

## Chapter 4

# The teaching workforce in the Slovak Republic

*This chapter is about policies to improve the effectiveness of the teaching workforce. It deals with the size of the teaching workforce and its geographical distribution. Furthermore, it discusses teacher preparation, recruitment, career development and use of time. The chapter places particular emphasis on areas of priority for the Slovak Republic such as the low status of the teaching profession, teacher salary levels, teacher professional development and the certification process for teachers. The chapter also reviews school autonomy in the management of the teaching workforce, teacher appraisal processes, teacher compensation and the use of teaching assistants.*

This chapter addresses policies to improve the effectiveness of the teaching workforce. Among other things, it analyses the size of the teaching workforce and its geographical distribution; how teachers are prepared and improve their skills while in the profession (e.g. initial preparation, professional development); how teachers are recruited and distributed across individual schools; how teacher resources and teaching time are allocated to students so that they optimally respond to improvement priorities (e.g. class size, teacher-student ratios, use of teachers' time); and how teachers are given incentives to perform at a high level (e.g. teacher appraisal, teacher certification, recognition and compensation).

## Context and features

### **Profile of the teaching workforce**

#### ***Size of the teaching workforce and its main characteristics***

In 2013, 72 909 teachers worked in mainstream schools (pre-primary education, basic education, general secondary education, vocational secondary education, conservatoires) while 5 345 teachers worked in special schools (pre-primary education, basic education, secondary education) (see Tables 4.1 and 4.2). Between 2005 and 2013, the number of teachers working in mainstream schools (not taking into account conservatoires) dropped 7.8%, while the number of teachers in special schools increased by 18.0% (see Tables 4.1 and 4.2). During this period, the fall in teacher numbers was more pronounced in vocational secondary education (21.7%) and general secondary education (12.1%) while more moderate in basic education (7.1%). By contrast, in this period, the number of teachers increased in pre-primary education (12.4%), special pre-primary education (40.9%), special basic education (16.1%) and special secondary education (23.0%) (see Tables 4.1 and 4.2). Figures 4.A1.1 and 4.A1.2 in Annex 4.A1 show teacher growth by provider. About one in five teachers works part-time in both general and vocational secondary education.

A major feature of the teaching profession in the Slovak Republic is its high degree of feminisation: the proportion of females in 2012 reached 100% in pre-primary education (against an OECD average of 97%), 89% in primary education (OECD average of 82%), 78% in lower secondary education (67% within the OECD), 74% in general upper secondary education (OECD average of 59%) and 71% in vocational upper secondary education (OECD average of 53%). In upper secondary education, the Slovak Republic had the 2nd highest proportion of female teachers among OECD countries, while in lower secondary education it had the 5th highest such proportion (OECD, 2014a).

The age distribution of the teaching profession is similar to that of the OECD average country. In 2012, the proportion of teachers aged less than 30 was 11%, 15% and 12% in primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary education respectively, against OECD averages of 13%, 11% and 9%. The proportion of teachers aged 50 and over was 26%, 37% and 39% in primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary education respectively,

Table 4.1. **Number of teachers, by level and type of education, 2005, 2009 and 2013, mainstream schools**

	2005	2009	2013	Change between 2005 and 2013 (%)
<b>Pre-primary education</b>				
State	12 989	13 238	14 001	7.8
Private	80	295	505	531.3
Church	132	208	335	153.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>13 201</b>	<b>13 741</b>	<b>14 841</b>	<b>12.4</b>
<b>Basic education</b>				
State	35 566	32 791	32 344	-9.1
Private	190	484	660	247.4
Church	1 934	1 896	2 002	3.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>37 690</b>	<b>35 171</b>	<b>35 006</b>	<b>-7.1</b>
<b>General secondary education</b>				
State	6 490	6 095	5 344	-17.7
Private	542	691	722	33.2
Church	1 372	1 439	1 321	-3.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>8 404</b>	<b>8 225</b>	<b>7 387</b>	<b>-12.1</b>
<b>Vocational secondary education</b>				
State	16 163	14 136	12 154	-24.8
Private	1 903	1 992	1 902	-0.1
Church	581	563	549	-5.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>18 647</b>	<b>16 691</b>	<b>14 605</b>	<b>-21.7</b>
<b>Conservatoires</b>				
State	604	568	678	12.3
Private	182	274	328	80.2
Church	63	69	64	1.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>849</b>	<b>911</b>	<b>1 070</b>	<b>26.0</b>
<b>All levels and types of education except conservatoires</b>				
State	71 208	66 260	63 843	-10.3
Private	2 715	3 462	3 789	39.6
Church	4 019	4 106	4 207	4.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>77 942</b>	<b>73 828</b>	<b>71 839</b>	<b>-7.8</b>

Note: Based on head counts. Teachers at primary schools of art and language schools are included in the total number of teachers.

Source: Data provided to the OECD review team by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports.

against OECD averages of 30%, 34% and 38%. The main concern is that there is a clear ageing trend. The proportion of secondary teachers aged 50 and over increased by 28% to 38% between 2002 and 2012 (OECD, 2014a). In 2014, the average age of teachers was 45.4, which reflects an increase of four years since 2009 (Educational Policy Institute, 2015). In 2014, 6.7% of teachers were working at an age above the typical retirement age (62 years) (Educational Policy Institute, 2015).

Table 4.2. **Number of teachers, by level and type of education, 2005, 2009 and 2013, special schools**

	2005	2009	2013	Change between 2005 and 2013 (%)
<b>Special pre-primary education</b>				
State	180	193	226	25.6
Private	0	19	26	..
Church	6	8	10	66.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>262</b>	<b>40.9</b>
<b>Special basic education</b>				
State	3 686	4 100	4 118	11.7
Private	6	96	176	2 833.3
Church	73	89	77	5.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>3 765</b>	<b>4 285</b>	<b>4 371</b>	<b>16.1</b>
<b>Special secondary education</b>				
State	572	746	660	15.4
Private	2	5	25	1 150.0
Church	5	18	27	440.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>579</b>	<b>769</b>	<b>712</b>	<b>23.0</b>
<b>All levels of education</b>				
State	4 438	5 039	5 004	12.8
Private	8	120	227	2 737.5
Church	84	115	114	35.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>4 530</b>	<b>5 274</b>	<b>5 345</b>	<b>18.0</b>

Note: Based on head counts. Teachers at primary schools of art and language schools are included in the total number of teachers.

Source: Data provided to the OECD review team by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports.

### **Class size and student-teacher ratio**

In 2012, class size was relatively low in the Slovak Republic at 17 and 20 for primary and general lower secondary education respectively (the OECD average was 21 and 24 for the same educational levels, OECD, 2014a). This hides some variation across sectors, as the respective averages for the non-state sector were 16 and 18 (OECD, 2014a). As suggested by Figure 1.A1.6 of Chapter 1, class size seems to be considerably smaller in the private sector while church schools have class sizes only slightly below those of state schools (except in pre-primary education, where they are slightly higher). Also, the same figure shows that class size has decreased considerably in the last decade across school sectors for all educational levels except for pre-primary education (where it has remained constant).

Average class size at special schools is considerably smaller, as it could be expected given their specialisms. In 2013, it stood at 7.5 in pre-primary education, 8.2 in basic education, 17.5 in general secondary education (where larger classes are allowed for gifted children) and 6.8 in vocational secondary education. The low figures reflect much lower class size limits than in mainstream schools, imposed by legislation to take into account the populations served by special schools. These have only slightly decreased in the last five to seven years (Educational Policy Institute, 2015).

Interestingly, student-teacher ratios are closer to those of the average OECD country. In 2012, the average student-teacher ratio was 12, 17, 13 and 14 in pre-primary, primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education respectively, which compare to the following OECD country averages: 14, 15, 14 and 14.

### Qualifications of teachers

In the Slovak Republic the vast majority of teachers meet the required qualifications across all school types. In 2014, the share of qualified teachers in the school system reached 96.1% in pre-primary education, 96.2% in basic education, 97.1% in general secondary education, 94.8% in vocational secondary education, 85.0% in conservatoires and 88.7% in special schools (see Table 4.3). However, in the last five years the share of qualified teachers slightly decreased in all school types except for basic education and special schools (in 2009, it stood at about 99% in pre-primary education, 98% in general secondary education and 95% in vocational secondary education) (see Table 4.3).

Table 4.3. **Number of teachers by qualification status, 2005, 2009 and 2014**

	2005	2009	2014		2005	2009	2014
Pre-primary education				Basic education			
<b>Total number of teachers</b>	<b>10 907</b>	<b>13 799</b>	<b>14 459</b>	<b>Total number of teachers</b>	<b>42 578</b>	<b>35 811</b>	<b>34 212</b>
of which:				of which:			
Qualified teachers	10 650	13 622	13 896	Qualified teachers	36 489	34 059	32 907
Unqualified teachers	257	177	482	Unqualified teachers	6 089	1 752	1 083
Of unknown qualification			81	Of unknown qualification			222
<b>% of qualified teachers</b>	<b>97.6</b>	<b>98.7</b>	<b>96.1</b>	<b>% of qualified teachers</b>	<b>85.7</b>	<b>95.1</b>	<b>96.2</b>
General secondary education				Vocational secondary education			
<b>Total number of teachers</b>	<b>7 801</b>	<b>7 999</b>	<b>6 959</b>	<b>Total number of teachers</b>	<b>17 772</b>	<b>16 283</b>	<b>13 779</b>
of which:				of which:			
Qualified teachers	7 062	7 856	6 757	Qualified teachers	14 646	15 448	13 067
Unqualified teachers	739	143	70	Unqualified teachers	3 126	835	417
Of unknown qualification			132	Of unknown qualification			295
<b>% of qualified teachers</b>	<b>90.5</b>	<b>98.2</b>	<b>97.1</b>	<b>% of qualified teachers</b>	<b>82.4</b>	<b>94.9</b>	<b>94.8</b>
Conservatoires				Special schools			
<b>Total number of teachers</b>		<b>800</b>	<b>829</b>	<b>Total number of teachers</b>	<b>3 947</b>	<b>4 207</b>	<b>5 099</b>
of which:				of which:			
Qualified teachers		718	705	Qualified teachers	2 376	3 382	4 524
Unqualified teachers		82	124	Unqualified teachers	1 571	825	482
Of unknown qualification			0	Of unknown qualification			93
<b>% of qualified teachers</b>		<b>89.8</b>	<b>85.0</b>	<b>% of qualified teachers</b>	<b>60.2</b>	<b>80.4</b>	<b>88.7</b>

Note: Number of teachers is based on head counts.

Source: Data provided to the OECD review team by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports.

In international comparison, Slovak teachers are highly qualified. According to TALIS (OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey)\* data, in 2013, 97.5% of Slovak lower secondary teachers had a university degree (ISCED 5A) or higher, the 6th largest figure among the 34 TALIS participating countries (against a TALIS average of 89.5%). However, this is not the case in pre-primary education because the minimum required qualification at this educational level is at upper secondary level (ISCED 3A, see below).

\* TALIS is the OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey, which was implemented in 2008 and in 2013, covering lower secondary education and with the participation of 24 and 34 countries respectively. TALIS 2013 enabled countries to also conduct the survey in their primary and upper secondary schools. The Slovak Republic participated in both editions of TALIS with a sample of teachers restricted to lower secondary education. The results derived from TALIS are based on self-reports from teachers and directors and therefore represent their opinions, perceptions, beliefs and their accounts of their activities. Further information is available at [www.oecd.org/edu/school/talis.htm](http://www.oecd.org/edu/school/talis.htm).

### **Initial preparation**

As explained by Shewbridge et al. (2014), initial teacher education for basic and secondary school teachers takes place at the universities. Upon completing the school-leaving examination at secondary schools, there are three different ways for students to obtain a teaching qualification: i) students may enrol at teacher education faculties, where they can complete bachelor's and master's level teacher education – the length of study is five years. After the defence of a thesis and completion of the state final examination they receive a pedagogical qualification; ii) students may enrol in a different study field and concurrently complete supplementary pedagogical study. Upon completion of both programmes, they may obtain a professional qualification and a pedagogical qualification; and iii) students may complete supplementary pedagogical studies after completing a qualification in another field (Shewbridge et al., 2014). The latter two options are also available from pedagogical departments within non-education faculties. In order to teach a given subject, teachers are required to obtain a master's degree in the relevant field of study. In 2013, pedagogy graduates represented 9.3% of all bachelor's and master's graduates from state universities. Once in school, at least half of the teaching load needs to be in the fields of study for which teachers acquired qualifications (but the employer can reduce this requirement to a third if the concerned school is not able to find a qualified teacher for some subjects) (Educational Policy Institute, 2015).

Qualification requirements for pre-primary education teachers are distinct. The minimum qualification level for a teacher in a pre-primary school (children from age three) is an upper secondary vocational degree with school-leaving examination (ISCED 3A programme), which typically lasts four years. The Slovak Republic is the only OECD country where the minimum qualification requirements for pre-primary education teachers are established at upper secondary level (ISCED 3). In most OECD countries, the minimum qualification is a higher education degree (ISCED 5 level) (OECD, 2014a). In the Slovak Republic, some universities already offer bachelor's and master's level teacher education degrees for pre-primary education. In nursery schools (children up to age three), which are under the authority of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, there is no minimum qualification requirement for teaching staff even if, in practice, providers aim to employ nurses with specialisation in childcare, which used to be provided in secondary vocational education and is now acquired in tertiary education.

### **Recruitment into teaching**

The main requirement to apply for a job as a teacher is to hold a teaching degree for the relevant level of education and field of study. Teachers are hired into schools through an open recruitment procedure organised at the school level and led by the school director. Schools have autonomy in teacher appointment, deployment and dismissal. However, schools need to observe the Act on Pedagogical Employees and Specialist Employees regarding teacher required standard qualifications and procedures for job placement. As of 2012, in order to improve the transparency of recruitment processes, both school founders and individual schools are required to publicise their vacancies on their websites. Aggregate information at the regional level must also be published by regional state authorities. In 2013, a national website – [www.edujobs.sk](http://www.edujobs.sk) – providing information about teacher vacancies in the entire country as well as information about teachers seeking a job,

was created. It seeks to bring together the demand for and supply of teachers. Teachers apply directly to schools and the hiring procedure typically involves interviews at the school with a panel organised at the school level.

### **Career structure**

Teachers in the Slovak Republic are public servants. Conditions of service are set out in the Labour Code and the 2009 Act on Pedagogical Employees and Specialist Employees. The majority of teachers have tenure (indefinite length of position) but there are also teachers on fixed-term contracts, mainly as substitutes for teachers who are absent for a long time (Shewbridge et al., 2014). According to TALIS data, in 2013, 80.9% of lower secondary teachers had tenure (against a TALIS average of 82.5%).

The teaching profession is differentiated both vertically and horizontally through a multi-step career structure and a range of specialised career position respectively. There is a clearly defined career structure for teachers with four career grades. These reflect different levels of professional competencies and experience:

- *Beginning teacher*

Upon entry into teaching, a teacher is placed in the “beginning teacher” category. Teachers undertake a mentoring programme, to be completed within two years, consisting of “adaptation courses” and the supervision of a mentor teacher at the school. This adaptation education is organised by the employer in line with the framework programme for adaptation education issued by the Ministry. The progression to the “independent teacher” category requires passing a school-level evaluation at the end of the first two years of employment or earlier. During this period, in addition to the regular activities of a teacher, a beginning teacher can only perform “Class Teacher” as a specialised activity (see below).

- *Independent teacher*

At this grade, teachers perform teaching activities independently. In addition to these, they are also allowed to perform the specialised activities described below except for mentor teacher. In order to progress to the next grade, teachers either have to pass the 1st certification examination or hold a doctorate in a field of study related to his or her pedagogical activities (provided the teacher has at least three years of teaching experience). Eligibility to pass the 1st certification examination is acquired either by accumulating 60 professional development credits or by accumulating 30 such credits and completing a specific preparatory training programme. The teacher may indefinitely remain an “independent teacher” with no need for re-certification.

