition/validation of prior learning and experience? Is it structured around learning outcomes? Where relevant, please refer to it in answering the questions below.
3. How are stakeholders involved? Who are they?
4. Are the objectives of lifelong and life-wide learning as defined by the EU and/or at the national level being addressed by policies using the concept of learning outcomes? How?

1. Lifelong and life-wide learning and mobility (between sectors, employment fields, countries) is pronounced by policy makers and stressed within curriculum development, however without making use of the term “learning outcomes”. A focus on achieving competences and in particular key competences required by standards (that are explicitly stressed within state educational programmes) exactly targets this agenda. It is much more visible than using explicitly the term “learning outcomes” when addressing this agenda. However, the term “learning outcomes” is gradually more and more used, as e. g. visible in methodologies elaborated within the national ESF project “Training Teachers with regard to Development of School Educational Programmes” [35], and a new wording of the decree of the Education Ministry issued in 2013

setting details on information sheets [17]. It can be concluded that higher attention paid to the development of “key competences” is a more significant feature of the aforementioned agenda than a rather “technical” focus on “learning outcomes”.

2. There is neither national nor sector-based system of recognition/validation of prior learning. The so-called “Komplat” communication platform intended to offer one-stop-shop information opportunities for all inhabitants, providers and authorities was envisaged by the Lifelong Learning Strategy and planned to be established within an ESF project. This plan did not materialise. The National Institute for Lifelong Learning (www.nuczv.sk) has now other priorities, and a national ESF project launched in 2013 run by the National Institute for Lifelong Learning focuses on other issues.

3. The Education Ministry is a major player with regard to lifelong learning as set by legislation, with the exception of the training for the unemployed, for which the Labour Ministry and in particular the Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family is responsible. The National Institute for Lifelong Learning is a directly managed institution of the Education Ministry and it should support the ministry in implementing respective polices. Further progress is hampered by lacking cooperation among sectors, as well as by the understaffed National Institute for Lifelong Learning. There is no overarching legislation addressing lifelong learning as a whole. Provision of education/learning regulated by sectoral legislation in only partly touched by the currently valid Act No. 568/2009 Coll. on Lifelong Learning. Moreover, this act does not address all learning settings; in fact it does not address non-formal and informal learning. A need for substantial change of legislation is recognised and a new legislation concerning lifelong learning was already announced by the Education Ministry in 2013. A specific act to cover recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning was suggested. It is still open whether this agenda will be covered by a specific act or by a substantial amendment of the Act on Lifelong Learning. Substantial legislative change is anyway needed, as the currently valid Act on Lifelong Learning does not fully address provision of education/learning outside the education sector.
The lifelong learning agenda is still insufficiently reflected by other players, in particular employers and national authorities other than education and labour sectors. Other ministries, e. g. the Ministry of Health, focus in detail on lifelong learning (or rather continuing training), predominantly with regard to professions relevant for their sectors. Another example of wide involvement of social partners relates to the development of the National System of Occupations. Twenty sectoral councils covering respective sectors of economy and umbrelled by the Alliance of Sectoral Councils were set up in the labour sector, nevertheless it is expected that they would also cover IVET in the future.
A transversal involvement in education issues is visible within secondary IVET as a consequence of the Act No. 184/2009 Coll. on VET that created a new architecture of managing IVET, in detail describing the rights and responsibilities of employers and professional associations. The so-called subjects of coordination are precisely identified for almost all fields of study by a Decree of the Education Ministry No. 282/2009 Coll. on Secondary Schools. They should predominantly contribute to matching performance standards and learning outcomes with labour market skills needs.

4. Eurostat data indicate a serious problem in lifelong learning, as Slovakia in a long term features low participation rates that are among the weakest within the EU28.

Participation of person aged 26 to 64 in lifelong learning (in %)

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
EU28	9.1	9.5	9.4	9.3	9.3	9.2	9.1	8.8	9.0
EU27	9.2	9.6	9.5	9.3	9.4	9.3	9.1	8.9	9.0
Slovakia	4.3	4.6	4.1	3.9	3.3	2.8	2.8	3.9	3.1

Source: Eurostat, [tsdsc440], date of extraction: 10-02-2014

These data indicate the need for targeted policies to enhance participation in lifelong learning. A national discussion concerning the Memorandum on Lifelong Learning led to putting the lifelong learning agenda on the table, however, strategies adopted by the government did not translate into practice and even the Act on Lifelong Learning failed to cover the lifelong learning agenda in full. The proposed policies to introduce fiscal incentives to inhabitants and to enhance promotion of lifelong learning by better targeted and shaped information instruments were finally not implemented. Thus, these two agendas are more topical than further stressing of a "shift to learning outcomes". Although further progress in refining efforts to properly identify learning outcomes is needed, a new paradigm is already accepted and exactly with regard to lifelong learning most visibly pronounced. A discourse on relevant competences and properly set qualification standards related to lifelong learning policies subsequently impose changes also in regional schooling and higher education. [11]

The following sections each focus on a major EU tool for transparency and mobility.

3.2 National Qualification Framework

For this section, please refer to Cedefop studies on NQF development and implementation and EQF referencing report for your country, when available.

1. Very briefly, what is the current situation in your country concerning the development and adoption of a NQF? Does it cover all levels and subsystems?
2. Are stakeholders involved in defining learning outcomes for the NQF? Which ones? How? Are there formal procedures, mechanisms for their participation?
3. If your national referencing document for EQF has already been prepared, how strongly it is focussing on the use of learning outcomes and what does it say about the move towards the learning outcomes approach?

