



REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA
COURT OF AUDIT

AUDIT REPORT

Reading literacy in children in the Republic of Slovenia



2020

4 QUALITY EDUCATION



5 GENDER EQUALITY



10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

MISSION

The Court of Audit informs the public about important audit findings concerning the operations of state bodies and other users of public funds in a timely and objective manner. It provides recommendations to state bodies and other users of public funds for the improvement of their operations.



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Number: 320-1/2019/35
Ljubljana, 16 September 2020

Summary

The Court of Audit of the Republic of Slovenia implemented the audit to review whether *Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, Ministry of Culture, National Education Institute Slovenia and Slovenian Book Agency were partially efficient in developing reading literacy in children in the period from 1 January 2014 to 31 December 2018.*

Reading literacy is recognised as a fundamental capacity that enables social inclusion, personal fulfilment and personal development of an individual. It represents the basis for the development of all other literacies. Namely, it focuses on the reading role of an individual's literacy and represents combination of different types of knowledge, skills, attitudes that start to develop already in the early childhood within the family environment and are later upgraded within the educational system and social environment.

The Republic of Slovenia cooperates in several international studies that assess the achievement of students in line with the international standards (TIMSS, PIRLS, PISA, ICCS, ICILS, TALIS and others) among which PIRLS and PISA are closely related to reading literacy development in children. PIRLS is monitoring trends in reading achievement every 5 years at the fourth grade (at the age of 10); while PISA measures reading performance of 15-year-olds every 3 years. In the Republic of Slovenia, the age of 15 represents the point when children complete compulsory primary school education and a milestone when they decide either to continue their education or to enter the labour market.

The Slovenian Development Strategy 2030 is an overall development and strategic document of the Republic of Slovenia and it incorporates the performance indicators directly linked to the achievements of Slovenian children as applied in the PISA international assessment that measures not only performance in mathematics and science but also reading performance.

The achieved level of reading literacy of the Slovenian 15-year-olds in 2018 was on average equal to the one in 2006. The average performance in reading literacy in 2018 compared to 2015 reduced mainly due to lower achievements at all 6 levels of the international scale, i.e. particularly at the second, third and fourth level.

There is a larger percentage of children who fail to meet 2 lowest levels out of 6, i.e. 18% of all, thus bringing us behind the objective of 15% set in the programme of the European Union Education 2020. Slovenia is the ninth out of 28 Member States of the European Union and thus fails to meet the performance indicator from the Slovenian Development Strategy 2030, i.e. to be ranked among the first quarter of the states.

In 2018, the reading satisfaction of children compared to data from 2009 was under the average regarding satisfaction levels of children from the Member States of the OECD. The Republic of Slovenia belongs among the states where the differences between children from different socio-economic background are smaller. Nevertheless, this does not apply to the achievements of the children with migrant background. The gender difference in the Republic of Slovenia is still quite evident and is one of the highest among the Member States of the OECD.

Care for language learning and reading literacy development reach into several areas, the largest scope of activities and the biggest financial share belong to the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, Ministry of Culture, National Education Institute Slovenia and Slovenian Book Agency. At the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport the development of reading literacy falls within the Education Development Office, while the National Education Institute Slovenia provides for professional development and consultancy to professionals and senior staff of kindergartens and schools. Slovenian Language Service at the Ministry of Culture coordinates the Slovenian language policy while Slovenian Book Agency, at least according to its legal bases, provides for conditions pertaining to reading culture development. Reading culture is an important factor behind the reading literacy development, nevertheless the Court of Audit believes the term is not well defined. Furthermore, the conditions which could be observed by the Slovenian Book Agency in order to provide reading culture development were not determined.

In all national cultural programmes developed up to now, the Slovenian language received its own chapter which includes reading literacy as a well-recognised issue. The Resolution on the 2014-2017 National Programme for Culture considered reading literacy development within the field of libraries, the Slovenian language and culture and arts education. Language policy was in the period covered by the audit outlined in the Resolution on the National Programme for Language Policy 2014-2018, the activities and objectives related to reading literacy development were included particularly in the Language Education Action Plan as an implementing document of the Resolution. In 2006, the first National Strategy for the Development of Literacy was adopted.

Common social and technological development has changed the requirements related to reading literacy of an individual, thus the strategy needed to be updated. The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport organised thematic consultation in February 2014 bringing forward the process of preparation of the National Strategy for the Development of Reading Literacy, nevertheless it was not completed by the end of 2018. In December 2019, the Government of the Republic of Slovenia adopted the National Strategy for the Development of Reading Literacy 2019-2030 as multisectoral document of the development planning.

Secondary studies based on the data from surveys and projects showed that it is necessary to improve reading literacy in children by providing systemic conditions at the national level, such as accessible pre-school education of high quality, public and free of charge primary school including school libraries and developed system of public libraries. The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, Ministry of Culture, National Education Institute Slovenia, and Slovenian Book Agency in the period covered by the audit failed to cooperate in planning of their activities by approaching towards the development of reading literacy in children in an integrated manner, namely to use available knowledge and experience and to set up efficient transfer of professional knowledge and recognised best practice.

In 2015, Act Amending the Librarianship Act was adopted whereby school libraries became an integrated part of the public service in the field of education and schooling and were transferred under the authority of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport. The purpose of the changes was to better involve school libraries into the school system, since school libraries are one of the most important elements in reducing differences among children in accessing reading materials. According to the results of the international studies, the Court of Audit assessed that the role of school libraries in the period covered by the audit was overlooked and all possibilities for systemic development of reading culture as well as reading literacy were not taken into account within the compulsory primary education, thus having an impact on the future

career possibilities of children, regardless of their economic status. The network of school libraries in the Republic of Slovenia in the period covered by the audit did not meet the criteria set for public libraries, relating to geographic accessibility, quality and structure of collections, computer equipment, working conditions and available space for education and training purposes.

The Evaluation Strategy of the development of the Slovenian Public Libraries 2016 showed that poor conditions existing in the relations between public libraries and local communities presented a threat of collapsing of the public library network. A similar situation exists in the relation between the public libraries and the State since the legally set financial share as an obligation of the State for purchasing library materials was not determined.

The Court of Audit expressed an opinion that the Republic of Slovenia was *partially efficient* in developing reading literacy in children. It also proposed several *recommendations* to improve the operations in the future, but it did not demand the submission of a response report.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Court of Audit audited the efficiency of operations of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, the Ministry of Culture, the National Education Institute Slovenia and the Slovenian Book Agency in planning and implementing activities for developing reading literacy in children¹ in the Republic of Slovenia in the period from 1 January 2014 to 31 December 2018.

The audit was carried out on the basis of the Court of Audit Act² and the Rules of Procedure of the Court of Audit³, and in accordance with the International Standards of Supreme Audit Institutions defined by the Instructions for Conducting Audits⁴. The Decision on audit implementation⁵ was issued on 8 January 2019, and the Decision supplementing the decision on audit implementation⁶ was issued on 31 January 2019.

The responsibility of the Court of Audit is, on the basis of the implemented audit, to express a descriptive opinion on the efficiency of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, the Ministry of Culture, the National Education Institute Slovenia and the Slovenian Book Agency in the part pertaining to reading literacy development in children in the period covered by the audit. The audit was planned and implemented in a manner to obtain sufficient and reasonable assurance for expressing an opinion.

1.1 Audit outline

The audit was defined as a performance audit. The objective of the audit was to express an opinion on the efficiency of the auditees in planning and implementing activities for developing reading literacy in children in the Republic of Slovenia in the period covered by the audit.

¹ The audit reviews the activities (measures and projects) of the auditees pertaining to reading literacy development in children by the end of the compulsory primary education, that is by the age of 15. The term *children* thus refers to persons by the age of 15. According to Slovenian legislation, a child is a person who has not turned 18 yet (Article 5 of Family Code; Official Gazette of the RS, No 15/17), however, for the purpose of this audit the term *child* is used for persons by the age of 15.

² Official Gazette of the RS, Nos 11/01 and 109/12.

³ Official Gazette of the RS, No 91/01.

⁴ Official Gazette of the RS, No 43/13.

⁵ No 320-1/2019/2.

⁶ No 320-1/2019/5.