- *Teacher with the first certification*

At this grade, teachers are competent to perform the following additional activities: mentor teacher; teacher at training schools or school facilities; teacher-leader; trainer of professional development courses (provided the teacher has at least seven years of experience); member of examination committee for completion of “adaptation course”; and member of examination committee for 1st certification. In order to progress to the next grade, teachers either have to pass the 2nd certification examination (and hold at least a master’s degree) or hold a doctorate in a field of study related to his or her pedagogical activities (provided the teacher has at least six years of teaching experience). Access to the 2nd certification requires holding the 1st certification. As in the previous grade, eligibility to pass the 2nd certification examination involves the

acquisition of 60 professional development credits or the accumulation of 30 such credits together with a specific preparatory training programme. The teacher may remain indefinitely at the first certification level with no need for re-certification.

- *Teacher with the second certification*

At this grade, teachers are competent to perform the following activities in addition to the ones performed at the previous grade: sponsor of a professional development programme; member of examination committee for 2nd certification; member of national and international expert committees; and research and analytical activities to improve education practices in the school system. Once the teacher obtains the second certification, the teacher remains indefinitely at this stage.

Hence, teachers' career advancement is partly linked to their accumulation of credits through the completion of continuous professional development. The terms for obtaining credits are determined through the 2009 Act on Pedagogical Employees and Specialist Employees. The 2015 amendment to the Act specifies that teachers may obtain credits for: completing an accredited programme of professional development; passing a doctoral examination; passing a national foreign language examination; completing education related to pedagogical or specialist activities directly abroad (i.e. not through distance learning); and authoring or co-authoring approved or recommended textbooks and workbooks.

Table 4.4 provides the distribution of teachers across certification levels by level and type of education in 2014. The great majority of teachers are at the "independent" level or have reached 1st certification. Typically 1st certification is the stage at which more teachers are categorised except in pre-primary education and conservatoires. The proportion of teachers at the 2nd certification level is highest in general and vocational secondary education (about 15%) while less than 1% of pre-primary education teachers have reached that level. Table 4.5 provides the distribution of teachers across certification

**Table 4.4. Distribution of teachers across career levels, by level and type of education, 2014**

Percentage of teachers in each career level

Pre-primary education		Basic education		General secondary education	
<b>Total number of teachers</b>	<b>13 862</b>	<b>Total number of teachers</b>	<b>35 766</b>	<b>Total number of teachers</b>	<b>6 816</b>
Unknown career level	0.0	Unknown career level	0.0	Unknown career level	0.3
Unqualified	1.7	Unqualified	1.8	Unqualified	0.5
Beginner	4.8	Beginner	3.6	Beginner	3.2
Independent	88.9	Independent	38.5	Independent	34.8
1st certification	4.0	1st certification	46.2	1st certification	45.8
2nd certification	0.6	2nd certification	9.8	2nd certification	15.4
Vocational secondary education		Conservatoires		Special schools	
<b>Total number of teachers</b>	<b>13 816</b>	<b>Total number of teachers</b>	<b>818</b>	<b>Total number of teachers</b>	<b>4 198</b>
Unknown career level	0.7	Unknown career level	0.0	Unknown career level	0.2
Unqualified	2.4	Unqualified	13.1	Unqualified	4.4
Beginner	3.7	Beginner	3.3	Beginner	3.0
Independent	29.7	Independent	56.8	Independent	36.0
1st certification	48.7	1st certification	20.0	1st certification	44.5
2nd certification	14.7	2nd certification	6.7	2nd certification	11.8

Note: Number of teachers is based on head counts.

Source: Data provided to the OECD review team by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports.



Table 4.5. **Distribution of teachers across career levels (%), by school sector and size of municipality, 2014**

	Unknown career level	Unqualified	Beginner	Independent	1st certification	2nd certification	Total number of teachers
Career levels by school sector							
<b>School sector/career level</b>							
State	0.20	2.3	3.5	46.9	37.7	9.4	72 282
Church	0.05	1.7	5.0	49.0	36.6	7.8	4 366
Private	0.17	6.5	9.8	58.3	19.3	6.0	4 705
<b>Total</b>	<b>0.19</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>47.6</b>	<b>36.6</b>	<b>9.1</b>	<b>81 353</b>
Career levels by size of municipality							
<b>Size of municipality/career level</b>							
<= 1 000	0.07	3.2	5.3	60.3	26.2	5.0	5 438
> 1 000 and <= 2 000	0.09	2.7	4.6	52.6	33.5	6.5	9 230
> 2 000 and <= 3 000	-	2.8	4.5	50.6	35.4	6.7	5 047
> 3 000 and <= 4 000	0.04	3.8	3.5	49.9	34.5	8.3	2 706
> 4 000 and <= 5 000	0.17	3.2	3.9	48.9	34.6	9.2	2 365
> 5 000	0.24	2.3	3.7	45.2	38.4	10.2	56 567
<b>Total</b>	<b>0.19</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>3.9</b>	<b>47.6</b>	<b>36.6</b>	<b>9.1</b>	<b>81 353</b>

Note: Number of teachers is based on head counts. Teachers at primary schools of art and language schools are included.

Source: Data provided to the OECD review team by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports.

levels by school sector and size of municipality in 2014 (in contrast to Table 4.4, it includes teachers at primary schools of art and language schools). It shows that the proportion of teachers at the two top career levels is considerably smaller in the private sector while the distribution of teachers across career levels is similar in the state and church sectors. Table 4.5 also shows that the average proportion of teachers at the two top career levels decreases as the size of the municipality decreases.

Horizontal differentiation in the profession is articulated through access to a range of specialised career positions. The structure and assignment of career positions is decided by the school director. Typical career positions are:

- *Class teacher*: consists of taking co-ordination and communication responsibilities for one specific class. This involves guidance, maintaining pedagogical documentation, and communicating with parents.
- *Mentor teacher*: mentors beginning teachers during their “adaptation” period.
- *Educational advisor*: provides consulting services, including methodological assistance.
- *Career advisor*: provides students with career guidance and counselling.
- *Head of subject committee (or study area), Head of methodology association (or study programme)*: takes responsibility for pedagogical work at the school either focussed on a given subject (or study area) or on pedagogy more generally, with involvement in project, advisory and evaluative work.
- *ICT co-ordinator*: co-ordinates use of ICT in the teaching and learning process.
- *Co-ordinator of specific work*, as work with special needs children and children from a socially-disadvantaged background.

Teachers may also specialise as chief pedagogical employees or be appointed, by the school director, to roles such as deputy director. To access most specialised career positions, teachers need to comply with given qualification requirements and need to undergo “specialisation training”. Specialised career positions typically involve a dedicated salary allowance (see below).

### Compensation

Teacher salary scales are based on the Law Code on employees performing public service. They are typically the subject of collective negotiations between the government and teacher unions. Teachers’ compensation includes their basic salary, compensation for professional development credits and special allowances. The basic salary depends on the teacher’s public service category (which depends on teacher qualifications and career grade), the type of class taught (mainstream or class for special education children), and years of experience.

Since 2009, the salary scale consists of seven salary grades for teachers at schools and school facilities, which depend on qualifications and career grade. The salary scale is also organised according to two distinct classes: i) teachers working in regular classes (Class 1); and ii) teachers working in special classes and special schools (Class 2). Each salary grade, for each class, has 32 stages which correspond to years of experience. Table 4.6 provides the salary scales in 2014 while Table 4.7 shows the salary grade according to qualifications and career grade.

**Table 4.6. Monthly salary scale for teachers at schools and school facilities, 2014**

Class 1 – General classes							
Salary grade	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Salary (EUR)	408	452.5	501.5	561	612.5	686.5	769
Years of experience	Salary increase (EUR)						
1	4.5	5	5.5	6	6.5	7	8
2	8.5	9.5	10.5	11.5	12.5	14	15.5
3	12.5	14	15.5	17	18.5	21	23.5
...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
30	94	104.5	115.5	129.5	141	158	177
31	96	106.5	118	132	144	161.5	181
32	98	109	120.5	135	147	165	185
Class 2 – Special classes							
Salary grade	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Salary (EUR)	436.5	484.5	535.5	599.5	654	732.5	820.5
Years of experience	Salary increase (EUR)						
1	4.5	5	5.5	6	7	7.5	8.5
2	9	10	11	12	13.5	15	16.5
3	13.5	15	16.5	18	20	22	25
...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
30	100.5	111.5	123.5	138	150.5	168.5	189
31	103	114	126	141	154	172.5	193
32	105	116.5	129	144	157	176	197

Source: Educational Policy Institute (2015), *OECD Review of Policies to Improve the Effectiveness of Resource Use in Schools: Country Background Report for the Slovak Republic*, [www.oecd.org/edu/school/schoolresourcesreview.htm](http://www.oecd.org/edu/school/schoolresourcesreview.htm).

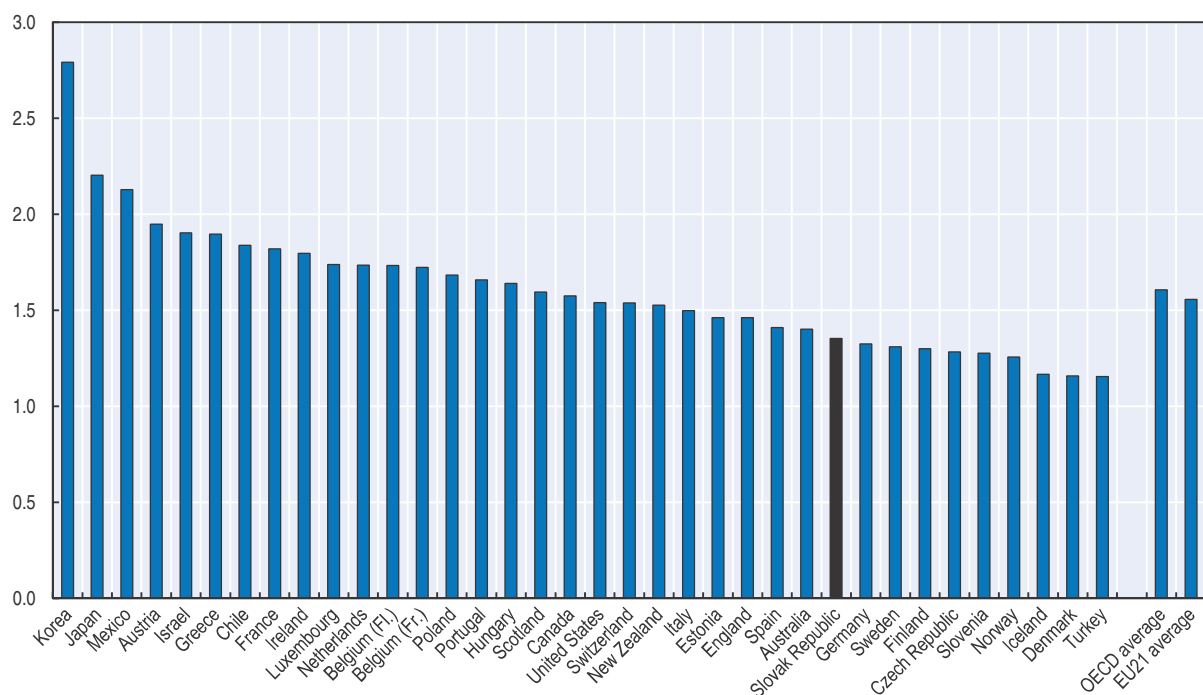
Table 4.7. **Assignment of salary grade, 2014**

Career grade	Qualifications				
	Not qualified	Beginning teacher	Independent teacher	Teacher with 1st certification	Teacher with 2nd certification
<b>Teacher in basic school and secondary school</b>					
Master's degree	9	9	10	11	12
<b>Teacher in pre-primary education</b>					
Master's degree	9	9	10	11	12
Bachelor's degree	8	8	9	10	-
Secondary vocational degree	7	7	8	9	-

Source: Educational Policy Institute (2015), *OECD Review of Policies to Improve the Effectiveness of Resource Use in Schools: Country Background Report for the Slovak Republic*, [www.oecd.org/edu/school/schoolresourcesreview.htm](http://www.oecd.org/edu/school/schoolresourcesreview.htm).

As can be seen in Figure 4.1, the ratio of salary at top of scale to starting salary is modest in international comparison (1.35 against an OECD average of 1.61). This is in addition to the fact that reaching the top of the scale takes 32 years, considerably above the OECD average (24 years) (OECD, 2014a).

There is also a direct link between the accumulation of professional development credits and teachers' salary: for each 30 credits obtained, teachers receive a 6% bonus (to a maximum of a 12% bonus for 60 credits), which is valid for seven years. Until recently, school directors were legally obliged to provide this financial compensation to all teachers having obtained the required amount of credits. From 2012 onwards, however, this link is

Figure 4.1. **Ratio of salary at top of scale to starting salary, lower secondary education, public institutions, 2012**

Notes: Data refer to statutory salaries for teachers with minimum qualifications. For Hungary, Sweden and the United States, data refer to actual salaries. For Sweden, reference year is 2011.

Source: OECD (2014a), *Education at a Glance 2014: OECD Indicators*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2014-en>.

no longer automatic and school directors are given a degree of discretion in this regard. All schools must create an internal school regulation specifying the conditions under which the school director approves the credit salary rise. For example, if the training is not considered relevant for school development, then these credits may not be considered in decisions on possible salary rises (Shewbridge et al., 2014).

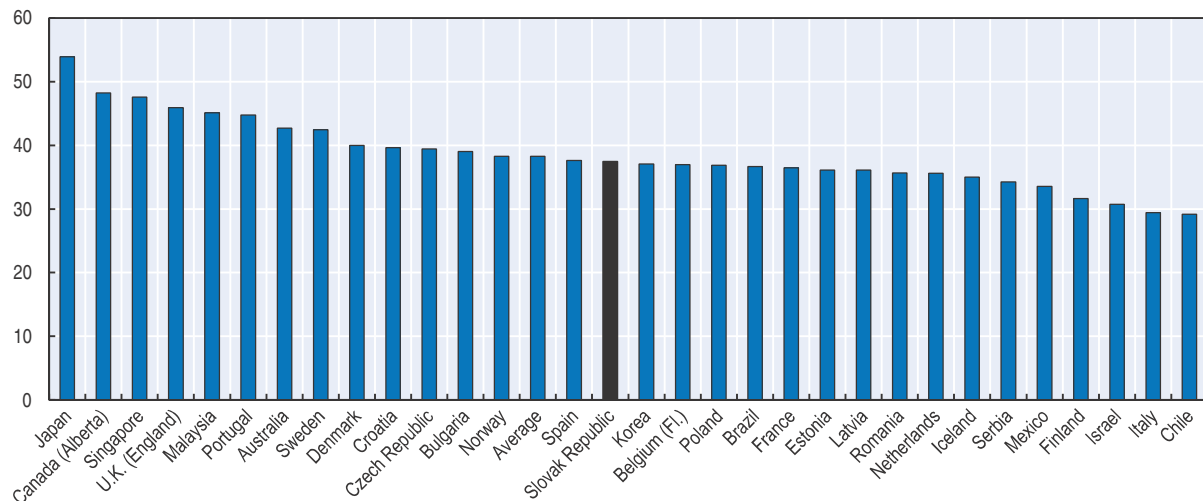
In addition, teachers also receive special allowances for a variety of reasons, including:

- *Personal allowance*: It can be given for good performance and for the fulfilment of tasks above job responsibilities. Its maximum amount corresponds to 24% of the basic salary. Decisions on personal allowances are taken at the school level by the school director.
- *Allowance for Class teachers*: Class teachers in charge of one class receive a 5% allowance while those in charge of two or more classes receive a 10% allowance (calculated on the basis of the basic salary increased by 24%).
- *Allowance for Mentor teachers*: Mentor teachers supervising a beginner teacher receive a 4% allowance while those supervising two or more beginning teachers receive an 8% allowance (calculated on the basis of the basic salary increased by 24%).
- *Allowance for managerial activities*: These involve a given allowance (calculated as a proportion of the basic salary increased by 24%) which depends on the founder's competence (i.e. local, district, regional, nationwide).
- *Allowance for beginning teachers*: During their adaptation education, beginning teachers receive an allowance which corresponds to 6% of their basic salary.
- *Allowance for working with students with disabilities and students from a socially-disadvantaged background*: It is paid to a basic school teacher working in a class where at least 30% of the maximum class size are individually integrated students with disabilities or from a socially-disadvantaged background. The allowance has a ceiling of 2.5% of salary grade 12 of Class 1. Eligibility requires the teacher to teach this specific class at least four lessons a week with no teaching assistant. The allowance level is defined by internal school regulations.