1. The Slovak National Qualifications Framework (further SKNQF) contains 8 levels and should cover all subsystems. Within a working group created by the Lifelong Learning Division of the Education Ministry an agreement was reached concerning levels 6, 7 and 8 and concerning the relevance of Dublin descriptors, however, no agreement was reached concerning the philosophy of the development of SKNQF. There were two alternative proposals discussed:
Alternative 1. Preparation of a "kick-off" conversion table assigning respective EQF levels to respective programmes of the Slovak education system. A more detailed analysis of respective programmes should have followed leading to adjustment of the initial table turning it into SKNQF.
Alternative 2. A detailed analysis of learning outcomes based qualifications should have preceded decisions on SKNQF
- decision on number of levels;
- formulations of SKNQF descriptors; and
- levelling of respective qualifications.
As a consequence of a delay in launching a project on the development of SKNQS the alternative 1 was chosen by the Education Ministry and national descriptors were selected, predominantly based on the experience with standards setting and learning outcomes in initial VET. The Education Ministry intends to prepare a referencing report in 2014 under the pressure of political commitment to do so. Unfortunately, the current version of SKNQF suffers from some systemic weaknesses (e. g. concerning drawing lines between levels 5 and 6 and with regard to insufficient sensitiveness to SKNQF level 3 covering all qualifications with a certificate of apprenticeship). Furthermore, there is no wide agreement about a SKNQF format achieved. It is already known that changes are inevitable and should be prepared within the ESF project aimed at the development of the National Qualifications System.

2. As already explained working on SKNQF was dominantly education system based and referred to the formal education system educational standards and related learning outcomes rather than to genuine lifelong learning and learning outcomes based qualifications. Similarly to other countries, there is a tradition of making a difference between educational programmes and qualifications, in contrast to the Anglophone approach. This results in creation of separate systems of standards in Slovakia – one covering educational programmes (and not necessarily leading to qualifications) and qualification standards to be elaborated within the National Qualifications System. Qualification standards of NQS should inform providers of secondary VET about qualification requirements, leaving them freedom to design their programmes as directly corresponding to qualification standards or to shape them wider, however also sticking to learning outcomes.
Involvement of specialists knowledgeable about the world of work and required skills at workplace is essentially needed for both development of a new NQS and for the development of the revised SKNQF. Currently a working group of 21 experts headed by a representative of the Education Ministry responsible for the development of SKNQF and a referencing process has been established within the national project. Proposals of this working group will be confronted with opinions of sectoral councils responsible for finalisation of qualification standards within respective fields of national economy.

3. The national referencing document for EQF has not yet been prepared. The Education Ministry announced its intention to prepare the referencing report in 2014. The interviewed VET expert pointed to the importance of the comparative study and the strategic paper commissioned by the State Institute of Vocational Education [5]:
"A strategic paper developed within the national ESF project "Development of the National Qualifications System" offered analysis of international experience and has recommended further steps of development of the Slovak NQF. There was a new matrix suggested, as well as three phases of implementation, and postponement of a referencing report as a consequence of the need to capitalise on the earlier work:
- setting educational standards that started within the curricular reform in 2008;
- elaboration of occupational standards within the national ESF project on the National System of Occupations that started in 2010; and
- elaboration of qualification standards within the national ESF project on development of the National Qualifications System that started in 2013."

3.3 Links to the labour market

1. Does the education system define occupational standards/profiles?
2. What is the role of sectoral bodies (e.g. skills councils) in the definition of sectoral skills needs? Do they develop occupational standards? What is their impact on the development of qualifications framework?
3. If so, are they used to formulate competence standards/profiles and assessment standards/profiles? Do these refer directly to learning outcomes?
4. Are stakeholders involved in other ways in defining the standards/profiles? Which ones? How? Are there formal procedures, mechanisms for their participation?

1. The curricular reform affecting all regional schooling including VET led to defining educational standards within the state educational programmes issued by the state. Elaboration of educational standards for VET programmes, in particular for ISCED 3C programmes offering a certificate of apprenticeship, was supported by analyses of occupations based on the DACUM methodology. The "Developing a Curriculum – DACUM" methodology was used based on the positive experience gained by the State Institute of Vocational Education within an international project of cooperation with the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIAST).
In parallel, however later, elaboration of occupational standards started in 2010 under the supervision of the Labour Ministry to address labour market requirements. Although named "occupational standards" they in fact addressed SK ISCO-08 working positions that are narrower than occupations. This is why clustering of descriptions according to SK ISCO-08 already worked out were required by the Labour Ministry. This was required to better inform VET providers about labour market needs concerning

provision of programmes preparing for occupations. This clustering process has not yet started, however a new initiative starting in 2013 can solve this problem. Within a national ESF project "Development of the National Qualifications System" qualification standards should be elaborated capitalising on occupational standards and informing VET providers on qualification requirements.

2. Twenty sectoral councils created within the national ESF project aimed at the development of the National System of Occupations directly contributed to identification of sectoral skills needs and development of occupational standards. The Alliance of Sectoral Councils coordinates sectoral councils' activities and finally approves occupational standards developed by respective councils. This experience should be exploited within setting qualification standards. Thousand qualification standards should be developed in cooperation with sectoral councils within the aforementioned national ESF project "Development of the National Qualifications System" till 2015.

3. As already explained secondary VET programmes are based on educational standards composed of content standards and performance standards. Performance standards are strongly interlinked with competences. Gaining these competences should be achieved within autonomously elaborated school educational programmes, within which learning outcomes should be specified. It is finally up to schools to identify learning outcomes relevant for the labour market. Relevance of performance standards, that are however much more general than individual learning outcomes, and individual learning outcomes identified by schools should be secured by the National Qualifications System and qualification standards set within it. Qualification standards should also contain assessment standards more precisely prescribing what an individual interested in obtaining qualification must be able to achieve. It is expected that these assessment standards will better correspond to labour market needs than current assessment procedures much more influenced by individual schools.