The term *literacy* is historically, geographically, culturally and socially defined⁷, which is why a uniform definition is not possible. Several professions are actively dealing with literacy, thus several models⁸ bringing forward different aspects were developed to ensure the understanding of literacy concepts. The common element of these models is the following constituents: reading, listening, speaking and writing. *Reading literacy* especially focuses on the role of reading when developing one's literacy.

In this audit reading literacy is considered as defined in the PISA survey⁹, namely as comprehension, using and reflecting on the written text, as well as the enthusiasm while reading which enables the reader to achieve the set objectives, to develop individual knowledge, potentials and team spirit.

Reading literacy represents a set of knowledge, skills and attitudes that start to develop already in the early childhood within the family environment and are later upgraded within the educational system and social environment.

Reading literacy is not dealt only within the field of education but also within other competent sectors. Different fields of human activity require also other types of literacy (for example, mathematical, natural science and digital literacy), which, however, all originate from reading literacy since this skill enables an individual – the reader to achieve its personal objectives, to understand its own knowledge, potentials and team-spirit capacity.

Efficiency in developing reading literacy in children means that reading literacy development in children in the Republic of Slovenia is adequately planned and that the activities (measures and projects) for developing reading literacy in children are efficiently carried out.

In order to be able to express the opinion, the key audit question was posed, *whether the Republic of Slovenia was efficient in developing reading literacy in children*.

The answer to the key audit question was given by answering the following sub-questions:

- were the activities for the development of reading literacy in children appropriately planned;
- were the activities for the development of reading literacy in children efficient.

The answers to audit questions were obtained mainly by reviewing data, examining documentation and acts of the auditees and by interviewing representatives of the auditees and other relevant stakeholders.

⁷ Obrazi pismenosti: Spoznanja o razvoju pismenosti odraslih, Javrh, P. (ur.), Slovenian Institute of Adult Education, Ljubljana, 2011 (hereinafter referred to as: publication Obrazi pismenosti), [URL: https://arhiv.acs.si/publikacije/Obrazi_pismenosti.pdf], 27/8/2020.

⁸ Publication Obrazi pismenosti.

⁹ Programme for International Student Assessment (hereinafter referred to as: PISA) is carried out under the authority of the OECD, [URL: <http://www.oecd.org/pisa/>], 27/8/2020.

1.2 Presentation of the audit field

Literacy shall be described as the competence of reading and writing and as the ability to comprehend everyday messages¹⁰. In the European Union, reading literacy is recognised as a key competence¹¹ that enables social cohesion, personal fulfilment and personal development of an individual. Achievement of the highest levels of various types of literacy in all areas of private and social life depends on different factors which are presented in the continuation of the report. Together, these factors represent an efficient social framework for developing reading literacy which reflects in developing reading culture in the family environment, in the time of schooling, in working environment, free time and elsewhere, as well as in accessibility to books and other reading materials. In the Republic of Slovenia, development of reading literacy is the matter of language policy.

1.2.1 Development of language policy

Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia¹² lays down in Article 11 that the official language in the Republic of Slovenia is Slovenian. In areas home to Italian and Hungarian national communities, the official language is also Italian or Hungarian. It seemed unquestionable and self-evident that this stipulation should be followed by an active Slovenian language policy¹³, nevertheless, it was only in 2002 when Exercising of the Public Interest in Culture Act¹⁴ was passed and thus systematic care for the Slovenian language learning received adequate notice. Since Exercising of the Public Interest in Culture Act by the time of accession of the Republic of Slovenia to the European Union did not include clearly defined objectives and activities and failed to emphasise the need for joint responsibility of all competent sectors

¹⁰ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (hereinafter referred to as: UNESCO), UNESCO Education Strategy 2014-2021, Paris, 2014, [URL: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000231288>], 27/8/2020. The basis of the UNSECO definition is a functional model which considers the process and content of learning of reading and writing as the preparation for work, vocational training, and as improvement of productivity of an individual. In the last decade, several other definitions were added to this model.

¹¹ Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning (OJ L 394, 30/12/2006, p. 10). The Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council defines key competences as a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to the context. Key competences are those which all individuals need for personal fulfilment and development, active citizenship, social inclusion and employment. The respective Recommendation defines 8 key competences: communication in the mother tongue; communication in foreign languages; mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology; digital competence; learning to learn; social and civic competences; sense of initiative and entrepreneurship; and cultural awareness and expression. Many of the competences overlap and interlock and each of them can contribute to a successful life of an individual in a knowledge society. The Council of the European Union adopted new recommendation on 22 May 2018, namely the Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 on key competences for lifelong learning – text with EEA relevance (OJ C 189, 4/6/2018, p. 1), where the first competence communication in the mother tongue was replaced by the literacy competence.

¹² Official Gazette of the RS, Nos 33/91-I, 42/97 – UZS68, 66/00 – UZ80, 24/03 – UZ3a, 47, 68, 69/04 – UZ14, 69/04 – UZ43, 69/04 – UZ50, 68/06 – UZ121,140,143, 47/13 – UZ148, 47/13 – UZ90,97,99 and 75/16 – UZ70a.

¹³ Comment on the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia (edited by Lovro Šturm), Faculty of Government and European Studies, Ljubljana, 2002.

¹⁴ Official Gazette of the RS, Nos 77/07 – official consolidated text, 56/08, 4/10, 20/11, 111/13, 68/16, 61/17 and 21/18 – ZNOrg.

and the Government of the Republic of Slovenia (hereinafter referred to as: the Government) as the overall foundation for the language policy, Public Use of the Slovene Language Act¹⁵ was passed in 2004. The aforementioned act laid down that the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia (hereinafter referred to as: the National Assembly) on a proposal of the Government adopts a national programme for language policy, defining measures for carrying out tasks and activities as set in Article 4 of Public Use of the Slovene Language Act for the following 5-year period and foreseeing therefor required funds and the manner of providing financial sources. Basic elements of the language policy¹⁶ include also broadening language skills and care for language development and culture.

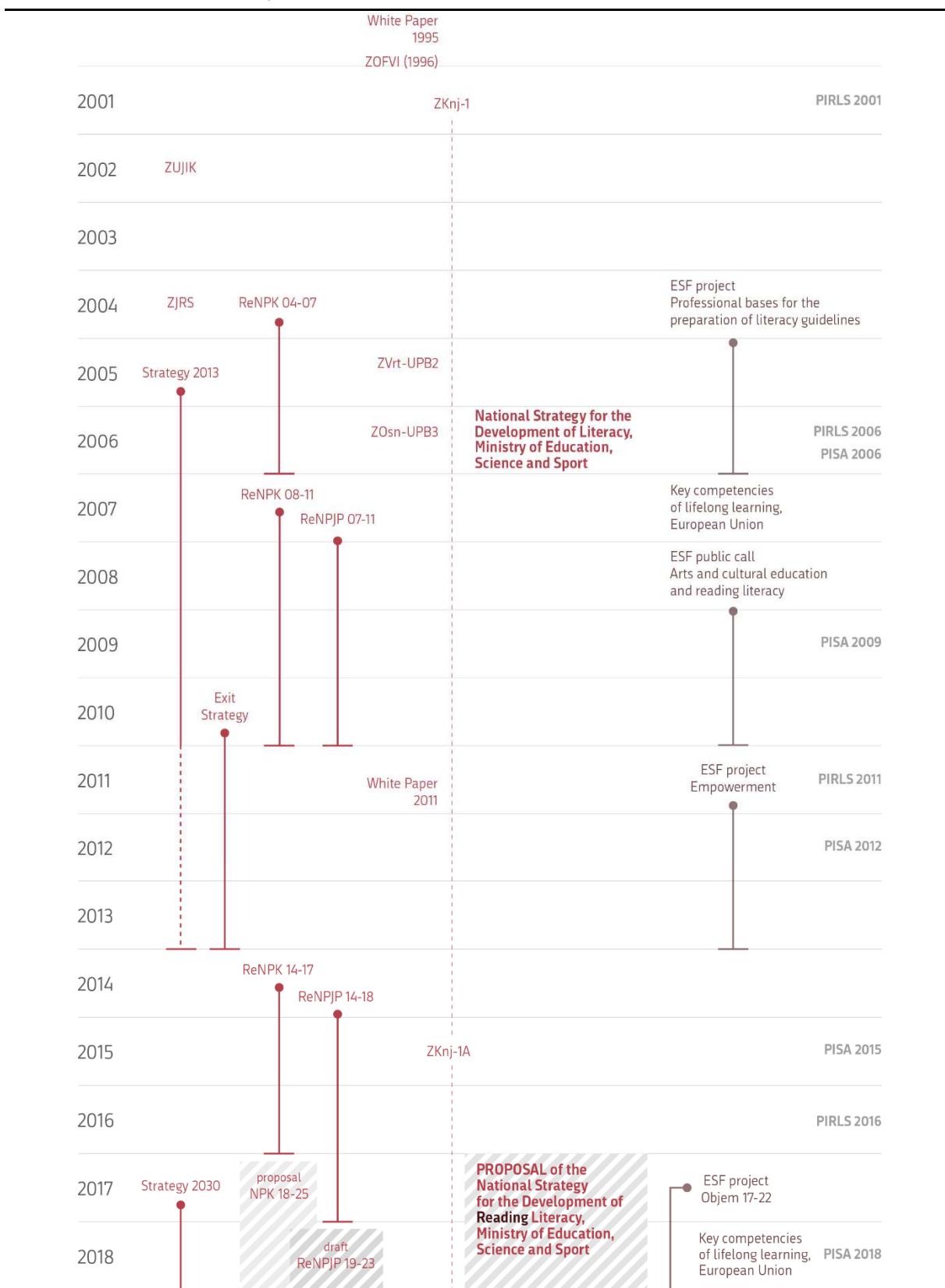
Figure 1 presents the timetable of programming documents and regulations in the field of language policy and international surveys PIRLS¹⁷ and PISA.