The teacher can receive, at the school's discretion, allowances in other instances such as "constrained working environment" and extra pay to work in the evenings, Saturdays or Sundays, or overtime.

In the Slovak Republic, teacher employment is conceived on the basis of a workload system, i.e. regulations stipulate the total number of working hours and define the range of tasks teachers are expected to perform beyond teaching itself. The total annual number of statutory working hours is 1 575 for all education levels, slightly below the OECD averages of 1 654 (pre-primary education), 1 649 (primary education), 1 649 (lower secondary education) and 1 643 (general upper secondary education) (OECD, 2014a). Figure 4.2 reflects self-reports of lower secondary teachers regarding actual hours worked during a week, positioning Slovak teachers around the TALIS average. Teaching time is also regulated, being set at 1 035 annual hours in pre-primary education (above the OECD average of 1 001 hours), 819 hours in primary education (above the OECD average of 782 hours), 635 hours in lower secondary education (below the OECD average of 694 hours) and 607 hours in general upper secondary education (below the OECD average of 655 hours) (OECD, 2014a).

Figure 4.2. **Average number of hours teachers report having worked during the most recent complete calendar week, lower secondary education, 2013**



Notes: A “complete” calendar week is one that was not shortened by breaks, public holidays, sick leave, etc. Also includes hours worked during weekends, evenings or other off-classroom hours. The sum of hours spent on different tasks (shown in Figure 4.3) may not be equal to the number of total working hours because teachers were asked about these elements separately. It is also important to note that data presented represent the averages from all the teachers surveyed, including part-time teachers.

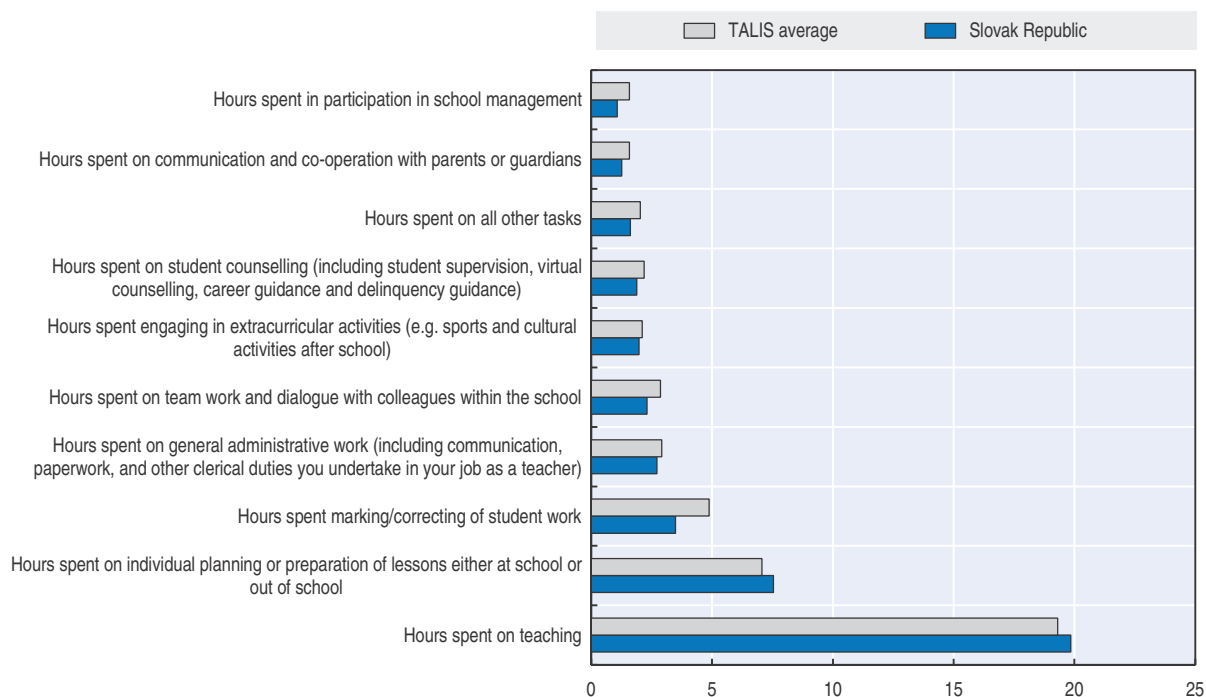
Source: OECD (2014b), *TALIS 2013 Results: An International Perspective on Teaching and Learning*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264196261-en>.

Regulations stipulate that, for all educational levels, in addition to teaching, the following tasks are expected to be undertaken at the school by teachers while not specifying the associated required time (OECD, 2014a):

- individual planning or preparing lessons (can be performed outside school, at the discretion of the school)
- teamwork and dialogue with colleagues
- marking student work (except in pre-primary education) (can be performed outside school, at the discretion of the school)
- supervising students during breaks
- providing counselling and guidance to students
- participating in school management
- general administrative communication and paperwork (can be performed outside school, at the discretion of the school)
- communicating and co-operating with parents or guardians
- engaging in professional development activities (can be performed outside school, at the discretion of the school).

Figure 4.3 shows the average number of hours lower secondary teachers report having spent on a variety of tasks for both the Slovak Republic and the average among TALIS countries. It highlights the fact that Slovak teachers spent relatively more time than teachers in other countries on the core aspects of a teacher’s work such as teaching itself and preparing lessons while they spend relatively less time in other tasks such as participation in school management, communication with parents or student counselling (OECD, 2014b).

Figure 4.3. **Average number of hours lower secondary education teachers report having spent on the following activities during the most recent complete calendar week, the Slovak Republic and TALIS average, 2013**



Notes: A “complete” calendar week is one that was not shortened by breaks, public holidays, sick leave, etc. Also includes tasks that took place during weekends, evenings or other off-classroom hours. The sum of hours spent on different tasks may not be equal to the number of total working hours (shown in Figure 4.2) because teachers were asked about these elements separately. It is also important to note that data presented represent the averages from all the teachers surveyed, including part-time teachers.

Source: OECD (2014b), TALIS 2013 Results: An International Perspective on Teaching and Learning, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264196261-en>.

Generally, school directors do not require teachers to stay at the school for the whole stipulated working hours, as part of their tasks can be performed outside the school. Collaboration and co-ordination among teachers and between teachers and the school leadership are mainly organised through the Pedagogical Board and the methodology bodies (Methodology Associations and Subject Commissions). The Pedagogical Board brings together school leadership and pedagogical staff to provide advice on pedagogical organisation issues such as individual teachers’ timetables, school’s student assessment policy, preparation of school education programmes and internal teacher appraisal. The Methodology Association (1st stage of basic school) and the Subject Committees (2nd stage of basic school) bring together pedagogical staff of the school (organised by subject in the 2nd stage of basic school) to discuss teaching and learning processes, internal quality assurance and evaluation and assessment procedures.

### **Teacher appraisal**

#### **Appraisal at the end of mentoring programme**

The school director determines the beginning teacher’s completion of the adaptation education programme. To complete the programme, beginning teachers are observed in class by a three-member examination board appointed by the school director (the school director acts as chairman of the board) and this is followed by an evaluation dialogue. The teacher’s competencies are evaluated in relation to what they have learned in the

adaptation education programme. If a beginning teacher does not complete the adaptation education within the first two years of employment, his or her contract is terminated by the employer (Shewbridge et al., 2014).

### ***Regular appraisal for performance management***

According to the 2008 School Act, school directors are required to regularly appraise their pedagogical staff. The Act prescribes that teacher appraisal should be undertaken once a year, at the end of the academic year. The school director is responsible for regular internal appraisal, but may delegate this authority to lower positions in the school, such as the deputy school director. Other individuals, including the chairs of subject committees and methodology associations, may also participate in the process, depending on the size and organisational structure of the school (Shewbridge et al., 2014).

The legislation does not prescribe the procedures to be used for teacher appraisal and schools have a high degree of autonomy in the way they implement regular teacher appraisal for performance management. School directors are expected to specify the aims, criteria and methods of appraisal in the internal school regulations, while accounting for the school's specific context, educational programme and priorities. The appraisal generally involves classroom observation. At the end of the year, school directors write an evaluation report regarding the performance of each teacher, which is stored within the teacher's file but not forwarded to any other level of the education system (Shewbridge et al., 2014).

The primary aim of this internal teacher appraisal process is formative, i.e. the appraisal should provide feedback on the teacher's performance and inform teachers' competency development. School directors are required to establish professional development plans for the following academic year, which should reflect the appraisal results of their teaching staff. At the same time, appraisal results may also influence teachers' salary levels through a personal allowance attributed based on extra tasks and performance (see above). However, school directors appear to have little room for manoeuvre in awarding such bonus payments due to resource constraints at the school level (Shewbridge et al., 2014). Sanctions are only applied in rare cases. If teachers underperform on the internal appraisal, school directors are more likely to provide recommendations for improvement measures and give time to the teacher to develop and show improvement. In cases of serious underperformance or violation of legal regulations, it is possible for the school leader to dismiss teachers (Shewbridge et al., 2014).

### ***External appraisal for certification***

Once teachers have accumulated the required amount of credits, they can apply for certification. For teachers to move up on the career ladder towards the first and second certification level (see above), they need to pass an external appraisal, which includes the defence of a thesis (also referred to as a "certification examination") before a certification committee made up of organisations responsible for continuous teacher education. These organisations are set up by the Ministry of Education (Shewbridge et al., 2014). In 2013, 1 149 and 702 teachers applied to 1st and 2nd certification, respectively, with a rate of success of about 80% (22.0% and 21.7% of applicants failed the 1st and 2nd certification examinations respectively) (data provided to the OECD review team by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports).

***Appraisal for specialised positions***

As described above, teachers may also specialise in different types of positions such as class teacher, educational advisor or mentor teacher. Generally, there is no special appraisal procedure for this, but school directors decide on whether or not teachers obtain specialisation. In some cases, teachers may qualify for specialisation by taking particular professional development courses. The appraisal format is dependent on specific conditions defined by the accreditation of the particular educational programme (Shewbridge et al., 2014).

***Other forms of feedback to teachers***

Once a year, a national teacher's day is organised in the Slovak Republic. On this day, outstanding teachers are celebrated and rewarded. This day can be an opportunity to provide a moral award for high performing teachers. Also, teachers typically receive feedback from the inspectors as part of the visits of the Slovak State Schools Inspectorate. The Inspectorate has developed an observation form with a list of indicators that are used by all inspectors in their classroom visits. After the observed lesson, teachers are invited to undertake a self-evaluation. Based on both the inspectors' observation and the teacher's self-evaluation, inspectors typically provide individual feedback to teachers in the presence of the school director. However, the purpose of classroom observations by the Inspectorate is to evaluate teaching quality of the school as a whole rather than to appraise individual teachers (Shewbridge et al., 2014).

***Teacher professional development***

In the Slovak Republic, there is no mandatory requirement for teachers to undertake professional development but incentives are strong as professional development activities give teachers credits which are necessary for career advancement and to be eligible for a salary allowance (see above).

School directors are responsible for the professional development of teaching staff. They prepare a professional development plan for the school pedagogic employees, which they have to submit to the school founder. The plan should include key priorities, a time schedule and a budget proposal for professional development activities in the coming year at the school. Teachers typically apply for professional development they would like to undertake through the school leader. The school leader is in charge of prioritising teachers' training requests in line with the educational and pedagogical needs and conditions of the school. Based on this judgement, the school leader submits requests for teachers' admission into professional development programmes (Shewbridge et al., 2014).

Professional development activities which are undertaken in the context of school development plans are free of charge for teachers. Teachers are also given five working days to take courses which prepare them for the 1st and 2nd certification examinations. The following types of professional development exist: adaptation programmes, specialisation programmes, functional programmes, updating programmes and innovation programmes. Adaptation programmes are for beginning teachers to acquire professional competencies necessary to perform the tasks of an independent teacher. Specialisation programmes equip teachers with competencies necessary to perform specialised activities. Functional programmes equip teachers with managerial competencies for their new functions as school leaders. Updating programmes seek to



maintain teachers' competencies for conducting their activities and can serve as preparation for certification. Innovation programmes seek to advance and improve teaching practices. Traditionally, the training provided has been mostly individual, but since 2011 there has been a shift towards more focus on group training.

Professional development is provided by a range of different institutions including higher education institutions and educational organisations of the Ministry of Education (the National Institute of Education, the Methodology and Pedagogy Centre and the National Institute of Vocational Education). The largest provider of professional development is the Methodology and Pedagogy Centre (MPC). It provides courses free of charge. The Centre has about 150 pedagogical employees and is organised in one head office plus three regional offices. The main role of MPC is to develop and provide in-service education and training to teachers, but it also has other responsibilities such as developing support materials for teachers, developing the national teaching standards and conducting a project on school self-evaluation (Shewbridge et al., 2014). Programmes of professional development are accredited by the Accreditation Council, which is part of the Ministry of Education. The Ministry also publishes a list of accredited providers on its website.

### **Other school staff**

In Slovak schools, two other types of staff provide support for student learning: teaching assistants and specialist employees. Teaching assistants are typically hired to support the education of students with special needs (in mainstream schools) and students from a disadvantaged socio-economic background (in both mainstream and special schools), mostly at the basic school level. The number of teaching assistants to support the learning of students with disabilities and gifted children has been increasing in the last few years, from 786 in 2009 to 1 640 in 2014 (Educational Policy Institute, 2015). This is the result of a growing demand by school founders. Between 2011 and 2013, the number of teaching assistants for students from a disadvantaged socio-economic background has fluctuated between 278 and 335 (Educational Policy Institute, 2015). As part of non-normative funding, specific funding streams support the hiring of teaching assistants: a process of applications to the Ministry for extra funding for teaching assistants for students with special needs in mainstream education and a per-student extra amount for each student identified as from a disadvantaged socio-economic background (see Chapter 3). In the latter case, the contribution is used by the school to cover the cost of a teaching assistant and for class equipment, didactic technology and teaching materials. The founder of a basic school with more than 100 socially-disadvantaged students must use at least 50% of the total contribution to cover the cost of teaching assistants (Educational Policy Institute, 2015).