4. Stakeholders can influence the relevance to labour market needs on several levels. School educational programmes developed by VET schools must be discussed with employers before issuing.
Educational standards within state educational programmes for VET were developed in cooperation with expert groups covering all fields of national economy, within which stakeholders were allowed to participate. Despite this, participation of employers was seen insufficient. Therefore establishment of sectoral councils was initiated after implementation of the 2008 curricular reform.
Occupational standards and qualification standards are now in process of development by sectoral councils, as already explained.
On the ultimate level, the National VET Council, set up according to the Act No. 184/2009 Coll. on VET, and its working groups covering respective sectors of economy can influence strategic decisions concerning graduates' profiles and provision of VET programmes. These working groups and the National VET Council itself can e. g. influence the provision of VET programmes by decisions on new experimental programmes.

3.4 The EHEA and the Bologna process

1. Is there a higher education qualifications framework in your country based on the EHEA qualifications framework? What is the impact of this on curriculum design practices in higher education institutions (HEIs)?
2. Has the focus on learning outcomes been an important part of your national implementation of the Bologna process?
3. Is the ECTS system generally used by HEIs in your country? If yes, are credits typically based on learning outcomes? Do course descriptions typically define learning outcomes?
4. Have there been any major national initiatives supporting the use of learning outcomes in the framework of the implementation of the Bologna process?

5. Is the Tuning programme known in your country? What has been the level of participation of national players in this programme?

1. There is no higher education qualifications framework developed in Slovakia and a respective referencing report has not been prepared. Curriculum design in higher education institutions (HEIs) partly reflects a learning outcomes approach within descriptions of graduates' profiles in respective programmes. There was however a focused policy and identification of learning outcomes appeared for the first time in legislation adopted in 2013 (see [17]).
2. Adoption of a 3-cycle model of higher education requiring introduction of Bachelor studies was the most visible feature in implementation of the Bologna process. Furthermore, a credit system has been launched and all HEIs adopted credit-based and international classification (A to F six-point scale) based assessment.

3. A credit system was introduced, however not necessarily ECTS compatible. Just gradually under the international influence (*inter alia* the Erasmus mobility and efforts to create joint programmes with foreign universities) individual schools reflected the need to adopt a genuine ECTS.
Credits are typically not based on learning outcomes and course descriptions do not typically define learning outcomes. This statement is also justified by a dry answer "No" by the Education Ministry to the question 4.2. "Are ECTS credits linked with learning outcomes in higher education programmes in your country? (This means that learning outcomes are formulated for all programme components and credits are awarded only when the stipulated learning outcomes are actually acquired.)" within the report to the European Commission. [10]

4. There was no explicit national initiative supporting the use of learning outcomes in the framework of the implementation of the Bologna process. Within the National ESF project "Development of the National Qualifications System" representatives of HEIs, including a president of the Slovak Rectors' Conference, expressed their support for development of NQS and NQF covering all subsystems, and representatives of HEIs participate in projects' working groups. Within this project qualification standards based on learning outcomes should be developed, as explicitly stated in projects' internal documents.

5. The Tuning programme is known among policy makers and experts, however it had no influence on implementing the Bologna process. There is no evidence about the influence of Tuning programme methodologies (see e. g. [36]) on individual HEIs, but it is very unlikely. (This can be discussed within the interviews, if needed.)
Dissatisfaction with the quality of higher education (and partly with reflection of a shift from content to outcomes based programming) led to strong support of the Education Ministry to join the OECD feasibility study "Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes (AHELO)" [37]. Slovakia is the only EU country participating in all three strands – Generic skills, Economics, and Engineering (Construction).

3.5 Use of ECVET

1. What progress has been made since 2009 and what is the current "state of the art" in the development and adoption of the ECVET?
2. Is it used in practice? By whom and for what purpose?
3. How are learning outcomes used for ECVET?
4. Are stakeholders involved in defining learning outcomes for ECVET? Which ones? How? Are there formal procedures, mechanism where they participate?

1. The Slovak Academic Association for International Cooperation (SAAIC) commissioned elaboration of a feasibility study (European credit system for vocational education and training : feasibility study for the Slovak Republic) within the NAFORFIL project. [38] Six key findings and recommendations were identified (see p. 31), within which the following two are relevant here:
Recommendation 1. Not to support initial philosophy of ECVET implementation aimed at creation of credit points system in VET (ECVET) compatible with the credit system applied in higher education (ECTS);
Recommendation 3. To recognise learning outcomes based transformation of qualifications as the core of ECVET initiatives, which can subsequently focus on transfer and accumulation of learning outcomes based credits in support of permeability in VET.
It has been recommended to focus on identification of learning outcomes within mobilities and on assessment and recognition of learning outcomes rather than on transfer and recognition of credit points. Thus, it has been recommended to stick to the national VET system that is not used to work with credit points, and therefore, to focus, with regard to credit transfer, on transfer of learning outcomes without addressing the issue of credit points.
Subsequently, within Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) mobilities ECVET has been prioritised in order to gather experience in identification of learning outcomes.
Furthermore, international documents in support of ECVET were translated into Slovak and an ECVET manual has been prepared to be issued in 2014 within the project "National Team of ECVET Experts 2012 – 2013" [39], supported by the European Commission. Good practice examples from the LLP projects with Slovak participants (addressing also identification and assessment of learning outcomes) should be included in the manual.