¹⁵ Official Gazette of the RS, Nos 86/04 and 8/10.

¹⁶ The role and importance of language policy are mainly to define relations among languages that are used within the State and its surrounding areas for smooth public communication (public interest – mission of the State), and to establish what are the communication needs of the citizens and how to satisfy them.

¹⁷ Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (hereinafter referred to as: PIRLS), which is implemented by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement. The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement operates in the field of measuring educational achievements already since 1958 and was established on the UNESCO initiative; it is a professional association holding a status of institution with its headquarters in the Netherlands and its members being organisations and professionals from around the world, [URL: <https://www.iea.nl>], 27/8/2020.

Figure 1: Timetable of programming documents and regulations in the field of language policy and international surveys PIRLS and PISA as of 31 December 2018.



Key:

ZUJIK – Exercising of the Public Interest in Culture Act

ZJRS – Public Use of the Slovene Language Act

White Paper 1995 – White Paper on Education¹⁸

White Paper 2011 – White Paper on Education¹⁹

ZOFVI (1996) – Organization and Financing of Education Act²⁰

ZKnj-1 – Librarianship Act²¹

ZKnj-1A – Act Amending the Librarianship Act²²

ZVrt-UPB2 – Kindergartens Act (official consolidated text)²³

ZOsn-UPB3 – Basic School Act (official consolidated text)²⁴

Strategy 2013 – Slovenian Development Strategy 2005-2013²⁵ (hereinafter referred to as: Strategy 2013)

Exit Strategy – Slovenian Exit Strategy 2010-2013²⁶

Strategy 2030 – Slovenian Development Strategy 2030²⁷ (hereinafter referred to as: Strategy 2030)

ReNPK 04-07 – Resolution on the 2004-2007 National Programme for Culture²⁸ (hereinafter referred to as: ReNPK 04-07)

ReNPK 08-11 – Resolution on the 2008-2011 National Programme for Culture²⁹ (hereinafter referred to as: ReNPK 08-11)

ReNPK 14-17 – Resolution on the 2014-2017 National Programme for Culture³⁰ (hereinafter referred to as: ReNPK 14-17)

proposal NPK 18-25 – proposal of National Programme for Culture³¹ (hereinafter referred to as: proposal NPK 18-25)

ReNPK 07-11 – Resolution on the 2007-2011 National Programme for Culture³² (hereinafter referred to as: ReNPK 07-11)

ReNPK 14-18 – Resolution on the 2014-2018 National Programme for Culture³³ (hereinafter referred to as: ReNPK 14-18)

draft ReNPJP 19-23 – draft National Programme for Language Policy³⁴ (hereinafter referred to as: ReNPJP19-23)

ESF – European Social Fund (hereinafter referred to as: ESF)

Drafting of the Public Use of the Slovene Language Act proposal took 8 years, which means that the Republic of Slovenia for 15 years after gaining its independence did not have overall respectively comprehensive and coherent language policy at the national level.

¹⁸ White Paper on Education in the Republic of Slovenia, Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, 1995.

¹⁹ White Paper on Education in the Republic of Slovenia from 2011, National Education Institute Slovenia, 2011, [URL: http://pefprints.pef.uni-lj.si/1195/1/bela_knjiga_2011.pdf], 27/8/2020.

²⁰ Official Gazette of the RS, No 16/07 – official consolidated text.

²¹ Official Gazette of the RS, Nos 87/01, 96/02 – ZUJIK and 92/15.

²² Official Gazette of the RS, No 92/15.

²³ Official Gazette of the RS, No 100/05.

²⁴ Official Gazette of the RS, No 81/06.

²⁵ [URL: http://www.umar.gov.si/fileadmin/user_upload/projekti/02_StrategijarazvojaSlovenije.pdf], 27/8/2020.

²⁶ [URL: http://nsk-slo.si/images/uploads/03_1_IZHODNA_STRATEGIJA2010-2013.pdf], 27/8/2020.

²⁷ [URL: https://www.rcms.si/upload/files/5_Strategija Razvoja Slovenije_2030.pdf], 27/8/2020.

²⁸ Official Gazette of the RS, No 28/04.

²⁹ Official Gazette of the RS, Nos 35/08 and 95/10.

³⁰ Official Gazette of the RS, No 99/13.

³¹ [URL: <http://pisrs.si/Pis.web/preledPredpisa?id=RESO113>], 27/8/2020.

³² Official Gazette of the RS, No 43/07.

³³ Official Gazette of the RS, No 62/13.

³⁴ [URL: <https://e-uprava.gov.si/.download/edemokracija/datotekaVsebina/367913>], 27/8/2020.

Strategy 2013 foresaw the adoption of a new national programme for culture which shall be prepared by the Ministry of Culture and shall include activities for the Slovenian language affirmation, as well as activities for strengthening national identity and culture within the framework of the educational system. Activities for achieving the language objectives in the field of culture set in Strategy 2013 were defined already in 2004 by ReNPK 04-07.

ReNPJP 07-11 was adopted in May 2007, that is 3 years after Public Use of the Slovene Language Act entered into force. Point 3.2 of ReNPJP 07-11 provides an overview of language strategy conditions evaluation, pointing out weaknesses, such as too low communicative competence (functional literacy) and linguistic insecurity, as well as challenges, such as communicative competence development strategy preparation. These findings may be referred to later endeavours for developing reading literacy. In June 2013, ReNPJP 14-18 was adopted.

Meanwhile, for the years 2012 and 2013, no language policy strategic document existed. There was also no overall respectively comprehensive analysis of the existing situation carried out upon the expiry of the existing and prior to the preparation of a new programme. Only available were some individual studies³⁵.

The minister responsible for the field of education, appointed national Commission for the preparation of national strategy for the development of literacy in May 2004. Findings of the international studies facilitated the formulation of a literacy development strategy, since they highlighted the insufficient level of literacy in Slovenian primary school children and adults, as well as pointed out the need for systematic approach to the matter and the importance of development incentives.

Significant contribution made also the findings of Slovenian surveys, examining several factors crucial for developing literacy in children and adults, namely the factors pertaining to kindergartens and schools³⁶, libraries and domestic environment which all increase motivation for reading and, consequently, for developing reading competence. Additionally, the findings showed that without planning a long-term national strategy for improving the level of literacy in the Republic of Slovenia, which shall encompass a substantial share of inhabitants of the Republic of Slovenia, the gap in the level of literacy in Slovenia compared to other developed states will even widen.