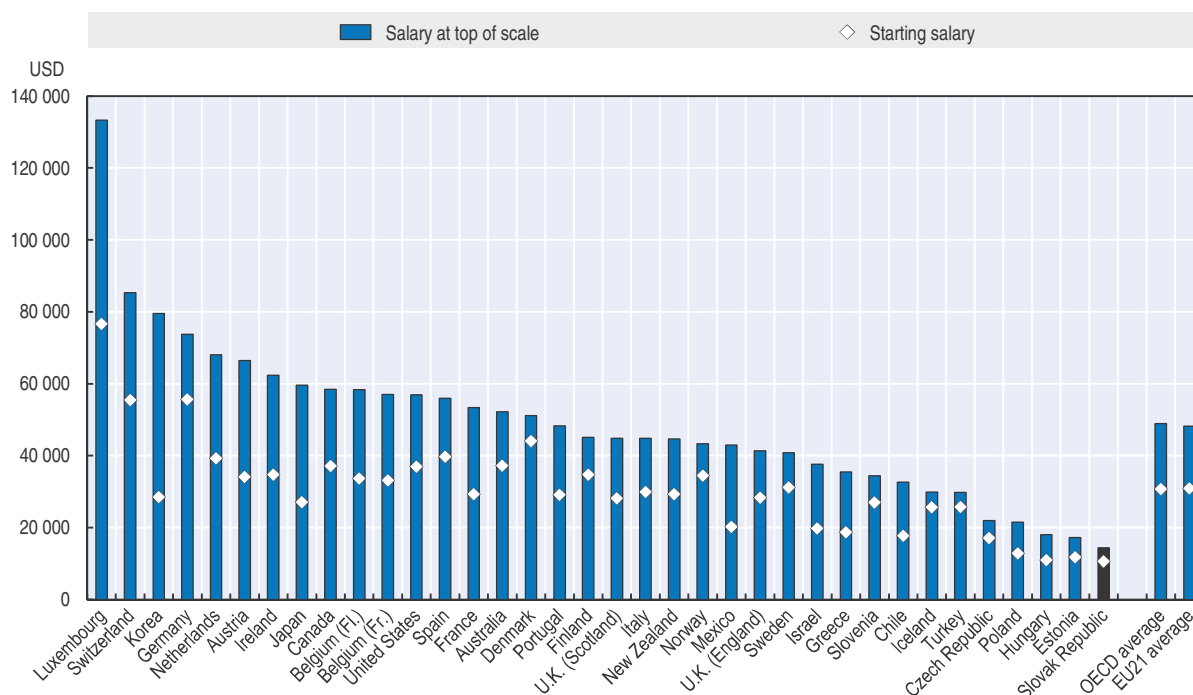
Schools can also directly employ specialist employees such as a psychologist, a special educator or a speech therapist. In 2012, mainstream schools employed 204 school psychologists (6 in pre-primary education, 112 in basic education, 49 in vocational secondary education, 35 in general secondary education, 2 in conservatoires). Special schools employed 43 school psychologists (36 in pre-primary and basic education, 7 in secondary education). For the same year, 496 special educators were employed in mainstream schools and only one in special schools (Educational Policy Institute, 2015).

## Strengths

### **Efforts made to increase teacher salaries send important signals about the importance of teaching**

In recent years, there have been efforts on the part of the Slovak Government to increase teacher salaries. Salaries were increased by 5% in 2013, 2014 and 2015, reflecting a commitment to bring teacher salaries to more adequate levels. There is a clear awareness that the salaries of Slovak teachers remain the lowest within the OECD area, both at the start of the career and at the top of the scale (see Figure 4.4). Even more striking, salaries of Slovak teachers relative to those of tertiary-educated workers in the Slovak Republic are the lowest in the OECD area (see Figure 4.5): for lower secondary teachers, they only reach 43% of the average salary of tertiary-educated workers against an OECD average of 88% (OECD, 2014a).

Figure 4.4. **Teacher annual salaries at start of career and at top of the scale, lower secondary education, public institutions, 2012**



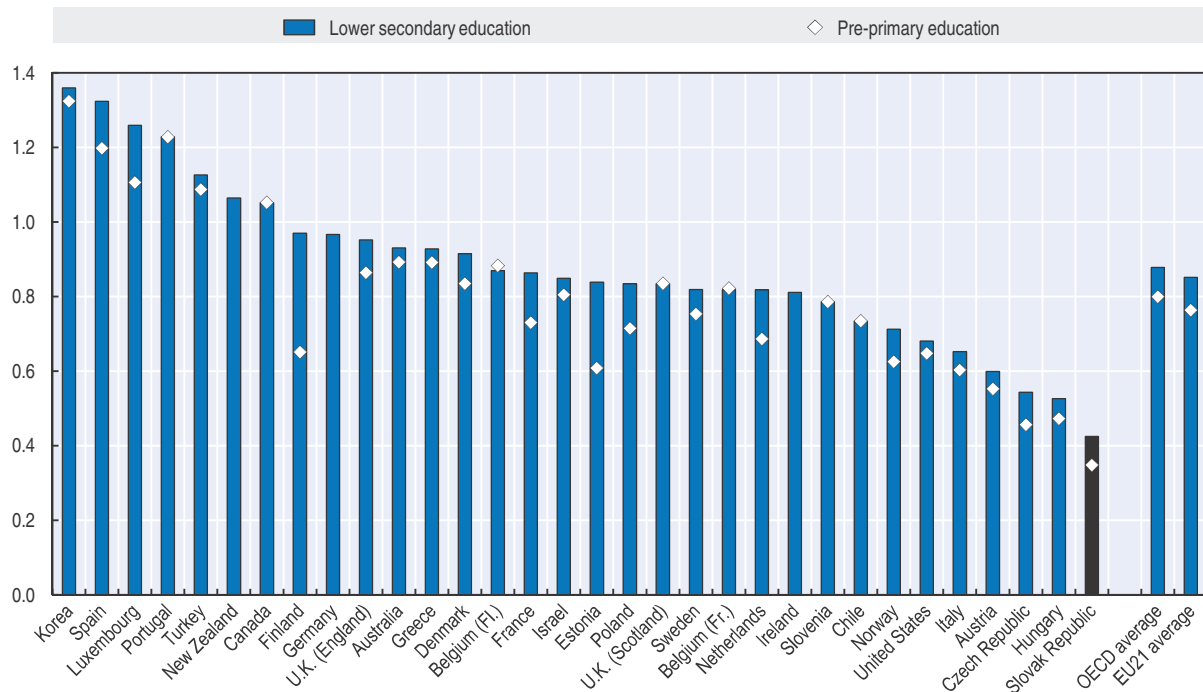
Notes: Salaries are in equivalent US dollars (USD) converted using PPPs for private consumption. Data refer to statutory salaries for teachers with minimum qualifications. For Hungary, Sweden and the United States, data refer to actual salaries. For Sweden, reference year is 2011.

Source: OECD (2014a), *Education at a Glance 2014: OECD Indicators*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2014-en>.

While there is no general shortage of teachers in the Slovak school system, low salaries have clear detrimental effects on the motivation levels of teachers (see below) and limit considerably the ability of the system to attract high-quality entrants and more males into the profession (OECD, 2005). There is also some evidence that a significant proportion of graduates from initial teacher education end up not entering the teaching profession, limiting its ability to refresh itself. This is reflected in the current ageing trend of the teaching workforce, which results from a low entry rate of new graduates.

Hence, it is commendable that the Slovak Government is committed to improve teachers' salary conditions. Given the tight budget constraints, as efficiency gains are achieved in the school system, the Ministry of Education improves its negotiation position vis-à-vis the Ministry of Finance in order to further improve teacher salaries.

Figure 4.5. **Teachers' salaries relative to earnings for tertiary-educated workers aged 25-64, public institutions, pre-primary and lower secondary education, 2012**



Notes: Data refer to actual salaries except for the following countries, for which statutory salaries were used: Austria, Canada, Ireland, Korea, Portugal, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain and Turkey. The "Actual" method refers to the ratio of average actual salary, including bonuses and allowances, for teachers aged 25-64 to earnings for full-time, full-year workers with tertiary education aged 25-64. The "Statutory" method refers to the ratio of teachers' statutory salary after 15 years of experience and minimum training (regardless of age) to earnings for full-time, full-year workers with tertiary education aged 25-64. For Belgium (French Community), Belgium (Flemish Community), England and Scotland, data on earnings for full-time, full-year workers with tertiary education refer to Belgium and the United Kingdom respectively. Scotland includes all teachers, irrespective of their age. For Sweden, average actual teachers' salaries do not include bonuses and allowances.

Source: OECD (2014a), *Education at a Glance 2014: OECD Indicators*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2014-en>.

### Teaching standards are being developed

As part of the project Professional and Career Progress of Pedagogic Employees, the Methodology and Pedagogy Centre (MPC) is developing professional standards for teachers. This is being done in collaboration with universities and international experts (Shewbridge et al., 2014). The professional standards are differentiated for the three different career stages of independent teacher, teacher with first certification and teacher with second certification. The draft standards are further structured in three dimensions: i) the student dimension: covers teacher professional competencies focussed on understanding of students' knowledge, characteristics and conditions for development; ii) the educational process dimension: covers professional competencies focussed on processes leading to student learning and development; and iii) pedagogic employee dimension: covers competencies focussed on teachers' own development as representatives of the teaching profession and as school employees. The standards describe key competencies for each of

these three dimensions and for each level of the teacher career. The intention is that the standards guide teachers' professional development and career advancement through their link to the internal and external appraisal of teachers (Shewbridge et al., 2014). During 2014/15, the teaching standards are being discussed with school directors, founders, teacher unions, representatives of the school private sector and the State Schools Inspectorate, before their implementation.

The establishment of teaching standards that provide a clear and concise profile of what teachers are expected to know and be able to do is a very positive development. Teaching standards are essential mechanisms for clarifying expectations of what systems of teacher education and professional development should aim to achieve, offering the credible reference for making judgements about teacher competence, guiding teacher professional development, and providing the basis for career advancement. Clear, well-structured and widely supported teaching standards are a powerful mechanism for aligning the various elements involved in developing teachers' knowledge and skills (OECD, 2005). There are also indications that the standards being prepared reflect the broad range of competencies that teachers require to be effective practitioners in modern schools.

### ***There is considerable autonomy in the management of the teaching workforce at the local level***

In the Slovak Republic, there is considerable autonomy in the management of the teaching workforce at the local level. According to PISA 2012 data, 95% of 15 year-olds attended schools whose directors reported that only directors and/or teachers have a considerable responsibility for selecting teachers for hire, against an OECD average of 49% (OECD, 2013a, Figure IV.4.2). The equivalent figure for responsibility for dismissing teachers is 92%, against an OECD average of 36% (OECD, 2013a, Figure IV.4.2). This is a strength in a system where schools are individually judged on their ability to improve student learning. A direct interaction with the applicants takes place, typically through interviews, and allows the use of a more complete set of criteria to match individual applicants' characteristics to schools' specific needs. The process of open recruitment also offers advantages to applicants since they can more directly choose the school and identify with the school's educational project. As a result, the process is more likely to build a sense of commitment of teachers to the schools where they are recruited. Wößmann (2003) used data from the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) to examine the relationship between different aspects of centralised and school-level decision-making and student performance. He concluded that students in schools with autonomy in deciding on the hiring of teachers performed statistically significantly better in mathematics and science, as did students in schools that could determine teacher salaries themselves.

However, it is important to note that school autonomy in teacher recruitment involves some complexity as there is the potential for an inequitable distribution of teachers (as schools with more resources and located in advantaged areas have greater potential to attract high quality teachers, see below) and opportunities for favouritism in teacher selection by schools. The latter requires transparency in recruitment processes through making information about existing teaching openings publicly available. This has now become a requirement in the Slovak Republic through the publication of job openings on websites for the school, the founder and regional state authorities.

In addition to recruitment, school leaders have considerable room to develop the competencies of their teaching bodies in agreement with school development plans. Teacher appraisal processes internal to the school are well established, are led by school directors and have important consequences for the professional development of teachers (see below). This strengthens the ability of school leaders to shape teacher professional competencies to properly respond to the needs of their educational communities. Also, the autonomy from which schools benefit to allocate their budgets to teacher resources grants them with the ability to select the optimal number and mix of school staff for their schools, including opportunities to hire non-teaching staff to support the work of teachers.

***Teacher employment under a workload system improves efficiency in the teacher labour market***

The conception of teacher employment in the Slovak Republic, whereby basic compensation is associated with a teacher's workload, improves efficiency in the teacher labour market. This is in contrast with countries which conceive teacher employment on the basis of a teaching load only. Employment under a workload system recognises that teachers need time for engaging in a range of other tasks, including the adequate preparation of lessons. This is likely to make the profession more attractive and to reduce the number of teachers with unreasonably high teaching loads, were pay to be directly associated with teaching only.

As explained in OECD (2005), teachers are now expected to have much broader roles. Some examples of areas of broadened teacher responsibility are: initiating and managing learning processes; responding effectively to the learning needs of individual learners; integrating formative and summative assessment; teaching in multicultural classrooms; introducing new cross-curricular emphases; integrating students with special needs; working and planning in teams; evaluation and systematic improvement planning; ICT use in teaching and administration; projects between schools; management and shared leadership; providing professional advice to parents; and building community partnerships for learning (OECD, 2005). These broaden responsibilities necessitate a conception of teacher employment which recognises the whole range of activities of a teacher in addition to teaching.

***A career structure exists and teachers have opportunities to diversify their roles at schools***

In the Slovak Republic, teachers benefit from a clearly established career structure with four steps associated with a teacher certification process. The existence of a career structure for the most part accomplishes two important functions: the recognition of experience and advanced teaching skills with a formal position and additional compensation; and the potential to better match teachers' skills to the roles and responsibilities needed in schools, as more experienced and accomplished teachers may be given special tasks within schools (e.g. member of examination committee, mentor teacher). These convey the important message that the guiding principle for career advancement is merit and have the benefit of rewarding teachers who choose to remain in the classroom.

Teachers, as they access higher categories of the career structure, are expected to have deeper levels of knowledge, demonstrate more sophisticated and effective teaching, take on responsibility for curricular and assessment aspects of the school, assist colleagues and

so on. Given the potential greater variety of roles in schools as the teacher goes up the career ladder, the career structure fosters greater career diversification. Such opportunities for diversification already exist in Slovak schools as with management responsibilities for teachers at schools, developers of professional development activities, members of teacher examination committees and mentoring of beginning teachers. These are likely to have a positive motivational effect.

Appropriately, access to higher categories of the career structure involves a formal certification process (certification examination). Such certification processes that are linked to career development can help provide incentives for teachers to perform at their best, bring recognition to effective teachers, support professional learning, and help recognise and spread good practice more widely. Given the high stakes of teacher certification, it is appropriate to use a national framework and standards procedures as well as an external component (members of certification committees are external to the school for the two highest categories) to ensure objectivity and fairness (Santiago and Benavides, 2009). However, as will be explained later, there are some concerns about the approach to certification.

Another positive feature of the teaching profession in the Slovak Republic is the opportunity for horizontal differentiation. This is formalised in specialised career positions such as class teacher, mentor teacher, educational advisor, ICT co-ordinator, Head of subject committee or Head of methodology association, which are proposed to teachers according to the needs of individual schools. These roles, which do not necessarily involve differentiated pay but instead release time from classroom teaching, provide more opportunities and recognition for teachers and meet school needs (OECD, 2005).

In addition, beginning teachers benefit from a clearly established mentoring programme which provides them with support and additional training as they enter the profession. Beginning teachers are assigned a more experienced colleague as a mentor. The mentor observes the teacher's classroom interactions, models effective teaching approaches, and provides advice on matters such as pedagogy, assessment and administration (Shewbridge et al., 2014). In TALIS 2013, 83% of Slovak lower secondary teachers were reportedly in schools with a formal induction programme for new teachers, compared to the international average of 66%; and 82% reportedly were in schools with informal induction activities, compared to 77% internationally (OECD, 2014b). There is ample evidence suggesting the benefits beginning teachers gain from mentoring while mentors also derive substantial benefits from the mentoring experience (OECD, 2005).