2. There is no national policy aimed at implementation of ECVET. The ECVET principles are applied within international projects, in particular within LLP mobilities. There are no intentions to embed a credit system within IVET so far. It is partly due to underdeveloped post-secondary VET in Slovakia. It is expected that ECVET can play a more important role provided post-secondary programmes are more developed and tertiary short-cycle programmes are developed. In such a case and in particular with regard to EQF 5 level qualifications, a credit system covering also not yet existing programmes might be needed and harmonisation of ECVET and ECTS could be seen as urgently needed.

3. Identification and assessment of learning outcomes is seen as a crucial point within LLP mobilities *per se*, and in particular with regard to those that indicated ECVET as their priority. Promotion of ECVET targeting people interested in international projects is envisaged for the end of February 2014. SAAIC supported by the national team of ECVET experts will also organise two events outside the capital city (19 February in Košice, 25 February in Banská Bystrica).

4. In Slovakia, as already explained, ECVET is seen and prioritised with regard to mobilities. Representatives of employers were involved within mobilities as well as within earlier most important transfer of innovation projects and ECVET pilot projects with the Slovak participation (see more in the feasibility study [38]). It is understood that identification of learning outcomes cannot be done without specific experience of the world of work. It is also visible from involvement of employers and other stakeholders in relevant ESF projects. Representatives of employers, namely the Association of Electro-technical Industry of the SR and the Slovak Automotive Industry Association, are among national ECVET experts.

3.6 Use of the European Social Fund to support the move towards learning outcomes

In this section we want to understand if/how ESF funding is used to support the development of learning outcomes approaches with the overall development of a lifelong learning system.

1. In planning ESF funded interventions, in what ways and to what extent is the development of learning outcomes approaches included in programme components?
2. What is the importance of these programme components in evaluating the impact of ESF funded interventions?
3. How are the relevant programme components connected to other interventions within a sub subsystem (e.g. coherence among interventions targeted towards HE)
4. How are the relevant programme components connected to other interventions targeting more than one subsystem (e.g. VET and HE)

1. ESF played a crucial role in implementation of lifelong learning based policies and it is also inevitable for future progress. A learning outcomes approach is embedded in the ESF programming documents of Operational Programme Education 2007-2013. [9] Priority axes of this operational programme are as follows:
Priority Axis 1 "Reform of the Education and Vocational Training System";
Priority Axis 2 "Continuing Education as an Instrument of Human Resource Development";
Priority Axis 3 "Support to Education of Persons with Special Education Needs";
Priority Axis 4 "Modern Education for a Knowledge-Based Society for the Bratislava Region".
Particularly important is ESF Priority Axis 1 "Reform of the Education and Vocational Training System" and its Measure 1.1 "Transformation of Traditional School into a Modern One". It opened the door for demand-driven projects of schools aimed at development of school educational programmes. Without explicitly speaking about learning outcomes, these projects facilitated accommodation of 2008 curricula reform, within which schools were asked to identify learning outcomes sticking to educational standards set by respective state educational programmes, and embed them into their own autonomously elaborated school educational programmes.
Within Priority Axis 4 similar activities as in Priority Axis 1 are supported, however under the different financial conditions, as the Bratislava region is not eligible for funding under the Convergence objective.
Furthermore, systemic, the so-called national projects within ESF were launched run by the governmental institutions:
a) Training Teachers with regard to Development of School Educational Programmes (Vzdelávanie učiteľov v súvislosti s tvorbou školských vzdelávacích programov), ITMS codes: 2611013008, 26140130015 [40];
b) Development of the National Qualifications System (Tvorba Národnej sústavy kvalifikácií), ITMS codes: 26140230013, 26120130023 [41];
c) Development of Secondary VET (Rozvoj stredného odborného vzdelávania), ITMS code: 26110130548 [42];
d) Promotion of the National Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Guidance Strategy (Ďalšie vzdelávanie a poradenstvo pre dospelých ako nástroj lepšej uplatniteľnosti na trhu práce), ITMS code: 26120130024 [43].

Titles of these projects explain how a learning outcomes approach is applied. In the first one, training was offered and methodologies were developed to facilitate development of school educational programmes (including learning outcomes). In the second one, identification of learning outcomes relates to setting qualification standards. In the third one, labour market needs and learning outcomes required by the world of work should be reflected by pilot schools testing the transformation of IVET and within digital learning objects to be delivered in support of better learning environment in VET schools. In the fourth one, learning outcomes based short track further education programmes for 44 qualifications identified as required by labour market should be developed.

Within the Operational Programme Employment and Social Inclusion the national ESF project National System of Occupations (Národná sústava povolaní), ITMS codes: 27110130006, 27130130022 [44] is carried out under the supervision of the Labour Ministry. Respective occupational standards were developed in cooperation with social partners. Occupational standards are described in terms of "general capabilities", "professional knowledge" and "professional skills" and at least in some cases can be considered learning outcomes based and very useful for qualification standards setting and VET programming.

2. The aforementioned national projects are crucial for transforming the education and qualifications systems. It is too soon to evaluate the impact of these projects in supporting implementation of change. Nevertheless, as explained in detail in the analysis prepared within the national ESF project "Development of the National Qualifications System" [5], national players must find agreement about the role of two existing and one to be developed sets of standards ("educational standards" for regional schooling already set, "occupational standards" partly already developed, and "qualification standards" to be elaborated). Furthermore, pronouncing a "shift to learning outcomes" must be more supported by policies aimed at development of procedures of learning outcomes assessment and by policies aimed at enrichment of learning environments supportive for achieving respective learning outcomes by individuals.