In 2004, the Commission for the preparation of literacy guidelines issued professional bases³⁷ for the preparation of literacy guidelines, serving as a cornerstone for drafting National Strategy for the Development of Literacy. As an example were pointed out the states which regulated development of literacy in a systemic manner by national strategies and by granting the funds necessary for the

³⁵ Link to point 3.3 of this report.

³⁶ In this report the term *school* refers to kindergartens and schools (educational and schooling system), where applicable for the purpose of reading literacy development.

³⁷ Prepared were Professional bases for the preparation of the National Strategy for the Development of Literacy. The document consists of 3 parts: summaries of the reports of Slovenian respectively international surveys from the field of literacy in which the Republic of Slovenia participated; overview and analyses of foreign literacy strategies; overview of literacy as presented in strategic and development documents and other instruments at the national and international level, reading culture in schools, formulating a uniform governmental policy in the field of books and access to cultural consumption.

development of the concerned field through an action plan. Slovenian development plans from that period also pointed out the need for ongoing and systematic development of all types of literacy that should be ensured to all citizens in formal and informal education. The first draft of the National Strategy for the Development of Literacy was prepared at the end of 2005. After its adoption at the college of the minister responsible for education and sport and after being considered by the competent bodies, the draft of the National Strategy for the Development of Literacy became subject to public discussion and was adopted by the National commission for the development of literacy in 2006³⁸. During the audit, it was not possible to obtain appropriate evidence that the National Strategy for the Development of Literacy was approved by the competent ministry, the Government or the National Assembly³⁹. The period of validity of the National Strategy for the Development of Literacy was not determined. Nevertheless, in Chapter 13 Slovenian language of ReNPK 14-17 which was adopted at the end of 2013, there was defined that within the objective "developing language competence of all groups of speakers with the aim of increasing the level of reading literacy by 2016" the National Strategy for the Development of Literacy shall be updated (including legal, organisational and financial conditionals for its implementation).

1.2.2 Factors for reading literacy development

1.2.2.1 Educational system

A child starts to learn a language in a particular cultural environment and further develops its language competence through the educational process.

Pre-school education

Pre-school education is of crucial importance for developing cultural capital of children and their reading competence⁴⁰. Efficient system of pre-school education should level out the differences between children (the principle of equality and equity) regarding the cultural capital that occur mainly due to different economic standing of families and other special circumstances (for example, medical reasons). Kindergartens fall under the authority of local communities but due to their significance the Republic of Slovenia co-funds and implements activities for increasing the number of children included in pre-school education within the framework of education policy (mostly provision of pre-school education to vulnerable groups⁴¹) and endeavours to provide high-quality and efficient system of pre-school education.

³⁸ National Strategy for the Development of Literacy, prepared by the National commission for the development of literacy, Ljubljana, November 2006, [URL: https://pismenost.acs.si/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Nacionalna-strategija-za-razvoj-pismenosti_2006.pdf], 27/8/2020.

³⁹ Documents were discussed and approved by the Professional council for general education (93th session as of 6 July 2006), Professional council for vocational and professional education (91st session as of 16 June 2006) and Profession council for adult education (41st session as of 29 June 2006).

⁴⁰ ReNPK 14-17, Chapter 14 Arts and cultural education.

⁴¹ The Roma children, ethnically mixed areas (bilingual kindergarten departments) and hospital kindergarten wards.

Education of children in pre-school period is monitored also by the European Commission, namely it monitors the enrolment of children in kindergartens in relation to later achievements of children included in PISA surveys⁴².

Kindergarten Curriculum, which is a national document and includes professional bases for work in kindergartens, was adopted in 1999 after being approved at the session of Profession council for general education, following the complete renewal of educational system in the Republic of Slovenia in 1996. In 2012 and 2013, the National Education Institute Slovenia carried out the first pilot project in the field of the development of reading literacy in children, namely Empowering children by improving their reading literacy and ensuring them access to knowledge (hereinafter referred to as: Empowerment project)⁴³. On the basis of experience gained within the framework of the Empowerment project, the National Education Institute Slovenia developed several activities that were carried out in kindergartens in the period from 2014 to 2018 within the programme of activities titled Emerging or early literacy in kindergarten.

Primary school education

As social and linguistic activity, literacy is closely linked to culture, since cultural practices are expressed through language and literacy⁴⁴. However, the content related to reading literacy development is in primary schools included mostly in the Slovenian course curriculum.

Effects of culture and art on the development of an individual and a society as a whole are known. It is therefore necessary to enable all children the possibility to learn about different fields of culture. Arts and cultural education is important for children especially from the aspect of accepting certain culture, research and creativity. Basic principles for operation in this field represent National guidelines for arts and cultural education in the field of education.

Within the framework of primary school education, the strategic documents of cultural and language policy⁴⁵ foresee and recommend various activities in the context of high-quality, diverse and accessible offer of arts and cultural education in all fields of culture. The result of carrying out these activities are the criteria set at the national level which define high-quality projects and programmes of arts and cultural education. In the field of reading literacy development, i.e. in the field of books and reading, lists of recommended quality children and youth literature exist, serving as the sign of quality of children and youth books as well as training⁴⁶.

⁴² Education and Training Monitor 2018, [URL: <https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/document-library-docs/volume-1-2018-education-and-training-monitor-country-analysis.pdf>], 27/8/2020. Strategic framework for European cooperation in the field of education and training was established by the Council conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020) (OJ C 119, 28/5/2009, p. 2), Annex 1: Reference levels of European average performance, [URL: https://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/european-policy-cooperation/et2020-framework_sl], 27/8/2020.

⁴³ More on the project under points 3.3, 4.1.2 and 4.2.1 of this report.

⁴⁴ Publication Obrazi pismenosti.

⁴⁵ ReNPK 04-07, ReNPK 08-11 and ReNPK 14-17.

⁴⁶ ReNPK 14-17, Chapter 14 Arts and cultural education, Objectives and measures of arts and cultural education by individual fields of culture.

1.2.2.2 Gender-based differences

For several years, international surveys have shown there exist gender-based differences in average reading achievements (in general, girls have better results)⁴⁷. Detailed data analyses and further research have shown that the differences are partly caused due to the natural differences in the development of girls and boys and partly because of domestic, home/family and other environmental factors, whose effects can be reduced by quality and efficient educational processes.

These findings additionally point out that the development of reading literacy is highly intersectoral and complex field. Any generalisation may thus be risky respectively dangerous both in terms of interpretation of results and in planning of activities. In practice this means that it is not possible to know in advance of which gender are the best and the most poor readers, however, it is of significant importance that children are exposed to different factors that positively impact reading literacy development. Home/family, school and wider⁴⁸ social environment together must ensure that children have as equal opportunities for developing reading literacy as possible. The important role of schools and wider society is to reduce the gap respectively make up for the deficit of those children from less supportive environments.

1.2.2.3 Family literacy

Family literacy includes all ways and situations in which family members use reading, writing and numeracy skills within family society on a daily basis. It also refers to reading culture and habits associated with literacy⁴⁹. According to the andragogical findings referring to the family impact on the level of literacy, the level of parents' education is significantly linked to the development of literacy in adults. Data gathered through various domestic and international surveys show that those adults with higher literacy levels are more active in passing reading habits and reading culture on to their children.

The results published in the PISA 2009 survey showed that each fifth 15-year-old in the European Union is under basic level of reading competence. Identified was also a wide gender gap not only between children but also between adults among which 73 million were not literate enough to be able to efficiently take part in their private and social life and economic sphere. Considering the identified impact of family literacy on children's abilities to develop reading literacy, the concerned data are even more alarming and draw considerable attention to activities that are oriented towards reading literacy development.

1.2.2.4 Socio-economic situation

Data of the PISA surveys in which also the Republic of Slovenia participated (Reading Literacy Study 1991⁵⁰, PIRLS 2001, PIRLS 2006, PIRLS 2011, PIRLS 2016) and of secondary studies carried out on the basis thereof suggest that reading literacy in children is improving.

⁴⁷ National reports on international PISA surveys for the years 2001, 2006, 2011, 2016 and national reports on international PISA surveys for the years 2006, 2009, 2012, 2015, 2018, [URL: <https://www.pei.si/raziskovalna-dejavnost/mednarodne-raziskave/>], 27/8/2020.