### ***The approach to professional development has a number of strengths***

Professional development is well established among Slovak teachers, benefits from a wide supply of programmes offered by a variety of providers, entails the accreditation of individual programmes, involves co-ordination between schools and their founders and benefits from dedicated budgets at schools. At the same time, MPC and other providers are expected to create professional development programmes that aim to develop the competencies required by schools. Two features are of particular importance and should be highlighted. First, teacher appraisal is used to identify the professional development needs of individual teachers. This is commendable as development is one of the main functions of teacher appraisal (OECD, 2013b). Second, taking advantage of the fact that schools organise internal processes for teacher appraisal, school leaders define individual professional development plans in alignment with school development plans. While

teachers decide on the professional development programmes they undertake, access to programmes free of charge is only granted if these are part of the school's plan for teacher professional development. Also, salary allowances for professional development credits are granted at the discretion of school leaders to allow them to assess the relevance of the professional development programmes to school development. The link between teacher professional development and school development is essential to ensure teachers give priority to acquiring those competencies that better fit the needs of the schools (OECD, 2013b).

### ***Teacher appraisal internal to the school seems to be well consolidated***

Another positive aspect of the teaching career in the Slovak Republic is the internal teacher appraisal which typically takes place in schools. In the schools visited by the OECD review team, school directors and teachers described teacher appraisal as a well-established aspect of regular practice in schools. Results from TALIS show that, in 2013, 100% of lower secondary Slovak school directors reported that appraisal was used in the school where the teacher worked, against a TALIS average of 92.6%. Internal teacher appraisal helps teachers learn about, reflect on, and improve their practice in the specific school context in which they teach. It also grants them the opportunity to identify areas for improvement. In the course of its visit, the OECD review team formed the impression that the principle of teachers being appraised is valued and accepted among teachers. According to TALIS 2013 data, 68.9% of Slovak lower secondary teachers reported a “moderate” or “large” positive change in their motivation, against a TALIS average of 64.7%.

A key strength of teacher appraisal in the Slovak Republic is that the process is clearly focused on evaluating actual teaching practices in the classroom. Results from TALIS show that, in 2013, 62% of lower secondary school directors reported that they often or very often observe instruction in the classroom, compared to an international average of 49% (OECD, 2014b). While school directors vary in their approaches to teacher appraisal, it appears that they typically operate an approach whereby they observe the classroom practice of each of their teachers at least once a year. The evaluator provides feedback for improvement and the teacher has an opportunity for self-evaluation. The process is strongly school-based and school-level professionals have ownership of methods and criteria (Shewbridge et al., 2014). Teachers interviewed by the OECD review team reported that they found classroom observations and feedback on their work valuable.

### ***The introduction of teaching assistants fosters the ability to respond to students' individual needs***

In recent years, the Slovak Republic has promoted the introduction of teaching assistants in schools to assist with the learning of students with special needs and students from a disadvantaged background. This is part of the overall strategy to improve the integration of students with special needs in mainstream schools and to support the learning of students who are at a disadvantage as a result of their socio-economic background. This is a move in the right direction in order to strengthen the ability of schools to respond to students' individual needs.

There are several mechanisms through which teaching assistants can have a positive impact on student attainment. With an additional professional in class, students receive more individual help and attention from either the teaching assistant or the teacher. Therefore, students' learning needs are more likely to be met, which is likely to lead to

greater achievement. In addition, the use of teaching assistants enables a more flexible learning environment, and groups of different size and characteristics can be created to better respond to students' needs and allow increased engagement and inclusion of children in classroom activities (Masdeu, 2015). The use of teaching assistants in schools can also contribute to a greater inclusion of students with disabilities as the required special assistance can more easily be provided.

Teaching assistants have a complementary role in regard to the teaching process, but also substitute teachers in a set of non-teaching and routine tasks, such as taking on routine teaching related tasks (e.g. lesson preparation) to reduce teachers' workloads and allow them to focus on teaching tasks. The literature also indicates that the work of teaching assistants can reduce pressure on the teacher in relation to classroom management by helping the teacher cope with student misbehaviour, thus creating a more productive atmosphere. Furthermore, teaching assistants can pair up with teachers during class in a complementary way, providing the most effective teaching in every different context (Masdeu, 2015). In the Slovak Republic, the priority has been to devote teaching assistants to support the learning of students with disabilities in mainstream basic schools while few resources have been assigned to the use of teaching assistants in more general terms as learning support staff in schools.

## Challenges

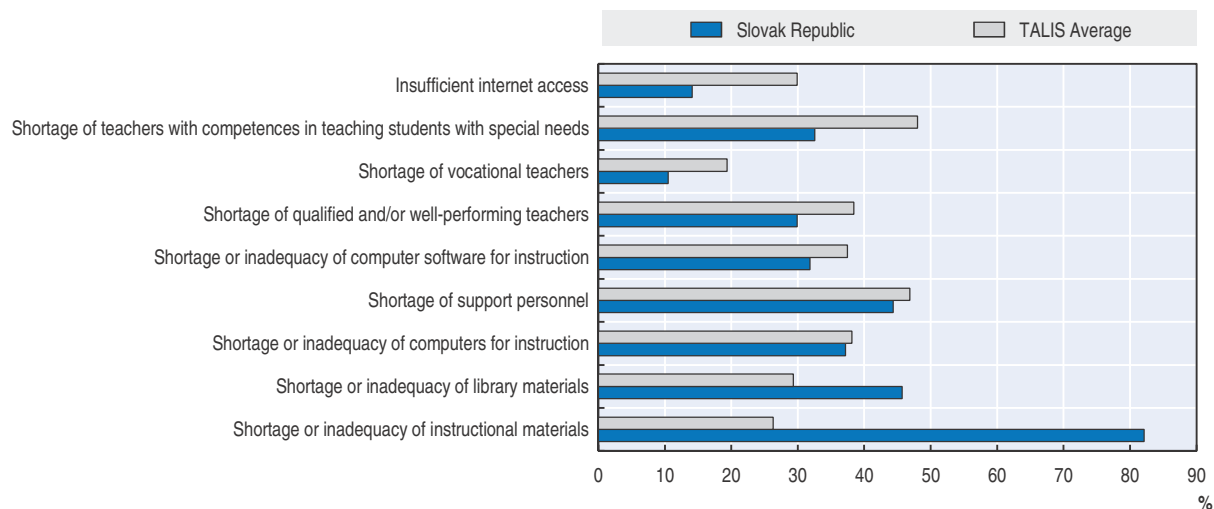
### ***The status of the teaching profession is low***

Many of the stakeholders interviewed by the OECD review team commented on the low status of the teaching profession. There is an overall feeling among Slovak teachers that society does not value their work. According to TALIS 2013 data, only 4% of lower secondary Slovak teachers reported that they agree or strongly agree that the teaching profession is valued in society, the lowest figure among TALIS countries (the TALIS average being 30.9%). Similarly, only 58% of lower secondary teachers in the Slovak Republic reported that they agree or strongly agree that the advantages of being a teacher clearly outweigh the disadvantages, the 2nd lowest figure among TALIS countries (against a TALIS average of 77.4%). A significant proportion of them (45.4%) also wonder whether it would have been better to choose another profession, the third such proportion against a TALIS average of 31.6%. Nonetheless, 89.0% of Slovak lower secondary teachers also reported that they are satisfied with their job, against a TALIS average of 91.2% (OECD, 2014b).

Clearly, there are concerns about the image and status of teaching in the Slovak Republic, and teachers often feel that their work is undervalued. This is related to the low relative salaries of teachers (see above) which, to a great extent, determine the teaching profession's social standing. As a result, the teaching profession is not competitive in the labour market, causing difficulties in attracting talented young people to the teaching profession and in keeping those already on the job motivated. A recent positive initiative to improve the attractiveness of teaching to young graduates was the creation of a special fund to provide loans to young teachers under favourable conditions (in 2014, 249 applications were approved for a total loan amount of EUR 2 million). There are also concerns regarding working conditions, namely in terms of benefitting from relevant professional development (see below) and accessing adequate instructional materials. These are detrimental to the status of teaching as a profession. According to TALIS 2013 data, Slovak school directors identify the inadequacy of instructional materials



Figure 4.6. **Resource issues hindering quality instruction, lower secondary education, the Slovak Republic and TALIS average, 2013**



Note: Data correspond to the percentage of lower secondary teachers whose school director reports that the resource issues depicted above hindered quality instruction “a lot” or “to some extent”.

Source: OECD (2014b), TALIS 2013 Results: An International Perspective on Teaching and Learning, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264196261-en>.

as the main resource issue hindering the school's capacity to provide quality instruction, a problem perceived as much more acute than in other countries participating in TALIS (an issue affecting 82.1% of Slovak teachers, the highest figure among TALIS countries, with a TALIS average of 26.3%) (see Figure 4.6).

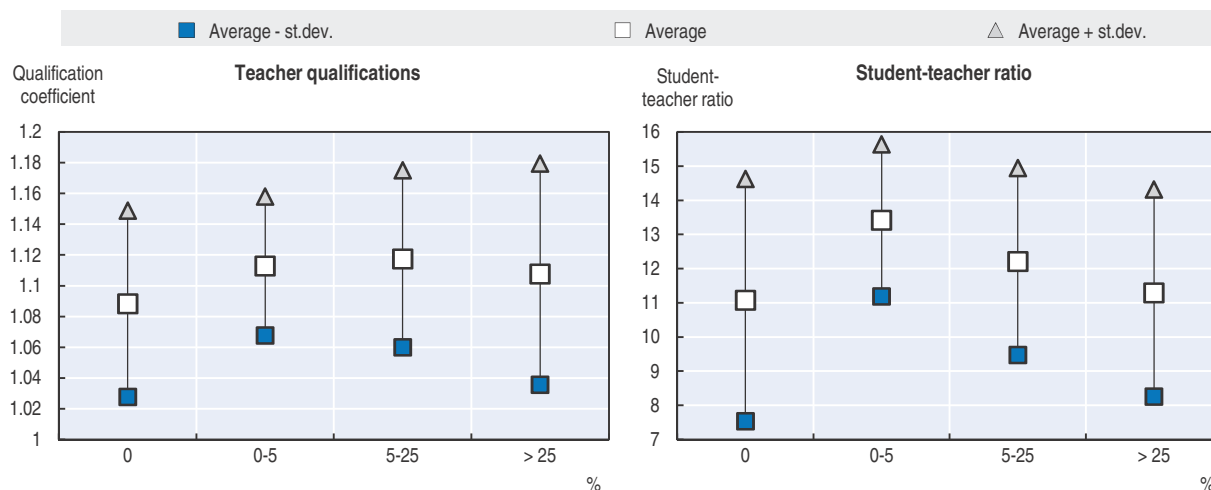
### **There are indications of some inequitable distribution of teachers across schools**

As explained above, recruitment at the school level combined with differences in resources across schools has the risk of leading to an inequitable distribution of teachers across schools. In the Slovak Republic, there are indications of some inequitable distribution of teachers across schools. This is supported by some TALIS and PISA data. The proportion of lower secondary teachers with 5 years of teaching experience or less in schools whose directors report that more than 10% of the students have special needs is 20.4% while the proportion of such teachers in schools whose directors report that 10% or less of the students have special needs is 16.7% (OECD, 2014b). In addition, there are indications that, in schools attended by 15 year-olds, the likelihood of teacher shortages (as perceived by school directors) is considerably higher in both socio-economically disadvantaged schools and in schools located in a rural area (fewer than 3 000 people) (Table IV.3.11, OECD, 2013a). However, this situation arises in an overall context where there is no overall shortage of teachers in the Slovak Republic.

This is confirmed by some national data. As shown in Table 4.5, the proportion of experienced teachers is lower in smaller municipalities. While the proportion of teachers either at the 1st or the 2nd certification career levels is 31.2% in schools located in municipalities with 1 000 inhabitants or less, it is 48.6% in schools located in municipalities with more than 5 000 inhabitants. Schools located in smaller municipalities also have a higher proportion of hours instructed by teachers who are not qualified for the subject or field taught. As displayed in Table 4.9, while such proportion is about 7% in schools located in municipalities with more than 5 000 inhabitants, it is about 18% in schools located in the smaller municipalities (1 000 inhabitants or less).

According to national data, inequities of teacher resources across schools are, however, not as visible in terms of the qualification status of teachers (i.e. whether a teacher has a teaching degree or not) and student-teacher ratios. Figure 4.7 shows the distribution of the qualification status of teachers and student-teacher ratio across the social status of the schools, defined as the proportion of students with a socially-disadvantaged background, in basic schools in 2013. As can be seen from the figure, the qualification status of teachers does not significantly worsen for schools with a greater proportion of disadvantaged students, even if the dispersion of qualifications tends to be greater for schools with a higher proportion of disadvantaged students. The figure also shows that a higher proportion of socially-disadvantaged students is more likely to go alongside a lower student-teacher ratio. This is likely to be related to the fact that student-teacher ratios are lower in smaller municipalities.

Figure 4.7. **Distribution of teacher qualifications and student-teacher ratio by social status of schools, basic education, 2013**



Notes: The horizontal axis represents basic schools of four types, depending on the proportion of socially-disadvantaged students: 0%; between 0 and 5%; between 5 and 25%; and more than 25%. In 2013, out of 2 159 basic schools, 468 had no socially-disadvantaged students, 511 schools had a proportion of socially-disadvantaged students between 0 and 5%, 680 schools between 5 and 25%, and 500 basic schools more than 25%.

Source: Educational Policy Institute (2015), *OECD Review of Policies to Improve the Effectiveness of Resource Use in Schools: Country Background Report for the Slovak Republic*, [www.oecd.org/edu/school/schoolresourcesreview.htm](http://www.oecd.org/edu/school/schoolresourcesreview.htm).

### **Teacher certification is too resource-intensive and might not concentrate on the core work of teachers**

The teacher certification process has clear benefits. It provides incentives for teachers to update their knowledge and skills and it rewards teachers for their performance and experience. However, there are a range of implementation aspects that raise concerns. First, teacher certification is not a competency-based process, i.e. it does not directly assess whether a teacher has acquired the competencies needed to perform at the different stages of the career. Instead, as it is currently designed, teacher certification focusses on the acquisition of qualifications: eligibility to apply for certification relates to the acquisition of professional development credits and a teacher can obtain certification through the completion of a doctoral degree or of a specific thesis defended at the certification examination. As explained by Shewbridge et al. (2014), “this raises concern

because it is difficult to tell from a written thesis whether teachers know how to apply what is outlined in the thesis and have acquired effective pedagogical skills to support the learning of their students.”

Second, the certification process is too resource-intensive for individual teachers and does not concentrate on the core work of teachers. Teachers have to considerably invest in the preparation of an academic piece of work to be defended at the certification examination. It is unclear whether the content of the thesis has relevance for the improvement of student learning and whether the thesis will be of any use for the subsequent work of the teacher. At the same time, the fact that the certification process is disconnected from classroom practice and does not include observation of actual teaching is of concern. As a result, teachers reach higher levels of certification with no assessment of their actual work in schools and of their ability to impact student learning.

Third, teacher certification is disconnected from other teacher appraisal processes such as those internal to the school. In part this is because they do not have a common appraisal reference (teaching standards), possibly sending conflicting messages about what is considered good teaching in the Slovak Republic. At the same time, there is little connection between teacher certification and internal teacher appraisal since they do not inform each other. In particular, information on the teacher's practice in school (as provided through internal teacher appraisal) is not used for teacher certification.

Fourth, there are no provisions for re-certification, i.e. once certified at a given stage, the teacher remains indefinitely at that stage. This implies that the teacher does not need to periodically demonstrate being fit to perform at a given certification stage, reducing his or her incentives to update knowledge and skills continuously.