3. Respective components of Operational Programme Education target national priorities, as visible from the priority axes above. Priority Axes 1 and 2 are strongly interrelated with curricular reforms. E. g. Measure 1.1 allowed for development of curricula in regional schools, sticking to the 2008 curricular reform introduced by the Education Act No. 245/2008 Coll. Although the need for a curricular reform was less pronounced within higher education compared to regional schooling, Measure 1.2 "Higher education institutions and research & development as the driving forces in the development of a knowledge-based society" offered opportunities for higher HEIs to improve their study programmes when addressing the issue of enhancing the quality of education directly targeted within this measure. No doubt, higher education faces substantial changes in both delivery of programmes and delivery of graduates for the labour market.

4. At least two projects have an overarching character and must cover all subsystems: "National System of Occupations" under the supervision of the Labour Ministry that started in 2010, and "Development of the National Qualifications System" under the supervision of the Education Ministry that started in 2013. A memorandum on cooperation between the Education and Labour Ministries was signed on 27 October 2009 to facilitate coordination of the development of National System of Occupations and National Qualifications System.

4 Learning outcomes in teacher and trainer education and training

4.1 Initial teacher/trainer education and training

Initial education of teachers is offered at universities. It can be offered by pedagogical faculties specialised in teacher training, but also by other faculties focusing primarily on science and research, but in addition offering also teacher training. Furthermore, there is also a consecutive model, the so-called complementary pedagogical study (CPS) that has been traditionally very important for VET teachers, as the study aims at acquisition of pedagogical competences by professionals who graduated from non-teaching programmes. CPS can be seen as a consecutive model of training, but it is possible to enter CPS during non-teaching studies and complete it simultaneously with non-teaching studies. Thus, there have been traditionally 4 ways to become a teacher:
- university teacher training at pedagogical faculty;
- university teacher training at other faculties;
- simultaneous studying of CPS and other non-teaching programme;
- graduation from a non-teaching programme and consecutive completion of CPS.

While teaching and non-teaching university programmes must be accredited by the Accreditation Commission affiliated to the government, CPS was only regulated by the decree of the Education Ministry, which was in the long term criticized, predominantly by pedagogical faculties. Pedagogical faculties traditionally offered a higher share of pedagogical and psychological training compared to other aforementioned programmes. This criticism resulted in legislative change requiring universities offering these programmes, and in particular CPS, to focus much more on "pedagogy" training. Therefore, at least 200 hours of training in pedagogy was stipulated by legislation and finally since 1 January 2012 provision of CPS has been conditioned by the parallel existence of an accredited teaching programme. This measure however resulted in reluctance of universities traditionally offering CPS to open CPS under new conditions. As a consequence IVET started to suffer from a lack of qualified teachers. Professionals interested in teaching in VET schools, and therefore required to acquire pedagogical capability, lost the opportunity to enter CPS and to fulfil qualification requirements. Thus, a new amendment of legislation was adopted, coming in force since November 2013, abolishing the obligation to apply for accreditation of teaching programme by the Accreditation Commission affiliated to the government. Instead, provision of CPS is only conditioned by the existence of any content-related programme (teaching/non-teaching) and accreditation of CPS by the Accreditation Council of the Education Ministry for Continuing Training of Pedagogical and Professional Staff established to accredit in-service training programmes (the so-called continuous professional development, according to Act No. 317/2009 Coll. on Pedagogical Staff and Professional Staff), see more in 4.2 below. As a consequence with regard to accreditation procedures a risk of double standard has been aired. [45] and [46] It is true that a mix of accredited non-teaching programme and CPS, which is very appropriate for obtaining qualification for teaching professional (vocational) subjects required by VET schools, can become very attractive also for obtaining qualification for academic subjects (e. g. Chemistry in grammar schools). It can be attractive for students, as they can receive two qualifications simultaneously (Chemistry and a Teacher of Chemistry) and also for universities, as compared to the accreditation of teaching programmes no proofs of research in pedagogy and no internal staff for teaching pedagogy, psychology and social science is needed. The Education Ministry rejected the criticism arguing that 80% of the minimum 200 hours of CPS must be allocated to training in pedagogy, psychology and social science. The Education Ministry declined to comment criticism concerning the creation of "double standard" and a risk of low quality of training in pedagogy as a consequence of lower requirements.
Significantly, this dispute focused on input rather than outcomes. There was no debate on achieving relevant identified learning outcomes. It is true that it is strange that it is possible to become a qualified teacher according to regulations stipulated by Act No. 317/2009 Coll. on Pedagogical Staff and Professional Staff, which was originally created to regulate qualification requirements and in-service-training of pedagogical and other professional staff. However, there would be no problem with two ways provided a "single" standard was set by description of required qualification standards.
As already mentioned, the accreditation procedure did not require submission of documents containing identified learning outcomes in all the aforementioned alternative ways to become a qualified teacher.

An example of requirements the accreditation procedure is based on is presented in the section on higher education in part 2.1. The description of requirements concerning teacher training programmes contains categories that allow for identification of learning outcomes within the graduate's profile description and/or respective specific categories - theoretical knowledge, practical skills, and additional skills and abilities. As visible from this example, respective items related to knowledge and skills are quite broad, indicating only a framework or even only topics that should be reflected. An extreme example is the item "e-learning" that is a reminder to take care about the need to address new ICT technologies rather than a requirement to master necessary (and therefore identified and included) skills.

The example in the section on higher education in part 2.1 illustrates requirements related to accreditation of regular higher education programmes, e. g. a programme for teachers of Chemistry at lower and upper secondary schools. This example is valid for all academic subjects. Another description is valid for teaching professional (vocational) subjects.

The example below describes requirements concerning the accreditation of CPS required by the Accreditation Council of the Education Ministry for Continuing Training of Pedagogical and Professional Staff. Here are respective headings from the accreditation form filled in as suggested by the Education Ministry as a model example.