⁴⁸ For example, by public library system.

⁴⁹ Knaflč, L.: Družinska pismenost v Sloveniji; Pismenost, participacija in družba znanja, Journal of the 4th andragogical colloquium, Slovenian Institute of Adult Education, Ljubljana, 2000.

⁵⁰ Predecessor of the PIRLS survey.

Achievements of children are closely linked to the mother's education, number of children's and other books the family owns, reading skills of a child before entering primary school, attending music school and everyday reading for enjoyment. Although these factors originate from home environment of a child, this does not mean that school does not or cannot affect the reading literacy in children. PIRLS survey data analysis thus showed that home/family environment has a significant impact in the Republic of Slovenia⁵¹. However, to make assumptions about the reasons for identified differences in achievements and impacts of home/family environment it would be necessary to additionally examine the cause and effect links by a scientific research. Thereby, it is necessary to take into account the fact that the State does not have the power to directly interfere in and affect the beliefs of parents or guardians about the importance of reading and schools. The State is only able to rear future generations of parents to have better attitude towards this. Relative influence of home environment compared to that of school environment derives from the set of factors the experts call cultural capital and comprises the social assets a child may possess when living in an environment with culturally rich background⁵². The richer vocabulary and wider experience of parents or guardians, better the chances of a child to learn new words and use them in different, even more complex ways. Good level of reading literacy depends on the frequency of being exposed to different reading stimuli whose complexity must gradually increase to ensure one's improvement. This is, however, closely linked with economic standing⁵³. Systemic provision of conditions and sufficient language learning equipment in schools is an important factor closely connected with ensuring equal conditions for all children, greatly contributing to decreasing of vulnerability of individuals in achieving of at least minimum results in the key fields such as reading. This thus offers the State an opportunity to create reading conducive and favourable environment and to rear children with developed reading literacy, empowering them for future life in the widest sense.

Part of cultural capital important for developing reading literacy in children represents family literacy. The concept which has been addressed by several strategic documents places family at the heart of development of reading literacy in children since it represents the first and most influential environment. When this environment fails to understand the importance and meaning of developing reading literacy in children from the early childhood on and fails to provide sufficient support (economic standing), this will clearly affect the possibilities for their development and independence later in life.

Crucial role in developing reading literacy play the network of public and school libraries and Slovenian Book Agency in the field of developing reading culture⁵⁴.

⁵¹ PIRLS 2011 and PISA 2018 survey reports.

⁵² PRILS 2011 survey report.

⁵³ PIRLS, PISA and PIAAC surveys.

⁵⁴ Article 4 of Slovenian Book Agency Act (Official Gazette of the RS, Nos 112/07, 40/12 – ZUJF and 63/13) defines the provision of conditions for development of reading culture as one of the tasks of the Slovenian Book Agency.

1.2.2.5 Public and school libraries

In the Republic of Slovenia, librarianship activities are carried out as library public service (public libraries) or as library service necessary for the implementation of public service in the field of education (school libraries)⁵⁵.

Public libraries

By performing public services, public libraries ensure free choice and use of reading sources as a fundamental right of every individual regardless its status. Librarianship activities of public libraries as the holders of public service include also attracting and educating users and ensuring information literacy⁵⁶. In this manner, public libraries improve their role in contributing to social development since they enable equalisation of cultural, educational and other social opportunities (the principle of equality and equity).

The responsibility of every municipality is to provide library services to all its residents by establishing a public library – on its own behalf, together with other municipalities or by conferring the responsibility for carrying out the concerned services on other public library by a contract and by agreement of the founder of the respective library⁵⁷. In case the municipality fails to provide library services, they should be provided by the State⁵⁸. Library users have the right to access basic library services free of charge, such as borrowing library materials, providing information on library materials and implementing librarian and pedagogic tasks (especially information literacy). Libraries that provide library public service have the right to charge its members annual membership fee, but persons under 18 and unemployed are exempted from payment⁵⁹.

The share of funds provided by local communities and the State for the operation of public libraries is not legally defined. In practice, local communities provide 85% of all funds necessary for the operation of public libraries. Librarianship Act lays down that the ministry responsible for culture in order to provide support for coherent and coordinated development of library services allocates to public libraries budgetary sources for special tasks (public libraries in ethnically mixed areas, border areas and central regional libraries)⁶⁰ and for co-financing annual purchase of library materials and computer equipment of public libraries⁶¹. On the basis of the aforementioned stipulations, the Ministry of Culture co-financed operations of public libraries, it namely provided funds for the purchase of library materials and library development (Table 5) in the amount of 5% of all funds necessary for their operation (approximately EUR 1.7 million).

⁵⁵ Article 1 of Librarianship Act.

⁵⁶ Article 2 of Librarianship Act.

⁵⁷ Paragraph 1 of Article 20 of Librarianship Act. Indent 12 of paragraph 2 of Article 21 of Local Self-Government Act (Official Gazette of the RS, Nos 94/07 – official consolidated text, 76/08, 79/09, 51/10, 40/12 – ZUJF, 14/15 – ZUUJFO, 11/18 – ZSPDSLS-1, 30/18, 61/20 – ZIUZEOP-A and 80/20 – ZIUOOPE).

⁵⁸ Paragraph 3 of Article 20 of Librarianship Act.

⁵⁹ Article 8 of Librarianship Act and paragraph 3 of Article 5 of Order on Core Library Services (Official Gazette of the RS, No 29/03).

⁶⁰ Articles 25, 26 and 27 of Librarianship Act.

⁶¹ Librarianship Act does not clearly specify the scope of funds.

The remaining funds were obtained through libraries' own income (membership fee, overdue fees and other similar resources).

In 2018⁶², the network of public libraries in the Republic of Slovenia encompassed 273 regional libraries, 92 mobile library material collections and 13 library buses which stopped at 719 stations.

School libraries

School libraries are also important for the development of reading literacy in children. The obligation of schools to have a library is laid down in Article 68 of Organization and Financing of Education Act.

School libraries should support the educational process by implementing librarianship activities mainly for students and professionals (Article 28 of Librarianship Act)⁶³. Librarians are professional employees of a school as in accordance with Article 94 of Organization and Financing of Education Act. School libraries are financed from different sources (state budget, European funds, municipal budgets). Indent 13 of paragraph 7 of Article 81 of Organization and Financing of Education Act and Article 52.a of Librarianship Act referring to school rules and regulations represent the basis for funding school libraries. School libraries at educational and schooling institutions are financed within the framework of supporting activities and as such do not have a specific budget item in the financial plan of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport and of public institutes.

Primary school library network included 480 school libraries with 688 library borrowing terminals in the school year 2017/2018. Borrowing terminals are located at home primary schools and their units. In the school year 2017/2018, there was 0.86 full-time equivalent identified for classified work post of a librarian, to which 1.42 employee on average was appointed.⁶⁴

1.2.3 Participation of the Republic of Slovenia in international studies

International studies

White Paper on Education in the Republic of Slovenia prepared in 2011 by the National commission for the preparation of White Paper on Education in the Republic of Slovenia at the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport lays down that to develop the Republic of Slovenia into knowledge society whose economic and cultural development is based on the high-quality knowledge, it is not to be satisfied with results that are within average as in accordance with international studies carried out among developed states. It is necessary to clearly set out the course to achieve the objective of Slovenian students to be close to the top as regards the quality of demonstrated knowledge, namely to be ranked among the first third of

⁶² [URL: <http://cezar.nuk.uni-lj.si/statistika/>], 27/8/2020.

⁶³ In line with the stipulations of the Librarianship Act, school libraries are no longer defined as library public service but are legally fully regulated as part of the public service in the field of education. The purpose of the legal amendment was to better involve school libraries into the school system and its arrangement. The Librarianship Act also foresaw that the Ministry of Culture should impose the Rules on conditions for providing library services in school libraries, but the document was not adopted by the end of the period covered by the audit. The Librarianship Act also proposed that school libraries should be included in COBISS – Co-operative Online Bibliographic System and Services (hereinafter referred to as: COBISS system).