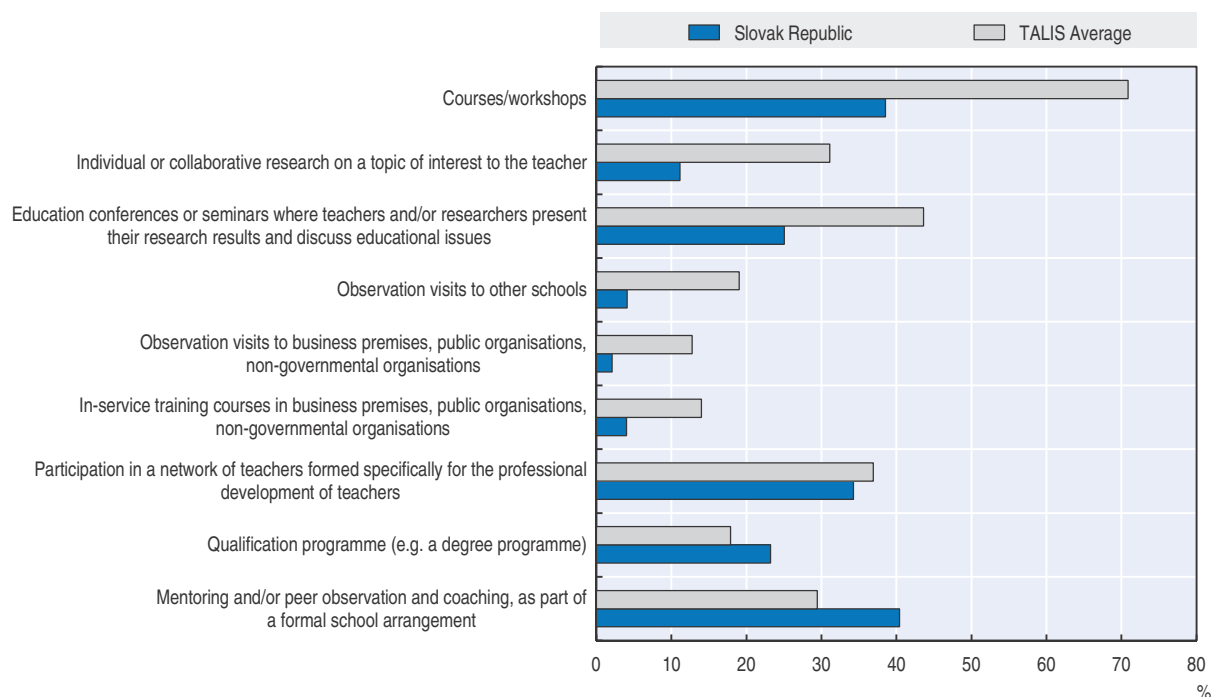
### ***There are a number of concerns on teacher professional development***

In international comparison, the participation rates in professional development of Slovak teachers appear to be low. According to TALIS 2013 data, 73.3% of Slovak lower secondary teachers reported having participated in at least one professional development activity in the previous 12 months, the 2nd lowest figure among TALIS countries, against a TALIS average of 88.4% (OECD, 2014b). There are indications that this might result from the combination of a number of factors such as the little relevance of the supply of professional development programmes, the limited entitlement to free professional development, the predominance of the financial incentive to undertake professional development and an inefficient market for professional development.

Compared to teachers in other systems, Slovak lower secondary teachers in 2013 reported the lowest levels of participation (39%) in recent professional development courses or workshops, which is by far the most common type of professional development among TALIS participating countries (see Figure 4.8). Participation rates of Slovak teachers were also among the lowest on the 2nd most common type of professional development (education conferences and seminars) (see Figure 4.8). By contrast Slovak teachers were more likely to be involved in mentoring/peer observation activities at the school level and formal qualification programmes.

At the same time, 43% of Slovak lower secondary education teachers agreed or strongly agreed that the non-relevance of the professional development offered represented a barrier to their participation in professional development, against a TALIS average of 39% (see Figure 4.9). This is consistent with the observations of the OECD review team during its visit

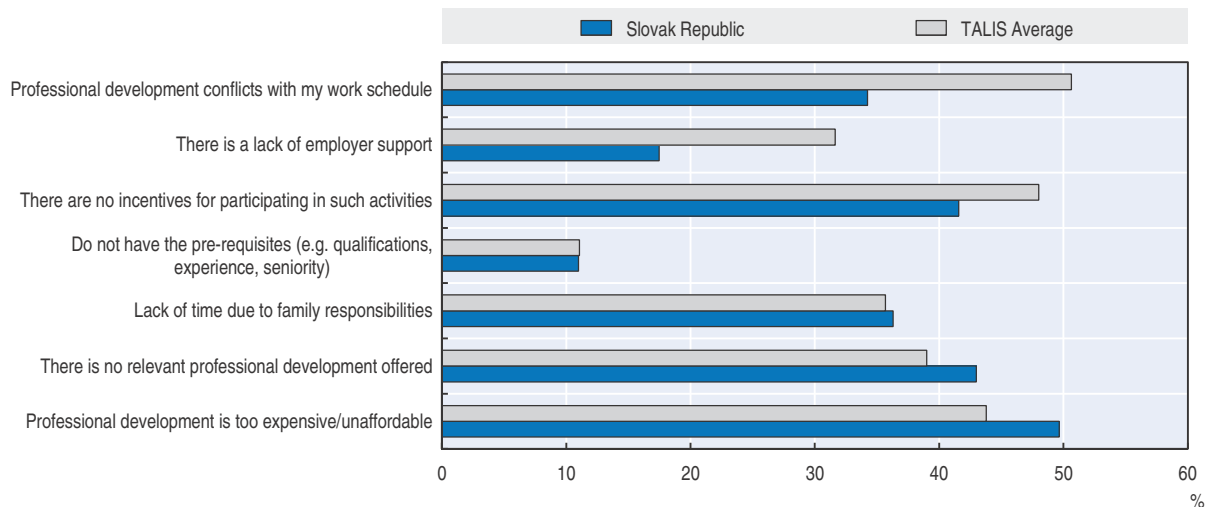
Figure 4.8. **Type of professional development recently undertaken by lower secondary teachers, the Slovak Republic and TALIS average, 2013**



Note: Data correspond to participation rates for each type of professional development reported to be undertaken by lower secondary education teachers in the 12 months prior to the survey.

Source: OECD (2014b), TALIS 2013 Results: An International Perspective on Teaching and Learning, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264196261-en>.

Figure 4.9. **Barriers to teachers' participation in professional development, lower secondary education, the Slovak Republic and TALIS average, 2013**



Note: Data correspond to the percentage of lower secondary education teachers indicating that they "agree" or "strongly agree" that the reasons depicted above represent barriers to their participation in professional development.

Source: OECD (2014b), TALIS 2013 Results: An International Perspective on Teaching and Learning, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264196261-en>.

as several teachers interviewed were critical about the supply of professional development, emphasising that it did not meet their needs. A survey conducted by the Slovak Chamber of Teachers reveals that over half of the surveyed teachers are not attracted to the supply of professional development programmes (SKU, 2014).

The TALIS survey also reveals that professional development being too expensive is perceived as the main barrier to professional development by Slovak lower secondary teachers. Almost 50% of surveyed teachers agreed or strongly agreed that affordability is a barrier to engaging in professional development, above the TALIS average of 43.8% (see Figure 4.9). Teachers can participate in the MPC courses free of charge, whereas they have to pay for courses offered by other providers. Schools also have a limited budget for professional development which limits their choices. This is particularly the case in smaller schools. For instance, PISA 2012 data reveal that, according to school directors' perceptions, Slovak mathematics teachers in schools in rural areas are less likely to attend a programme of professional development with a focus on mathematics during the previous three months than those in schools located in towns or cities, and this difference tends to be clearly more significant than in other OECD countries (Table IV.3.13, OECD, 2013a).

Another problematic aspect is the direct link between professional development and pay in particular through the salary allowance for professional development credits. Teachers receive a pay rise for merely attending professional development courses rather than for proving that they are changing their practice accordingly. One unintended effect of this system is the phenomenon of "credit chasing": there are concerns that teachers try and enrol in any courses they can rather than in courses that are interesting and relevant for them and their school. Given their low salaries, teachers have strong incentives to enrol in professional development to receive a salary increase (Shewbridge et al., 2014). A survey conducted by the Slovak Chamber of Teachers reveals that the salary allowance for professional development credits is the main motivation for most teachers to engage in professional development (SKU, 2014).

Finally, the market for professional development programmes does not seem to be effective. Most plans and programmes are developed centrally by the MPC. As the MPC's courses are free of charge, this puts at a competitive disadvantage other providers given that little money is available in schools' budgets for professional development. The process to accredit professional development programmes also raises concerns. Courses offered by MPC are automatically accredited, whereas other training providers need to apply and wait for accreditation of their programmes, a process that may take a considerable amount of time and reduce the ability of independent providers to respond adequately to teachers' demands (Shewbridge et al., 2014). In addition, little analysis of programme impact is undertaken by the Accreditation Council. Courses are accredited for six years with no possibility of adjustment during this period, including to introduce improvements on the basis of feedback provided by teachers who participate in specific programmes.

### ***There is no external validation of internal teacher appraisal processes***

For regular teacher appraisal internal to the school, the Ministry of Education provides appraisal forms that are available on its website. Schools may use the criteria as they are, modify them to suit the school's specific context, or create their own criteria. There is no obligation for schools to use these forms and as a result of schools' autonomy in developing their own systems, little is known nationally regarding the actual aspects appraised and criteria used across schools for teacher appraisal (Shewbridge et al., 2014).

As a result, internal teacher appraisal practices are likely to vary across schools in terms of the criteria applied and the way the results are used for professional development and teacher rewards. In this context there is a risk of potential bias or arbitrariness of teacher appraisal implemented by school directors, especially where the focus is not only on the teachers' performance but also on their personality. In the absence of widely-used teaching standards and an external validation of internal teacher appraisal processes, there are risks that teacher appraisal lacks consistency and coherence across schools.

### ***There are some challenges to the preparation of teachers***

Initial teacher education raises a range of concerns. First, there is some anecdotal evidence indicating that initial teacher education is not attracting the best candidates from school education. At their meeting with the OECD review team, teacher education institutions expressed their difficulties in attracting good enough candidates, emphasising that they have not been able to make a selection at the entry point for some years. This reflects the loss in the attractiveness of teaching as a result of low salaries, difficult working conditions and the low status of the profession. In this context, the establishment of a "motivation" scholarship in the amount of EUR 1 000 targeted at about 15% of the students in specific fields (physics, chemistry, mathematics, ICT, geography and biology) is a positive development. Second, as communicated by teacher education institutions at their meeting with the OECD review team, a very large proportion of graduates from initial teacher education seems not to actually go into teaching upon graduation. This is not surprising given the salaries of beginning teachers compared to those of other tertiary-educated individuals. This seems to indicate that, if teacher education programmes admitted fewer students, and if those admitted were more suited for teaching and more interested in a teaching career, the available resources could be used more effectively.

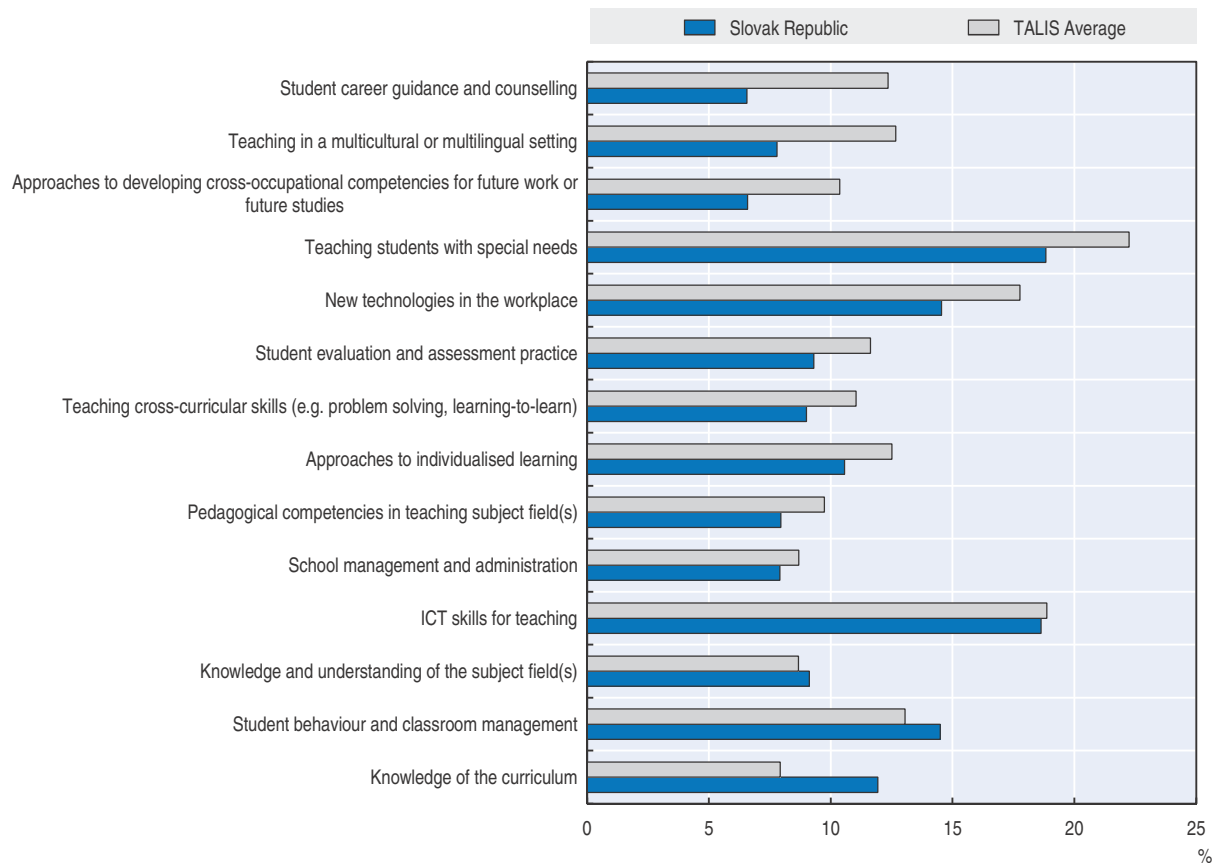
Third, there are concerns about the required minimum qualifications for pre-primary education teachers. The Slovak Republic is the only OECD country where such minimum qualifications are set at the upper secondary level (ISCED 3A). This is in stark contrast to the requirement of a master's level higher education qualification for teachers at the other levels of school education. There is no reason why quality standards should be lower at pre-primary education given the lasting effects of this level of education on student learning opportunities.

Fourth, a number of organisational aspects to the organisation of teacher education programmes are problematic. The OECD review team formed the impression that practical training in teacher education programmes could be strengthened through both the amount of time devoted to it and the quality of the interactions with schools. This is among the main concerns expressed by the Slovak Chamber of Teachers. In addition, teaching students with special needs and ICT skills for teaching have been identified by Slovak lower secondary teachers as their main needs for professional development, according to TALIS (see Figure 4.10), which might potentially indicate some under emphasis in these areas in teacher education programmes.

### ***There is some lack of transparency in teacher compensation defined at the school level***

There are some potential benefits of linking teacher appraisal to the personal allowance teachers receive. It can allow school directors to do proper staff planning and reward, retain and motivate teachers. However, there are concerns about the transparency and subjectivity of the criteria used to determine the individual performance-related extra

Figure 4.10. **Teachers' needs for professional development, lower secondary education, the Slovak Republic and TALIS average, 2013**



Note: Data correspond to the percentage of lower secondary education teachers indicating they have a high level of need for professional development in the areas displayed.