Main objective:	Acquire pedagogical capability for teaching professional (vocational) subjects referring to the study programme "Management of SMEs"
Specific objectives:	Proposed specific objectives (professional competences) must stem from the main objective and from the content of the study aimed acquiring pedagogical capability in pedagogy, psychology, didactics and field didactics, as described in study fields in teaching
Graduate's profile	Professional competences acquired by the graduate of CPS for teaching professional (vocational) subjects referring to the study programme "Management of SMEs" are set

Documents submitted for accreditation of CPS according to new legislation and application forms elaborated by the Education Ministry must contain specific objectives of the programme and a graduate's profile containing identified "professional competences". A model example of programming documents and application forms dated 30 January 2014 do not contain more detailed requirements concerning professional competences, but it can be assumed that they should refer to a sort of professional standards mentioned in Act No. 317/2009 Coll. on Pedagogical Staff and Professional Staff. As explicitly stated in § 25 (4), the content and profile of respective study programme must obligatorily stick to the professional standard of a beginning teacher, which is defined as a set of needed professional competences. This kind of standards has not yet been elaborated (see part 4.2 below).
Similar applies to training of trainers. They are asked to acquire pedagogical capability also by CPS organised for them by higher education institution or providers of in-service training for pedagogical staff. CPS for trainers is regulated by the same legislation as mentioned above. The extent of stressing outcomes over inputs depends on respective providers, as in the case of teachers it is not especially enforced by legislation.
An almost forgotten good practice example related to CPS was mentioned within the interview with the VET expert: "An isolated initiative of the Department of Engineering Pedagogy and Psychology of the Faculty of Materials Science and Technology of the Slovak University of Technology, which does not exist anymore, resulted in development of CPS standards. This initiative was much more advanced compared to the practice of other CPS providers. Within this initiative based on a grant of the Ministry of Education a publication (issued in 2003) presenting a CPS curriculum is still an interesting source of inspiration for CPS programming today."

4.2 In-service teacher/trainer education and training (continuous professional development)

Act No. 317/2009 Coll. on Pedagogical Staff and Professional Staff is a comprehensive legislative norm establishing rights and duties of teachers, trainers and other learning facilitators. Originally aimed at setting of a new model of continuing training and professional development it also stipulated the need for setting qualification requirements by elaboration of qualification standards for four career levels:
- beginning pedagogue/professional worker;
- independent pedagogue/professional worker;
- pedagogue/professional worker with the first attestation;
- pedagogue/professional worker with the second attestation;

in two specific career positions: specialist and leader (manager), and for the following categories of pedagogical staff: teacher, trainer, tutor, and pedagogical assistant, foreign lector, trainer of sport school or sport class, and répétiteur.

A specialised working group elaborated qualification standards that were published in a draft version and submitted for public discussion. These standards were not accepted either by pedagogical community or by the Education Ministry. Elaboration of new sets of standards has been announced, nevertheless it is still pending.

There are following types of in-service training programmes identified according to the Decree of the Ministry No. 445/2009 Coll. on Continuing Education, Credits and Attestation of Pedagogical Staff and Professional Staff:
- adaptive education, which is obligatory for starting teachers and lasts for one year. The teacher does not earn any credits for its completion;
- up-to-date education, which is designated for upholding the professional competence needed for standard performance or attestation;
- innovative education, which is meant to improve professional competence of a teacher;
- specialised education, which is designated for acquiring professional competences to pursue specialised activities;
- function education, which is obligatory for teachers in administrative positions. The teacher does not earn any credits for its completion;
- qualification education, which provides the teacher with higher qualification.

There are accreditation forms for each of the aforementioned types of in-service training (available at [47]. These forms submitted to the Accreditation Council of the Education Ministry for Continuing Training of Pedagogical and Professional Staff require descriptions of main objective, specific objectives and a graduate's profile, and are similar to the form related to CPD described in part 4.1 above. The extent of stressing outcomes over inputs depends on respective providers. They should stick to respective (however not existing yet) professional standards, and therefore it is impossible to insist on a specific outcomes based approach.

5 Impact: major areas of progress and issues

In this section we would like to understand:

1. If/ how conditions (economic, employment, social, etc.) have evolved in the recent years focussing on how they affect the shift to learning outcomes. What are the expected changes in the future?
2. How do conditions favour or hinder dissemination and take-up of the learning outcomes approach? What are potential barriers to take up?
3. What are estimated to be the conditions of success / factors supporting or hindering the dissemination and implementation of the learning outcomes approach in the country?
4. To what extent do development interventions targeted to teacher education and professional development promote the use of learning outcomes?

1. Slovakia has seen a very high GDP and employment growth after entering EU in 2004, interrupted by the 2008 crisis. A quite rush recovery in GDP is however not accompanied by an increase in employment. Pushed by harsh conditions of crisis employers better managed their human resources, e. g. preferring overtime working over recruiting a new staff. Unemployment in Slovakia in among the highest in the EU and it is extremely high among young people despite a comparably high level of education. Leaving school with only ISCED 2 level is very rare and Slovakia has a very low share of early school leavers. At the same time, the industry faces a shortage of qualified workers. About 300,000 new workers are expected to be needed within following five years, according to a representative of the Slovak Automotive Industry Association

[48]. This kind of supply is however unrealistic due to a population decline in the 1990s and due to a severe mismatch in qualification supply and demand. The industry used to draw from the army of unemployed skilled workers did not take care about changes in the school system, in particular in secondary IVET system. As a consequence of irresponsible underfinancing of education and a per capita financial scheme that was not balanced by the quality check of graduates caused a severe escape from ISCED 3C programmes in favour of ISCED 3A programmes, and from maths, science and technology (MST) based programmes to humanities and social science. This resulted in a current need for revival of MST programmes in higher education and reshaping profiles of primary and secondary school graduates to favour more MST and to attract more students to enter ISCED 3C programmes. Furthermore, dissatisfaction with the quality of graduates and dissatisfaction with a portfolio of their competences leads to calls for substantial changes in practical training. It is required to increase a share of work-based learning opportunities and even to introduce a dual system with practical training offered by employers at workplace. This change could support identification of learning outcomes better corresponding to labour market needs. Identification of learning outcomes relevant for the labour market became an urgent agenda.