⁶⁴ [URL: <https://bibsist.nuk.uni-lj.si/statistika>], 27/8/2020.

developed countries according to the achievements of students. It is necessary to maintain or additionally improve the demonstrated above-average knowledge of natural science, to improve the knowledge of mathematics and, most important, to make a considerable step towards high-quality knowledge in the field of improving literacy of students.⁶⁵

The Republic of Slovenia participates in international studies examining education of students in line with internationally harmonised standards (TIMSS⁶⁶, PIRLS, PISA, ICCS⁶⁷, ICILS⁶⁸, TALIS⁶⁹ and similar surveys). In the continuation of this report are presented 2 surveys that are directly linked to the development of reading literacy in children.

Progress in International Reading Literacy Study – PIRLS

PIRLS is carried out every 5 years at the fourth grade (at the age of 10). These studies are at the international level coordinated by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement.

Considering that the definition of reading literacy depends on the context, time and the aspect studied, the definition of reading literacy used in the survey PIRLS 2016 is also presented below: "Reading literacy is the ability to understand and use those written language forms required by society and/or valued by the individual. Readers can construct meaning from texts in a variety of forms. They read to learn, to participate in communities of readers in school and everyday life, and for enjoyment."⁷⁰ PIRLS is monitoring reading achievement of children and gathers internationally comparable information about reading performance of children. It also collects information about what kind of and how many education opportunities the children are offered by individual educational systems, and about factors which influence how children use such opportunities.⁷¹ The purpose of PIRLS is to provide the best and for the policy planning most relevant information in order to improve the quality of individual school systems by comparing particular fields of school systems.

⁶⁵ White Paper on Education in the Republic of Slovenia from 2011.

⁶⁶ Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study.

⁶⁷ International Civic and Citizenship Education Study.

⁶⁸ International Computer and Information Literacy Study.

⁶⁹ Teaching and Learning International Survey.

⁷⁰ International reading literacy survey PIRLS 2016, Summary of results, December 2017, Educational Research Institute.

⁷¹ PIRLS divides texts for examining reading achievements of fourth graders, providing the basis for assessing reading achievements, according to the purpose of reading (literary experience, acquiring and use of information) and to the processes of understanding respectively comprehension (finding and retrieving explicitly laid down written information, drawing simple conclusions, integration and interpretation of ideas and information, evaluation of text and linguistic elements). It is necessary to point out that the purpose of reading and the processes of understanding are not isolated from each other or from the contexts in which students live or learn. Contextual framework of PIRLS thus encompasses the following 5 wider areas: national context and community context, home environment context, school context, school grade context, characteristics of students and positions regarding learning.

Due to the complexity of the World Wide Web, online reading requires the skills of reading comprehension and understanding of strategies in the contexts which greatly differ from those when reading traditionally printed materials (which are regularly examined by PIRLS). This is why a new, extended version of research called ePIRLS was introduced in 2016, adding computer-based assessment of reading literacy for the first time. For the 2021 cycle, this type of reading literacy assessment is expected to be already fully integrated into PIRLS.

The Republic of Slovenia started measuring reading literacy in children by joining the study Reading literacy 1991. First record of PIRLS data was in 2001. Since then, the Republic of Slovenia participated in all cycles, namely in 2001, 2006, 2011 and 2016. In the period covered by the audit, Slovenia has been participating already in the cycle for the year 2021. Long-standing and ongoing participation leads to availability of data enabling observation of long-term trends, which is of key importance for policy planning.

Programme for International Student Assessment – PISA

PISA is carried out under the authority of OECD. At the international level, the first cycle was carried out in 2000, while the Republic of Slovenia joined the project in 2004. The study is carried out in 3-year cycles, each time including the tasks from the field of reading, mathematical and natural science literacy. 1 out of 3 fields of literacy is given increased emphasis per each measuring⁷². This means that the scope of tasks from the emphasised field of literacy is greater, thus factors affecting the development of the emphasised type of literacy are additionally identified (more under point 1.2.3.1 of this report). Each type of literacy is an emphasised field of the undertaken measurement every 9 years, with reading literacy being measured as such in the years 2009 and 2018⁷³.

The purpose of PISA is to collect data about skills of 15-year-olds⁷⁴ they require for their professional and private life and are important not only for an individual but also for the society as a whole. The study does not specifically focus on measuring the results of school teaching plans (unlike PIRLS for example), but it pays considerable attention to the use of knowledge gained in schools in actual, life and problem-based situations. In the field of reading literacy the study assesses the skills of children in the field of recognising information in text, integration and interpretation of various texts, as well as reflecting on and evaluating the text.

From 2015 on, PISA is fully computer-based but the concept of reading literacy and thereto associated skills and competences are being regularly adapted due to development of technology and different ways of reading that young people apply. This recently includes topics such as online reading, keeping critical distance from the text read and distinguishing between relevant and irrelevant information, etc.

⁷² The PISA test consists of 2/3 of tasks from the emphasised field and of 1/3 of tasks from 2 other fields of measuring.

⁷³ The results were published on 6 December 2019, [URL: <https://www.pei.si/raziskovalna-dejavnost/mednarodne-raziskave/pisa/pisa-2018/>], 27/8/2020.

⁷⁴ In the Republic of Slovenia, the PISA representative sample comprises 15-year-olds and is drawn from institutions that include 15-year-olds into their educational programmes.

1.2.3.1 Achievements of Slovenian children

In PIRLS 2006 (included were 41 countries), the average result of the Republic of Slovenia was below European average, however, the spread of results was not large. The majority of fourth graders thus achieved similar results but were below the European average. In PIRLS 2011, 49 countries participated, with the Republic of Slovenia being somewhat in the middle of them considering their joint achievement. PIRLS 2016 results were even better since the total score respectively achievement of the Republic of Slovenia was above the average.

The average achievements of Slovenian 15-year-olds in PISA 2009 were below the OECD average. PISA 2009 also showed that only 0.3% of Slovenian 15-year-olds reached the highest of the 6 levels of reading literacy. In 2012, the average achievement of Slovenian children was again below the OECD average (Republic of Slovenia 481 points, OECD average 496 points), in 2015, the result was statistically significant and thus above the OECD average (Republic of Slovenia 505 points, OECD average 493 points). In PISA 2018, the Republic of Slovenia was among the states with the results in reading literacy above the OECD average, however the average results of Slovenian 15-year-olds in PISA 2018 were somewhat lower (495 points) than in 2015 and the average at the OECD level also decreased (487 points)⁷⁵.

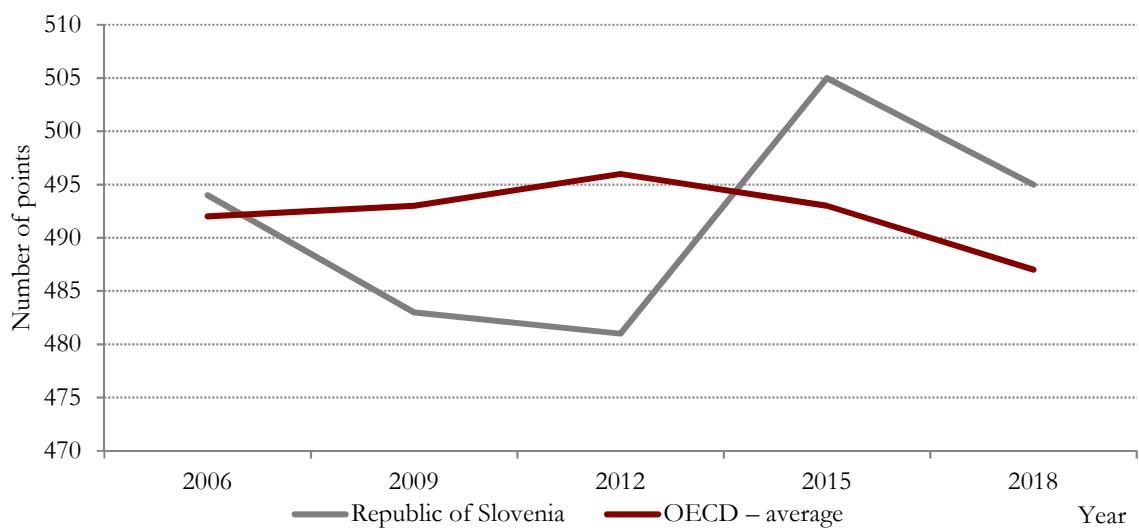
Monitoring through a longer period of time enables identification of those factors that are connected with (cognitive and non-cognitive) achievements of children. But this is not to be considered as interference with educational system but as monitoring how different circumstances⁷⁶ connect with achievements of children included in education. Professionals are thus highly interested in monitoring the information on accompanying factors of knowledge, such as school circumstances and circumstances in which children learn at home, namely the information on socio-economic and cultural background of children (background elements).