Source: OECD (2014b), TALIS 2013 Results: *An International Perspective on Teaching and Learning*, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264196261-en>.

compensation teachers may receive at the school level. Many of the teachers the OECD review team spoke to indicated that the relationship between performance and pay was not transparent. Teachers often did not know how the extra compensation was determined and whether it was based on classroom observations or other aspects of their work. A major reason for the lack of transparency in defining teachers' personal allowance is the absence of a clear framework for appraising the performance of teachers. As indicated above, internal teacher appraisal procedures are not undertaken in schools in a consistent manner with defined reference standards and criteria. For this reason, in fact, school directors may feel inhibited to establish a closer linkage between pay and performance and limit the personal allowance to the extra responsibilities and tasks teachers assume in the school. In addition, according to some of the school directors the OECD review team spoke to, there is in fact very little scope for school directors to award performance-related extra payments because of the limited extra money available in their budgets. Therefore, in practice, the personal allowance is used predominantly as an instrument to reward additional tasks and responsibilities.

### ***There might be some instances of shortage and out-of-field teaching***

Analysis of class size and student-teacher ratios in the Slovak Republic provide indications that, compared to the situation in other OECD countries, on the whole, the Slovak Republic might be facing a slight oversupply of teachers. As described earlier, average class size is low compared to the OECD average while student-teacher ratios are around the OECD average. This discrepancy is explained by both the facts that Slovak teachers tend to have a teaching load above average (in pre-primary and primary education) and Slovak students tend to have lower instruction time. PISA 2012 data also reveal that the Slovak Republic has the 10th lowest index of teacher shortage among OECD countries (OECD, 2013a). In 2012, 5.0%, 5.3% and 2.2% of 15-year-old students were in schools whose director reported that the school's capacity to provide instruction was hindered a lot by a lack of qualified teachers in mathematics, science and language of instruction respectively (this is against OECD averages of 16.7%, 16.2% and 8.5% respectively) (Table IV.3.37, OECD, 2013a). As could have been expected, given the demographic developments, this represents an improvement relative to the 2003 situation, when the equivalent figures for the Slovak Republic were 5.7%, 9.8% and 4.9% (OECD, 2013a).

However, this does not mean that the Slovak school system is not faced with specific instances of teacher shortage. PISA 2012 data reveals that the index of teacher shortage is considerably higher in both socio-economically disadvantaged schools and in schools located in a rural area (fewer than 3 000 people) (Table IV.3.11, OECD, 2013a). This is of concern given that the Slovak Republic has been identified by PISA analysis as the second country with the strongest negative relationship between the index of teacher shortage and mathematics performance (Table IV.1.12b, OECD, 2013a).

In addition, there are some indications that out-of-field teaching might be a more serious issue than in other OECD countries. This type of “hidden shortage” is said to exist when teaching is carried out by someone who is not fully qualified to teach the field/subject and is usually measured as the proportion of teachers teaching a subject in which they are not qualified. TALIS 2013 provides data on the proportion of lower secondary teachers in given subjects who have not had formal education or training at ISCED level 4 or higher or at the professional development stage for those subjects. In the Slovak Republic, such proportions for teachers currently teaching reading, writing and literature; mathematics; science; and modern foreign languages were 13.5% (2nd highest figure among TALIS countries), 12.9% (4th highest), 15.1% (2nd highest) and 11.3% (10th highest) against TALIS averages of 5.7%, 6.6%, 7.6% and 10.5% (OECD, 2014b). However, out-of-field teaching might result not only from shortages but also from the way schools are managed. In fact, given their high levels of autonomy in the Slovak Republic, it might be the case that some school directors find that assigning teachers to teach out of their fields is often more convenient, less expensive or less time-consuming than the alternatives.

These figures are confirmed by national data, as shown in Table 4.8. In 2014, in basic education, about 12% of the instructed hours were taught by a teacher with no qualification in the field or subject taught. Figures are considerably better in secondary education where such proportion is 2.4% and 5.9% in general and vocational education respectively. Since 2005, the situation has slightly improved in terms of the instruction provided by teachers with adequate qualifications for the subject or field taught (in 2005, in basic education, almost 17% of instructed hours were taught by a teacher with no qualification for the subject or field taught). As displayed in Table 4.9, there are no major



Table 4.8. **Instructed hours by teaching qualification for the subject or field taught, by level and type of education, 2005, 2009 and 2014**

	2005	2009	2014
Basic school			
<b>Number of instructed hours</b>	<b>783 306</b>	<b>694 123</b>	<b>720 481</b>
of which:			
Instructed by teachers with teaching qualification	650 687	587 701	633 911
Instructed by teachers without teaching qualification	132 619	106 422	86 570
<b>Proportion of qualified hours (%)</b>	<b>83.07</b>	<b>84.67</b>	<b>87.98</b>
General secondary school			
<b>Number of instructed hours</b>	<b>141 950</b>	<b>156 637</b>	<b>131 601</b>
of which:			
Instructed by teachers with teaching qualification	137 238	151 455	128 452
Instructed by teachers without teaching qualification	4 712	5 182	3 149
<b>Proportion of qualified hours (%)</b>	<b>96.68</b>	<b>96.69</b>	<b>97.61</b>
Vocational secondary school			
<b>Number of instructed hours</b>	<b>430 480</b>	<b>409 574</b>	<b>345 543</b>
of which:			
Instructed by teachers with teaching qualification	397 197	376 114	325 160
Instructed by teachers without teaching qualification	33 283	33 460	20 383
<b>Proportion of qualified hours (%)</b>	<b>92.27</b>	<b>91.83</b>	<b>94.10</b>

Notes: Teaching qualification refers to qualifications for the subject/field taught.

Source: Data provided to the OECD review team by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports.

Table 4.9. **Instructed hours by teaching qualification for the subject or field taught, by school sector and size of municipality, 2014**

School sector/teaching qualification	Number of instructed hours	Of which: Instructed by teachers with teaching qualification	Of which: Instructed by teachers without teaching qualification	Proportion of qualified hours (%)
<b>By school sector</b>				
State	1 180 288	1 067 904	112 385	90.48
Private	59 771	53 337	6 434	89.24
Church	72 520	67 107	5 413	92.54
<b>Total</b>	<b>1 312 579</b>	<b>1 188 348</b>	<b>124 232</b>	<b>90.54</b>
<b>By size of municipality</b>				
<= 1 000	61 991	50 688	11 303	81.77
> 1 000 and <= 2 000	138 510	115 667	22 843	83.51
> 2 000 and <= 3 000	81 080	68 135	12 946	84.03
> 3 000 and <= 4 000	44 353	37 234	7 120	83.95
> 4 000 and <= 5 000	35 576	31 658	3 918	88.99
> 5 000	951 069	884 967	66 102	93.05
<b>Total</b>	<b>1 312 579</b>	<b>1 188 348</b>	<b>124 232</b>	<b>90.54</b>

Notes: Teaching qualification refers to qualifications for the subject/field taught.

Source: Data provided to the OECD review team by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports.

differences across school sectors in the proportion of hours instructed by a teacher with no qualification in the field or subject taught. As pointed earlier, however, the proportion of hours instructed by teachers without a teaching qualification for the subject or field taught tends to increase as the size of the municipality decreases, indicating a greater probability of out-of-field teaching in smaller municipalities.

## Policy recommendations

### ***Increase teacher salaries and improve the working conditions of teachers***

As further resources become available to the school system and as efficiency gains are realised (see Chapter 3), a top priority for the allocation of the newly available resources should be the improvement of teachers' compensation and working conditions. The objective is to improve the status of the teaching profession, attract better candidates to teaching, ensure teacher education graduates enter the profession, make teaching more appealing to males, and ensure teachers have adequate incentives to be effective in their daily practice. This need is well recognised by the Slovak government as shown in recent efforts to improve teachers' salaries. These efforts should be sustained in the years to come, result in the significant improvement of teacher salary conditions, and go alongside efforts to improve working conditions. The latter relate, in part, to efforts to better resource individual schools so they are able to provide better instructional materials to teachers (see Chapter 3), more relevant professional development for teachers (see below), and better conditions for individual student support (e.g. extra teacher resources in disadvantaged schools, more teaching assistants to support the work of teachers).

In light of the current ageing trend, resulting from the small number of teachers currently entering the system, it is important to ensure that good qualified candidates enter the teaching profession at an adequate rate (and remain in it). Even if there appears to be no overall shortage of teachers, it is important for the school system to ensure a given rate of teacher renewal so the school system is continuously provided with new ideas and perspectives. It is also important that newly educated teachers are not lost for the profession. Hence, one option is to target greater salary increases to the early stages of the career. This is particularly important in the Slovak Republic given how low teacher salaries are relative to the salaries of other tertiary-educated graduates.

### ***Introduce and promote the use of teaching standards across the system***

The OECD review team strongly encourages the Slovak education system to pursue its efforts in introducing teacher professional standards. The expectation is that the current process led by the Methodology and Pedagogy Centre (MPC), as part of the project Professional and Career Progress of Pedagogic Employees, will lead to the introduction of teacher professional standards to guide teacher development in the school system. As explained by Shewbridge et al. (2014), "the current co-existence of the MPC's national standards, the Ministry's appraisal forms and the Inspectorate's criteria for classroom observation would benefit from being consolidated into a single set of standards so that there is a clear understanding of what is considered accomplished teaching".

These new standards, if they are clear, well-structured and widely supported, can become a powerful mechanism for aligning the various elements involved in developing teachers' knowledge and skills. They should provide a common basis for initial teacher education, appraisal of beginning teachers, regular school-based teacher appraisal, teacher certification, professional development and career advancement (Shewbridge et al., 2014). This would provide coherence for the teaching profession and a more consistent application of teacher appraisal, professional development and career advancement across teachers and schools.

The development of professional standards for teachers should include a strategy for national consultation: a variety of actors at different levels and from different contexts should participate in the consultation process, to generate knowledge and ownership of standards across the country. There is also a need to ensure appropriate feedback mechanisms: following implementation, standards can have periodical revisions to ensure that these remain aligned with other elements of the system, and that they are useful in the promotion of teacher professionalism. Another objective is that these standards are clear to teachers. This “making sense” of standards by teachers is essential to transform their practice. Extensive socialisation of standards for teachers can be done at several stages of teachers’ careers (NBRC, 2010):

- During initial teacher education courses so that beginning teachers already have a clear understanding of what is expected from them.
- In mentoring programmes to ease the transition between initial education and school-level practice (Hobson, 2009).
- In-service teachers must receive training on the use of standards and their implications for classroom practice.

### ***As school consolidation proceeds, adjust the use of human resources at schools***

While there is a need to both ensure the continuous entry of new talent into the teaching profession and to constantly motivate in-service teachers, there is no need to increase the overall size of the teaching workforce. On the contrary, the needed school consolidation is likely to require a certain degree of teacher redundancy. This entails developing strategies for reallocating, redeploying and retiring teachers currently employed in schools which will be affected by school (or class) consolidation. In this context, it is important to note that there are a number of areas in which teachers made redundant by school consolidation could assume new responsibilities. These include engaging them to help mainstream special needs students in regular schools and classes; using them to implement strategies to individually support students who are falling behind; and involving them in advisory roles within or across schools. This could go alongside offering early retirement packages for some teachers who are close to retirement age.

### ***Expand the use of learning support staff***

The introduction of teaching assistants to support the learning of students with special needs and disadvantaged students is a good development. There is a clear need to develop capacity at the school level to be able to make progress with the integration of students with special needs in mainstream schools. At the same time, this should be part of an overall agenda to improve the ability of schools to provide individual support for students with learning difficulties, which calls for an expansion of the availability of teaching assistants in schools, particularly those with a high concentration of disadvantaged students.

### ***Provide incentives to work in remote areas and disadvantaged schools***

In order to address the specific instances of shortage that might still occur in rural areas and disadvantaged schools, the introduction of some incentives such as special allowances or in-kind support is recommended. These could assist rural and disadvantaged schools in making their employment conditions more attractive and could reduce the potential inequitable distribution of teachers which may result from the more decentralised approach to teacher recruitment which prevails in the Slovak Republic.

### ***Monitor instances of out-of-field teaching***

Also, the Slovak decentralised approach to human resources management, and to school decision-making more generally, requires that educational authorities play a strong role in monitoring the adequate and equitable distribution of teacher resources throughout the country. This includes not only monitoring teacher qualifications, teachers' experience levels and student-teacher ratio across schools but also monitoring out-of-field teaching as a practice that might reflect mismanagement of teaching resources at the school level. The latter could, for instance, be among the aspects monitored by the State Schools Inspectorate.

### ***Simplify the teacher certification process and bring it closer to teaching practice***

#### ***Focus on the acquisition of competencies and simplify the process***

The teacher certification process should remain as the component of teacher appraisal predominantly dedicated to accountability but needs to be simplified and brought closer to teaching practice. The OECD review team endorses the recommendation provided by the OECD Review of Evaluation and Assessment on revising the career advancement system (Shewbridge et al., 2014). As explained by Shewbridge et al. (2014), “the career advancement function that is currently being achieved through appraisal processes at the end of induction, credit evaluation, certification processes and appraisal for specialisation, could be brought together in a single process of teacher appraisal for career progression. This process should be associated with the existing career structure, allowing for progression within the career path as well as providing access to different specialisations and positions.”

The model, as proposed by Shewbridge et al. (2014), can be summarised as follows:

- It is based on an appraisal of teacher competencies with a clear linkage to teaching practice. The appraisal for certification (or career progression) should be founded on the national framework for teaching standards, describing teacher competencies at the different stages of the career. Also, instruments used in teacher appraisal need to capture the quality of teachers' practices in the classroom, namely classroom observation and teacher portfolios providing evidence of teachers' work. This would be in contrast to the current certification examination, which involves a more academic exercise with a tenuous link to classroom practice.
- It determines career advancement, with voluntary stages and the need for re-certification. Access to career levels beyond “independent teacher” could be through a voluntary application process, and teachers not applying for such promotion should be required to maintain their basic certification status as independent teacher. This would involve each permanent teacher periodically (e.g. every four years) being subject to a formal appraisal for certification, or re-certification. The purpose would be to confirm the teachers as fit for the profession. The results of the certification process should influence the speed of career and salary progression (e.g. if excellent, the teacher would progress by two salary steps; if regular, the teacher would progress by one salary step; and if poor, the teacher would remain in the same salary step). The certification appraisal should also constitute an opportunity to identify underperformance.

Further details are available in Shewbridge et al. (2014). The OECD review team is aware that there are plans by the Slovak Government to move in this direction with a new career system based on the acquisition of competencies and relying on the introduction of teacher professional standards.

***Link teacher certification to school-based teacher appraisal***

School-based teacher appraisal for professional development and appraisal for certification (or career progression) cannot be disconnected from each other. A possible link is that appraisal for certification needs to take into account the qualitative assessments produced through school-based teacher appraisal, including the recommendations made for areas of improvement. School-based teacher appraisal should also have a function of identifying sustained underperformance. Similarly, results of teacher certification appraisals can also inform the professional development of individual teachers.

***Improve the framework for professional development provision***

The OECD review team formed the view that the framework for professional development provision needs rethinking. This relates to incentives to undertake professional development, the supply of professional development opportunities for teachers and the efficiency of professional development provision. The objective is that professional development becomes a more regular practice among teachers in the Slovak Republic, with a greater diversity of relevant offerings, driven by teachers' aspirations for professional growth and adequately resourced.

***Eliminate the direct link to teacher compensation***

Professional development activities seek to update, develop and broaden teachers' competencies in agreement with his or her professional aspirations, needs and specific school context. Ideally, they should change teachers' practices and impact student learning. This is less likely the case if the teacher's motivation to engage in professional development is purely to achieve better salary prospects, as is currently the case for many teachers in the Slovak Republic. Clearly, a direct link between the completion of professional development activities and credit accumulation to access a salary allowance leads to the phenomenon of "credit chasing" in which the relevance of the programmes becomes secondary. Instead, professional development should be understood by teachers as the main instrument to acquire the new competencies necessary for professional growth and career advancement. It is therefore suggested that the direct link between professional development and a salary allowance is eliminated.