2. As already explained in the previous paragraph conditions in Slovakia are favourable for adoption of the learning outcomes approach and its dissemination. The main barrier is a lack of experience in translation into practice. While the philosophy is widely accepted, there is a serious problem with appropriate identification of learning outcomes. Even in cases respective learning outcomes seem to be well formulated it is not clear whether they are based on an adequate fundament. There is a serious risk that learning outcomes formulations are insufficient for deep understanding of the impact of respective learning outcomes on learners' performance, and that they are insufficiently interlinked with procedures of assessment. The following is a comment of the interviewed general education expert concerning this: "There were no arguments against learning outcomes when the curricular reform was launched ... The criticism have emerged rather recently as a result of a lack of theory and a lack of expertise in learning outcomes issues … a lack of teaching materials and professional assistance as well as research in pedagogy aimed at interlinking classroom activities with respective levels of taxonomy and achieving identified learning outcomes causes a tendency to "return to content" in the classroom practice.
Furthermore, there is a lack of experts from the world of work able to translate workplace requirements into the language allowing for identification of learning outcomes (or setting standards) based on mutual agreement and understanding. The following statement of the interviewed adult learning expert indicates a crucial barrier: "The methodology on national level for description of learning outcomes is lacking."

3. Implementation and dissemination of a learning outcomes approach desperately needs a capacity building on the side of employers. Employers *per se* have difficulties to formulate their needs in the language of learning outcome while educators – both theorists and practitioners who are already much more skilled in formulating learning outcomes lack the experience in the workplace. As a consequence learning outcomes identified by educators refer predominantly to knowledge, skills and other competences embedded in a traditional content approach and are similar to learning objectives rather than to practical skills and competences needed in the workplace. Educators widely reflect traditional approaches based on the Mager's "preparing instructional objectives" technique or the Bloom's taxonomy revised by Krathwohl and Anderson. As a consequence learning outcomes or educational standards seem to have an appropriate format, but the relevance to the workplace and the labour market is not necessarily secured.
The following is the way how the interviewed VET expert assessed pluses and minuses of developments in the VET subsystem:
"The major success (e.g. in contrast to general education) is a unified methodology applied within secondary IVET and subsequently visible in VET StEPs developed for IVET.

Despite three[2] parallel initiatives addressing a (more or less) shift to learning outcomes all suffer from a lack of analysis of workplace needs in terms of knowledge, skills and competences. Identification of learning outcomes is led by educators and is based on their expertise. The relevant expertise from the world of work is however missing due to a lack of specialists on the side of employers.
For further progress capacity building on the side of employers is urgently needed. A functional analysis of workplace activities done in cooperation of specialists from the worlds of work and education can substantially improve the quality of qualification standards that should be developed till 2015."

4. The influence of a learning outcomes approach on initial teacher training seems to be very limited. A preliminary review of teacher training programmes seems to confirm that universities prefer to stick to traditional input based approach. This is what the interviewed higher education expert said to this issue: "Learning outcomes do not play an important role in teacher training programmes. HEIs delivering teacher training only use learning outcomes in the extent required within an accreditation procedure of study programmes and informing on study possibilities at HEI (information sheets for courses)." This confirms that identification of learning outcomes is seen as relevant for administrative purposes only and not for programming studies and learning itself.
In contrast to this in-service training and continuous professional development fully reflects learning outcomes approach in the Act No. 317/2009 Coll. on Pedagogical Staff and Professional Staff. Nevertheless, translation into practice is pending. The envisaged professional standards of respective categories of pedagogical staff, respective career paths and respective four career levels have not yet been adopted and accreditation forms do not explicitly focus on learning outcomes. Thus, it is fully up to individual cases to what extent a learning outcomes approach is used in both programming education and shaping a learning environment for learners. Furthermore and quite paradoxically, non-existence of professional standards led to increased importance of diverse in-service training programmes bringing credits to teachers, and gathering credit points became crucial for career progression. Attestation examination cannot be based on assessment of respective professional standards and individual learning or experiential learning is therefore less valued compared to accredited formal training bringing credits to its graduates.

5.1 What are the major areas of progress since 2009?

The major progress since 2009 is in better understanding of the need to establish the National Qualifications System, and in particular the National Qualifications Framework as an instrument for reviewing current qualifications and IVET programmes. In secondary IVET it translates in better understanding of the inevitability of closer cooperation of the world of work and the world of education. A lot of experience has been acquired within revision of state educational programmes for secondary IVET, within the National System of Occupations and descriptions of qualifications elaborated with regard to a lifelong learning agenda. Hopefully it would translate in creation of qualification standards within the overarching National Qualifications System.