Figure 2 shows achievements of children from the Republic of Slovenia compared to the average achievement of the OECD member states in PISA for the years 2006, 2009, 2012, 2015 and 2018.

⁷⁵ PISA 2018: National report with the examples of reading tasks, [URL: https://www.pei.si/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/PISA2018_NacionalnoPorocilo.pdf], 27/8/2020.

⁷⁶ For example, socio-economic standing of a child's family, accessibility to and availability of public libraries, cultural environment of a child and similar.

Figure 2: Achievements of children from the Republic of Slovenia compared to the average achievement of the OECD member states in PISA for the years 2006, 2009, 2012, 2015 and 2018.

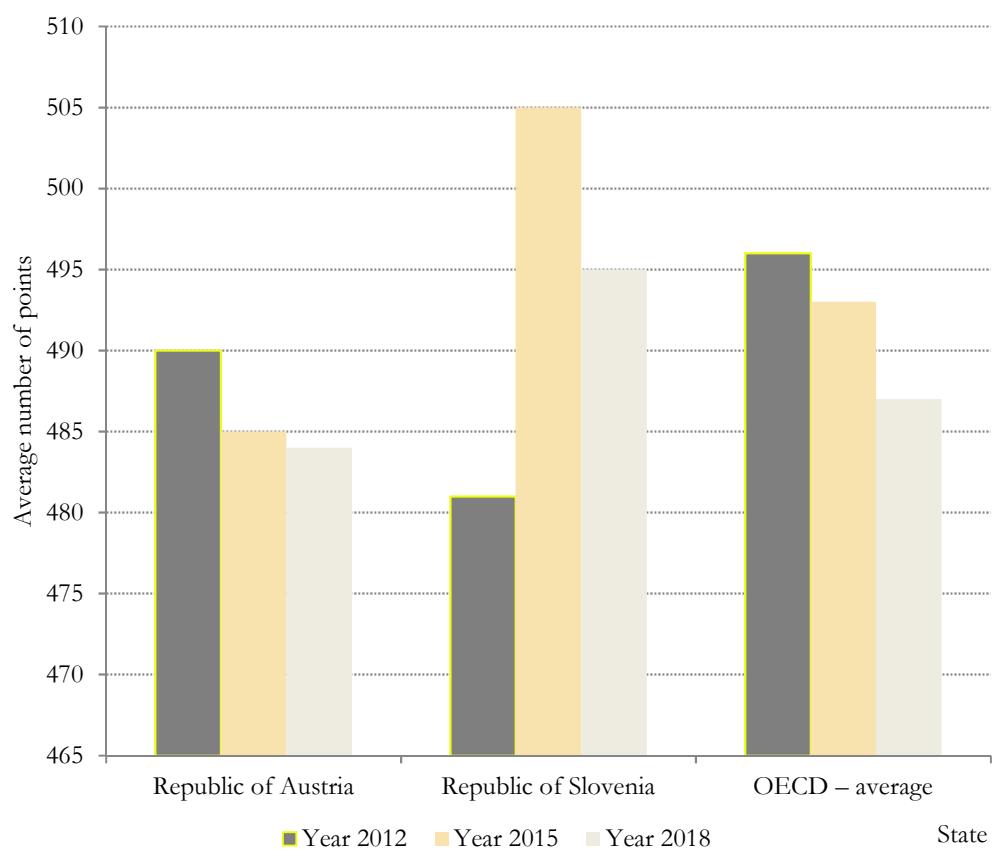


Source: data of OECD⁷⁷.

Since this audit was carried out on the initiative and upon the exchange of opinions with SAI Austria, Figure 3 shows the comparison of achievements of children from the Republic of Slovenia and from the Republic of Austria. Due to historical links between the countries, the comparison of the results of children of both countries within the context of PISA is considerably interesting. Presentation of the average achievements of the OECD member states is intended for easier placement of Slovenian children among other OECD member states.

⁷⁷ [URL: <https://data.oecd.org/pisa/reading-performance-pisa.htm>], 27/8/2020.

Figure 3: Achievements of children from the Republic of Austria, the Republic of Slovenia and the OECD member states – average results on the basis of PISA carried out in the years 2012, 2015 and 2018



Source: data of OECD⁷⁸.

Although the results of the individual cycle provide valuable information, comprehensive consideration and long-term planning considerably depend on trend monitoring and observation of factors that cause differences between achievements, including the consequences of implemented measures in different circumstances and generations. Thereby it is also of utmost importance that the studies are used for the purposes they were designed. The majority of countries consider PIRLS and PISA as complementary surveys and they thus participate in them on a regular basis. The same position is taken by Slovenian experts and in practice, pointing out the need and importance of continuing and ongoing participation in both studies.

⁷⁸ [URL: <https://data.oecd.org/pisa/reading-performance-pisa.htm>], 27/8/2020.

1.3 Audit approach and criteria

In order to be able to express the opinion on the efficiency in developing reading literacy in children, certain criteria were determined in advance. The key criterion on the basis of which the Court of Audit assessed efficiency of the auditees in developing reading literacy in children represented the evaluation whether the objectives and activities of the audited entities for the development of reading literacy in children were appropriately planned.

Objectives and activities for the development of reading literacy in children were appropriately planned if:

- reading literacy in children was recognised as an important value/priority;
- objectives pertaining to the development of reading literacy in children at the same time contributed to the implementation of the Strategy 2030 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development⁷⁹ (hereinafter referred to as: Agenda 2030);
- responsibilities of the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, the National Education Institute Slovenia and the Slovenian Book Agency were clearly delimited;
- professional and equitable implementation of activities was ensured;
- the selection of the activities for the development of reading literacy in children was founded on the professional bases supported by data and analyses.

Objectives and activities for the development of reading literacy in children were assessed as efficient if:

- the activities for the development of reading literacy in children were implemented;
- the funds for the development of reading literacy in children were appropriately planned;
- professional and complete implementation of activities was ensured;
- the results of well performed pilot projects for the development of reading literacy in children were transferred to the educational system;
- the implemented activities affected the ability to understand the content and the achieved level of reading literacy in children.

The audit reviewed only the key players and activities at the level of the Republic of Slovenia pertaining to the development of reading literacy in children, namely those focusing on pre-school and school children. Since international studies clearly show that home environment and family substantially influence the development of reading literacy in children, the audit also focused on the importance of these elements and examined the activities aiming at setting such conditions for children at home (for example, family literacy) that contribute to conducive environment and to the development of their reading culture and literacy. However, the Court of Audit did not express an opinion thereon.

⁷⁹ Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Resolution adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 25 September 2015, A/RES/70/1.

2. INTRODUCTION OF AUDITEES

The auditees were selected on the basis of their role and responsibilities pertaining to the development of reading literacy in children in the Republic of Slovenia.

2.1 Ministry of Education, Science and Sport

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport carries out the tasks and activities in the field of pre-school, primary, secondary and tertiary education, adult education, science, research, sports and youth in accordance with Article 39 of Public Administration Act⁸⁰.

The tasks of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport include participation in formulating policies, executive and supervision tasks, monitoring of the situation, developmental tasks and provision of public services⁸¹. Public service in the field of educational and schooling activities, which is an important field for the development of reading literacy in children, is carried out by the National Education Institute Slovenia which was one of the audited entities and is presented in more detail under point 2.3 of this report.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport carries out the tasks from the field of reading literacy development in children that were subject to audit within the framework of Preschool and Basic Education Directorate (hereinafter referred to as: Basic Education Directorate) and Education Development and Quality Office (hereinafter referred to as: Education Quality Office).