***Improve the relevance of professional development programmes***

Slovak teachers are consistent in raising doubts about the relevance of professional development programmes that are on offer. This indicates that the supply of programmes does not fit teachers' needs, possibly because providers are not successful in forming an accurate picture of the actual professional needs of teachers and schools. This is worrisome taking into account that schools prepare plans for professional development on the basis of the regular teacher appraisals they conduct. Clearly, suppliers of professional development programmes need to better connect to the professional development needs identified through school-level professional development plans. This suggests a range of possible actions: better interaction between professional development providers and individual schools; an assessment on the part of an organisation such as the State Schools Inspectorate of the professional development needs of teachers on the basis of the information collected through school inspections; or strategies to directly survey teachers about their professional development needs.

Successful professional development programmes involve teachers in learning activities that are similar to ones they will use with their students (OECD, 2005). The most effective forms of professional development seem to be those that focus on clearly articulated priorities, provide ongoing school-based support to classroom teachers, deal with subject matter content as well as suitable instructional strategies and classroom management techniques, and create opportunities for teachers to observe, experience and try new teaching methods (OECD, 2005). In this context, school-based professional development activities are particularly important and seem to receive little attention in the Slovak Republic. Professional development should create opportunities for teachers to engage in school-focused research and development. Such programmes support teachers in studying and evaluating their own teaching strategies and school programmes, and in sharing their findings with their colleagues, and through conferences and publications (see OECD, 2005, for specific examples). Areas where professional development is likely to be needed in the Slovak republic are the use of ICT, teaching students with special needs and classroom management (see Figure 4.10).

### ***Improve the efficiency of professional development provision***

Given that there is a significant degree of dissatisfaction with the current provision for professional development, it would be helpful to review the framework for funding and provision. A possible approach is to open a market for professional development provision while providing individual schools with earmarked funds for professional development or give each teacher a personal allowance which could be spent over several years (see also Chapter 3). In this situation, schools could freely choose the training and provider most suitable to meet their professional development needs. This would also require the strengthening of the accreditation system, making sure accreditation processes are effective and take into account the observed quality and relevance of programmes. This involves requiring providers to establish internal quality systems whose results are then used to subsequently improve programme provision – while ensuring external accreditation processes audit such internal quality systems. This approach would also benefit from an improved eligibility for paid professional development for individual teachers. A feature that should be kept is the co-ordination of professional development needs at the school level which ensures that individual teacher training needs are aligned with the respective school's development plan.

### ***Maintain a focus on school-based teacher appraisal and validate it through external school evaluation***

#### ***Maintain a strong focus on the developmental function of teacher appraisal***

The well-embedded procedures for school-based teacher appraisal are a key strength of the Slovak approach to the management of the teaching workforce. The current system for internal appraisal benefits from a non-threatening evaluation context, focus on classroom observation, a culture of feedback, and formal links to professional and school development. This emphasis on teacher appraisal which is predominantly for teacher development should be maintained and strengthened. The introduction of teaching standards will bring the necessary reference to guide teachers through their development and will better link school-based teacher appraisal to other aspects of teacher policy such as appraisal for certification, career advancement and professional development. In addition, teacher appraisal undertaken at the school level would benefit from the enhancement of school

leaders' appraisal and evaluation competencies. As explained by Shewbridge et al. (2014), "there is a need to build the credibility and authority of school leaders as educational leaders so that they can operate effective observation, feedback and coaching for their teachers and lead whole-school evaluation processes" (see also Chapter 5).

### ***Validate internal teacher appraisal through external school evaluation***

In order to guarantee the systematic and coherent application of school-based teacher appraisal across Slovak schools, it would be important to undertake the external validation of the respective school processes. An option is for school evaluation processes conducted by the State Schools Inspectorate to include the audit of the processes in place to organise teacher appraisal, holding the school director accountable as necessary. While the introduction of teaching standards as the main reference for teacher appraisal will support the consistency of school-based teacher appraisal across schools, there is still a need to ensure these processes are appropriately conducted in all schools.

### ***Improve the provision of initial teacher education***

#### ***Make initial teacher education more selective***

Overall, the Slovak Republic is not facing shortages. This is an opportunity to be more selective about those who are employed and those who enter the profession and initial teacher education. If salaries are increased, as suggested above, and better candidates are attracted to initial teacher education, it is clear that entry into preparation programmes can be much more selective to ensure only high-quality graduates fill the available teaching posts. Potentially useful initiatives include: providing more information and counselling to prospective teacher trainees so that better informed enrolment decisions are made; procedures that try to assess whether the individuals wanting to become teachers have the necessary motivation, skills, knowledge and personal qualities (specific assessments); incentive schemes to recruit candidates with high-level competencies (such as higher education grants); and flexible programme structures that provide students with school experience early in the course, and opportunities to move into other courses if their motivation towards teaching changes. This could go alongside initiatives at the starting point of the teacher's career strengthening requirements to enter the profession, in addition to better incentives for beginning teachers (as suggested earlier), to ensure high-quality graduates actually enter the teaching profession.

#### ***Upgrade minimum qualification requirements for pre-primary teachers***

A higher education qualification should become the minimum requirement for entering the teaching profession at pre-primary education level. There is no reason why qualification requirements for pre-primary education teachers should be lower than those for teachers at other school levels. This is an important step to improve the status of pre-primary education teachers with potential consequences for the attractiveness of the job. At the same time, it is expected that initial teacher education standards will increase, placing greater demands on student teachers. This transition in qualification requirements will need to pay due attention to the need to keep a close link to school-level practice as student teachers obtain their degree at university. Initial preparation of pre-primary teachers at the university level should involve significant practice at schools. Overall, the objective is to improve the overall quality of pre-primary education teachers and give them the same status as teachers at other levels of school education.

### ***Improve links to school-level practice and the preparation of teachers to support students with special education needs***

The role of field experiences in schools as part of teacher education programmes could be reinforced. These should happen early in teacher education, and be framed to provide a broad experience of what it means to be a professional teacher, including actual class teaching, counselling and guidance, curriculum and school development planning, research and evaluation and collaboration with parents and external partners (OECD, 2005). The Slovak Government has already expressed the intention of moving in this direction through the commitment to increase the amount of practical training during initial teacher education in the 2014 National Reform Programme (Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic, 2014). In addition, in light of efforts to integrate students with special needs in mainstream schools, initial teacher education programmes need to strengthen their preparation of teachers to respond to this increasing need in schools. School systems are increasingly offering integrated education for students with disabilities and learning difficulties, and teachers are expected to develop knowledge on special education, on appropriate teaching and management processes, and in working with support personnel (OECD, 2005).

### ***Limit teacher pay bonuses at the school level***

Given that teacher certification processes, as recommended above, associate good performance to career progression, also possibly linking performance to the speed of salary step progression within career stages, an indirect link between performance and teacher compensation is established. This ensures teachers have a monetary incentive to achieve good performance. As a result, the possible use of pay bonuses for good performance at the school level (through the personal allowance) might be redundant as a monetary incentive.

In addition, the intended additional “bonus” pay element should be approached with considerable caution. The evidence of the overall impact of such extra payments is mixed and can be contentious and potentially divisive (OECD, 2005). This is even more the case when criteria to award such “bonus” payments at the school level are not transparent, as is the case in the Slovak Republic. Rewarding teachers with time allowances, sabbatical periods, opportunities for school-based research, support for post-graduate study, or opportunities for in-service education could be more appealing for many teachers (OECD, 2005).

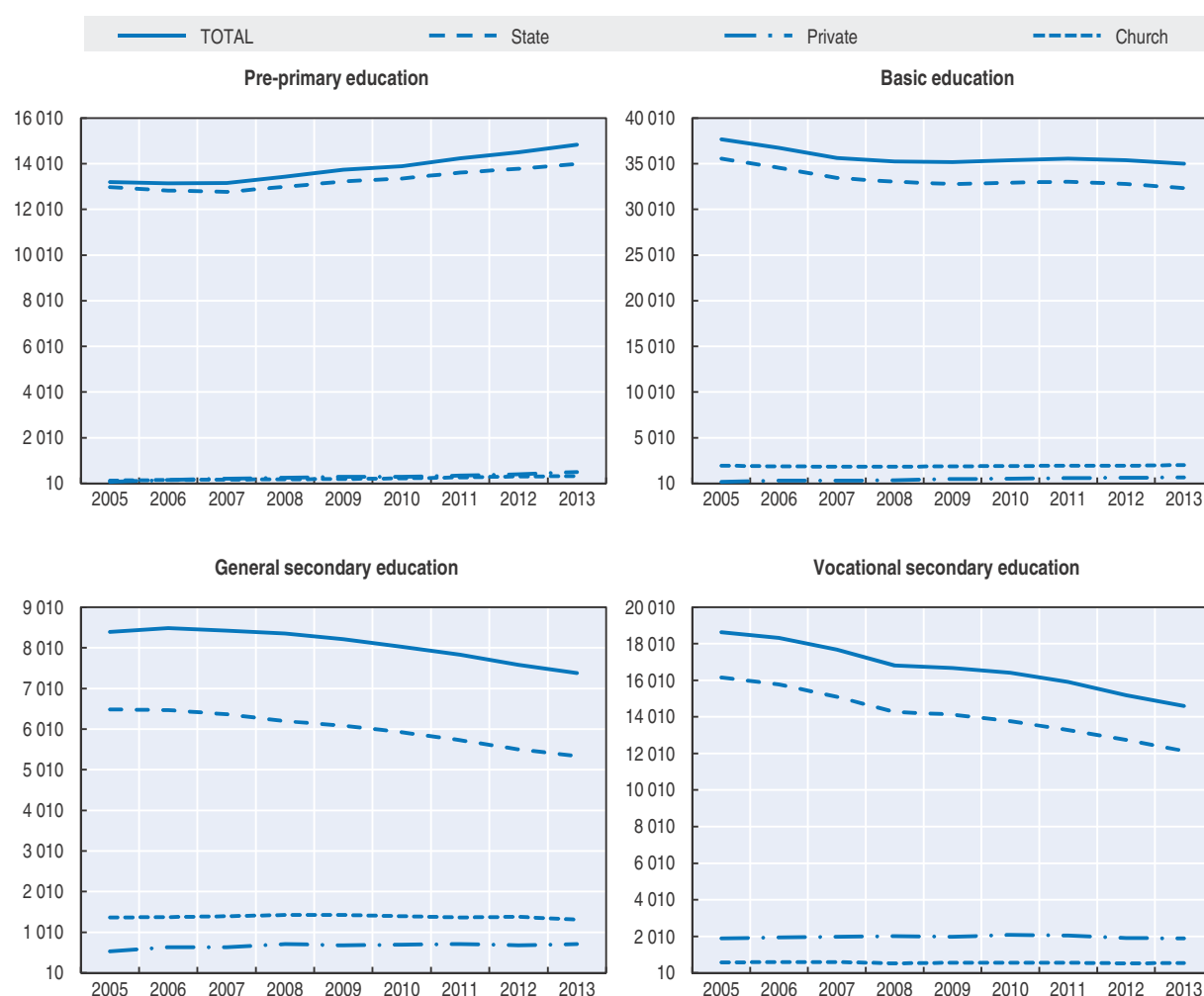
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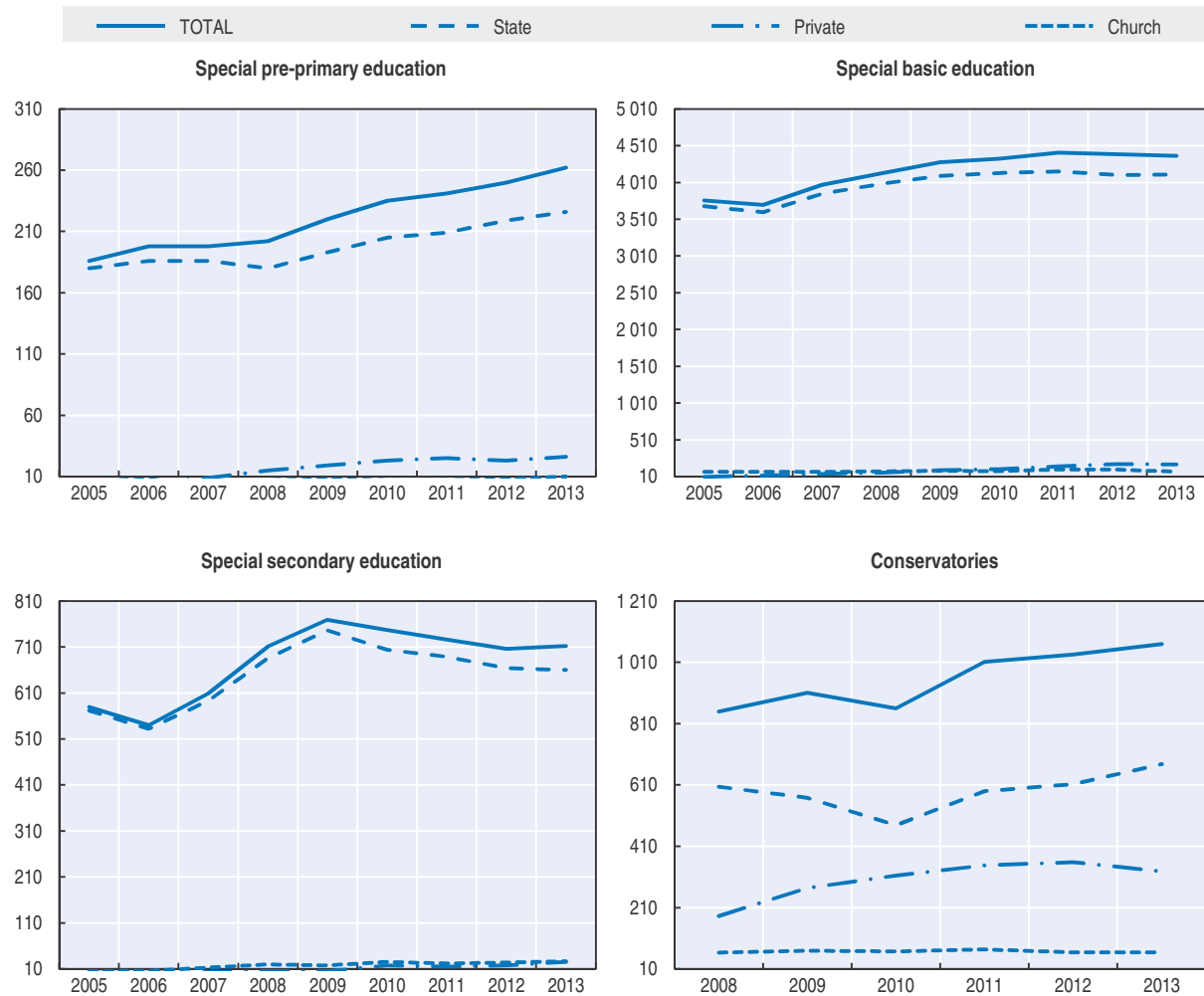
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## ANNEX 4.A1

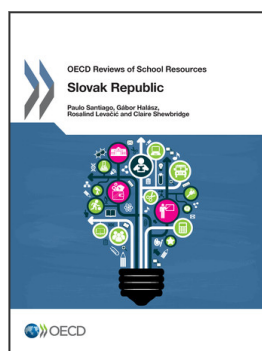
*Descriptive data on teachers*Figure 4.A1.1. **Number of teachers, total and by type of provider, mainstream schools, 2005-13**

Source: Data provided to the OECD review team by Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports.

Figure 4.A1.2. **Number of teachers, total and by type of provider, special schools and conservatoires, 2005-13**



Source: Data provided to the OECD review team by Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports.



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