5.2 What are the major issues to be resolved?

As already stressed there is a lack of experts in the world of work and a "shift to learning outcomes" is promoted more by educators than by other stakeholders. In the case of employers a "shift to learning outcomes" is usually interpreted as "just-in-time" delivery of needed workforce without sufficient contribution to the clarification of required needs. Slovakia needs to better study effects of a "shift to learning outcomes" in other countries that progressed more, and in particular to study methodologies of

[2] These are the following: education standards set in VET, occupational standards already partly developed within the National System of Occupations and qualification standards in process of development since 2013.

identification of learning outcomes and compare them with the domestic experience. The domestic experience seems to suffer from insufficient functional analysis of workplace needs as well as the low quality of labour market intelligence. Improvement in particular in these fields is urgently needed.
Furthermore, better understanding of learning environments emerging around traditional formal education must be more studied. Relevant research and development is however missing, partly due to underfinancing of research and partly due to a severe brain drain. Improving research capacities is inevitable in order to better monitor an impact of policies to assist schools in managing the change and support individuals in managing their learning.

6 Summary, final comments and overall impression

Please include a one-page of summary with the key issues for the country, highlighting the areas where the most progress has been made since 2009.

In this section please also include items you feel are important but did not fit into the above template of questions. This could include, for example, critical attitudes about learning outcomes or transparency instruments.

A "shift to learning outcomes" policy is well embedded in a national discourse and partly also in legislation. Translation into practice started exactly in the 2008/2009 school year in regional schooling including secondary VET, and in specific segments of adult learning since 2009. Compared to 2009, decision makers, experts and practitioners are more experienced with regard to pluses and minuses of translation of this policy into practice. There were changes introduced in state educational programmes and a new effort emerged with regard to alignment of VET and continuing professional development to labour market needs. Since 2010, the National System of Occupations has been developed and occupational standards for 1,400 out of 1,800 SK ISCO-08 occupations should be developed by 2015. Furthermore, the development of the National Qualifications System, originally envisaged by the Act No. 568/2009 Coll. on Lifelong Learning started in March 2013. Experience gathered in setting educational standards within the state educational programmes for regional schooling, occupational standards within the Register of Occupations in the National System of Occupations, and qualification standards developed for an interim list of qualification to replace a pending National Qualifications System, can be efficiently used in the development of qualification standards within the National Qualifications System that should cover all subsystems and learning environments, thus serving also for recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning. The most visible progress is in secondary IVET as a consequence of a longer history of reflection of the learning outcomes philosophy compared to the general education sector and the higher education sector. The importance of a learning outcomes approach in secondary VET can be best documented by the following quotation from the 2011 methodology elaborated by the State Institute of Vocational Education to facilitate development of schools educational programmes: "The most significant systemic change within the education reform lies in the fact that the assessment relates primarily to assessment of expected learning outcomes. School educational programmes set assessment standards defined by the organizational and methodological guidelines for summative assessment according to the currently valid legislation, by criteria, resources and assessment procedures for interim assessment within subjects and for summative assessment." [49, p. 30] The implementation of a learning outcomes approach is hampered by a lack of expertise from the side of the world of work. The capacity building is urgently needed for receiving qualified impulses from the world of work identifying an appropriate mix of skills required by the labour market and respective working positions to influence appropriate identification of learning outcomes. The recent experience indicates that a feedback from the world of work features rejections rather than proposals of constructive changes. It is caused by a lack of experts from the world of work understanding also the world of education.
Compared to the time prior 2008 a serious debate on the National Qualifications Framework functions takes place. In 2013, strategies for revision of the initial National Qualifications Framework were proposed, as well as suggestions for creation of the National Qualifications System based on analyses of international experience. [5] and 50]

7 List of sources:

Please list all the sources you have used including the web references and the date you accessed it, as this is required for reporting to Cedefop.

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National Institute for Certified Measurement (Národný ústav certifikovaných meraní vzdelávania), http://www.nucem.sk/

National Institute for Education (Štátny pedagogický ústav), http://www.statpedu.sk/

National Institute for Lifelong Learning (Národný ústav celoživotného vzdelávania), http://nuczv.sk/

State Institute of Vocational Education (Štátny inštitút odborného vzdelávania), http://www.siov.sk/

8 In preparation for the interviews

A template of questions will be prepared by the senior experts and you will also be asked to include your own questions as necessary to complete the fiche.
Your supervising expert, whose name is in your contract, will work with you in identifying the key informants for your country, respecting the criteria suggested by Cedefop (policy makers or experts in the field of general (primary or secondary) education, policy makers or experts in the VET area, higher education policy makers or experts, adult education / lifelong learning policy makers or experts). There will be four interviews per country.

We invite you to also make suggestions about **whom to interview, as well as the specific questions to ask** for this country in order to complete the fiche? Generally there should be 1 interview per subsystem (however 1 person may provide information on more subsystems). Please propose the following interviewees and questions that you want to ask them:

This paper was prepared based on a desk research and many informal discussions with experts knowledgeable about respective subsystems.
Three types of questions can be used within interviews:

i. questions validating important finding or parts of this paper;
ii. questions asking for deeper clarification or commenting of findings or parts of this paper; and
iii. questions concerning future intentions and actions of national authorities.

The following experts have been suggested to be interviewed:

Klaudius Šilhár, president of the Slovak Association of Adult Education Institutions concerning adult learning;
Michal Rehúš, a researcher responsible for analyses of higher education programmes in terms of applying a learning outcomes approach within the national ESF project "Development of the National Qualifications System", concerning higher education;
Vladimír Repáš, former director of the National Institute for Education, member of the Curricular Board of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport, concerning general education; and
Juraj Vantuch, a member of the Curricular Board of the Education Ministry, concerning VET.

All the aforementioned experts have been selected as the best suitable for provision of experts' views concerning the status quo. In case the questions on future plans are relevant another interviewers can be suggested.

With regard to the questions concerning the categories i.) and ii.) we suggest that you indicate findings or parts of the paper that are of particular interest for you. We can subsequently suggest a more detailed wording of questions for interviewees.