The field of reading literacy development in children is the responsibility of Basic Education Directorate which carries out the tasks to ensure the implementation of activities in the field of pre-school and primary school education⁸² and primary music school education. Basic Education Directorate publishes the adopted educational programmes in the field of pre-school, primary school and primary music school education, and programmes aimed at education and schooling of children with special needs. Basic Education Directorate also lays down objectives and activities in its field of operation that are part of the explanation of the financial plan of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, as well as compiles report about the achieved objectives and assesses the effectiveness of the achieved.

⁸⁰ Official Gazette of the RS, Nos 113/05 – official consolidated text, 89/07 – CC ruling, 126/07 – ZUP-E, 48/09, 8/10 – ZUP-G, 8/12 – ZVRS-F, 21/12, 47/13, 12/14, 90/14 and 51/16.

⁸¹ Articles 8 to 13 of Public Administration Act.

⁸² Primary school education includes also education of children with special needs and ensuring special rights to the persons belonging to national and ethnic minorities in the field of pre-school and basic education.

Education Quality Office is also authorised for the field of reading literacy development in children. It monitors and develops educational and schooling system, as well as the field of learning and teaching in Slovenian educational and schooling environment in accordance with the National Framework of Quality Assessment and Quality Assurance⁸³. Education Quality Office lays down objectives and activities in its field of operation that are part of the explanation of the financial plan of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, as well as compiles report about the achieved objectives and assesses the effectiveness of the achieved.

There are 2 sectors organised within Education Quality Office, namely Sector for education and Sector for human resources development in education.

Sector for education carries out the tasks pertaining to operations of the governmental professional councils for education, cooperation in Eurydice – European information network for the exchange of data on education⁸⁴, evaluation of school system, management of the European cohesion policy projects, and to the preparation of bases for development and research work in the field of pre-school, primary and secondary education, higher vocational education, adult education, music education and education of children and the young with special needs.

Sector for human resources development in education carries out the tasks pertaining to professional workers in the field of pre-school, primary and secondary education, higher vocational education, education and schooling of children and the young with special needs, and adult education.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport cooperates with other scientific and research, as well as professional institutions⁸⁵ when carrying out the tasks and in achieving objectives in the field of reading literacy development. Those institutions in the field of reading literacy development are especially the Ministry of Culture, National Education Institute Slovenia, Educational Research Institute, National Examinations Centre, National School for Leadership in Education, and Slovenian Institute of Adult Education. The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport exercises control over the legality of work and financial operation of the National Education Institute Slovenia as in accordance with Article 50 of Institutes Act⁸⁶.

Responsible persons of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport in the period covered by the audit and during the audit implementation itself were the following:

- dr. Jernej Pikalo, Minister of education, science and sport, from 20/3/2013 to 18/9/2014;
- dr. Stanislava Setnikar Cankar, Minister of education, science and sport, from 18/9/2014 to 6/3/2015, until 13/3/2015 performing current business;

⁸³ [URL: http://mizs.arhiv-spletisc.gov.si/si/delovna_podrocja/urad_za_razvoj_in_kakovost_izobrazevanja/sektor_za_razvoj_izobrazevanja/ugotavljanje_in_zagotavljanje_kakovosti_v_vzgoji_in_izobrazevanju/], 27/8/2020.

⁸⁴ [URL: <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/>], 27/8/2020.

⁸⁵ Faculty of Arts of the University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Education of the University of Ljubljana, Slovenian Book Agency, National and University Library, and Slovenian Institute of Adult Education, etc.

⁸⁶ Official Gazette of the RS, Nos 12/91, 8/96, 36/00 – ZPDZC and 127/06 – ZJZP.

- dr. Miroslav Cerar, Prime Minister and temporally responsible for managing the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, from 13/3/2015 to 27/3/2015;
- mag. Klavdija Markež, Minister of education, science and sport, from 27/3/2015 to 1/4/2015, until 9/4/2015 performing current business;
- dr. Miroslav Cerar, Prime Minister and temporally responsible for managing the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, from 09/04/2015 to 13/05/2015;
- dr. Maja Makovec Brenčič, Minister of education, science and sport, from 13/5/2015 to 13/9/2018;
- dr. Jernej Pikalo, Minister of education, science and sport, from 13/09/2018 to 13/03/2020;
- dr. Simona Kustec Lipicer, Minister of education, science and sport, from 13/3/2020.

2.2 Ministry of Culture

The Ministry of Culture performs administrative tasks in the field of art, culture, cultural heritage, film, mass media, the Slovenian language and religious freedom in accordance with Article 32.a of Public Administration Act.

The Ministry of Culture was established for the performance of administrative tasks in one or more administrative areas⁸⁷, whereby the administrative tasks of the ministry include: cooperation in formulating policies, executive and supervision tasks, monitoring of the situation, developmental tasks and provision of public services⁸⁸.

The Ministry of Culture implements and co-finances tasks respectively activities and projects in the field of reading literacy development within the Slovenian Language Service, Cultural Diversity and Human Rights Service, Museums, Archives and Libraries Sector, Cultural Heritage Directorate, and Sector for Arts within the Creativity Directorate.

Slovenian Language Service is responsible for strengthening, promotion and development of the Slovenian language and thereto related planning and implementation of the national language policy and strategies. It also helps all the interested parties to be provided with answers to linguistic issues.

Cultural Diversity and Human Rights Service monitors the developments in the area of human rights, consults stakeholders and analyses the needs of vulnerable social groups, particularly ethnic communities and persons with disabilities. It proposes legislative and other measures that enable the aforementioned groups and communities to preserve and develop their own culture and provides everyone with access to the rich treasure trove of cultures. It financially supports cultural projects that enable social integration and social symbiosis.

Creativity Directorate – Sector for Arts is responsible for the planned development of arts and cultural education whose integral part is also reading culture (more under point 3.1 of this report).

Cultural Heritage Directorate – Museums, Archives and Libraries Sector contributes to the provision of conditions for the operation of network of public libraries and library system and thus enables better access

⁸⁷ Paragraph 2 of Article 14 of Public Administration Act.

⁸⁸ Articles 8 to 13 of Public Administration Act.

to libraries respectively library materials and services to all citizens of the Republic of Slovenia as in accordance with Librarianship Act. It participates in setting out conditions for the operation of the National and University Library, whose founder is the Republic of Slovenia, and of other libraries under its authority (more under point 4.1.4 of this report). The Ministry of Culture co-finances programmes and contents of relevant service providers in the field of librarianship activities in line with the regulations pertaining to the field of librarianship and in accordance with Exercising of the Public Interest in Culture Act⁸⁹.

In adherence to Article 12 of Slovenian Book Agency Act, the Ministry of Culture also exercises control over legality, efficiency and effectiveness of operations of the Slovenian Book Agency, which is a public agency and was determined as an independent auditee in this audit (more under point 2.4 of this report).

Responsible persons of the Ministry of Culture in the period covered by the audit and during the audit implementation itself were the following:

- dr. Uroš Grilc, Culture minister, from 20/3/2013 to 18/9/2014;
- mag. Julijana Bizjak Mlakar, Culture minister, from 18/9/2014 to 26/4/2016;
- Gorazd Žmavc, minister without portfolio, competent for relations between the Republic of Slovenia and the autochthonous Slovene national community living in neighbouring countries, as well as between the Republic of Slovenia and Slovenians living abroad, and temporally responsible for managing the Ministry of Culture, from 26/4/2016 to 20/5/2016.
- Anton Peršak, Culture minister, from 20/5/2016 to 13/9/2018;
- Dejan Prešiček, Culture minister, from 13/9/2018 to 29/1/2019;
- dr. Jernej Pikalo, Minister of education, science and sport and temporally responsible for managing the Ministry of Culture, from 29/1/2019 to 11/3/2019;
- mag. Zoran Poznič, Culture minister, from 11/3/2019 to 13/3/2020;
- dr. Vasko Simoniti, Culture minister, from 13/3/2020.

2.3 National Education Institute Slovenia

The National Education Institute Slovenia is the main national research, development and consultancy institution in the field of pre-school, primary and general secondary education. It was established⁹⁰ in 1995 as a public institute for carrying out consultancy, research, development and other professional tasks in the field of education.

⁸⁹ Exercising of the Public Interest in Culture Act lays down the following tasks: purchase of library materials, tasks of central regional libraries, special tasks of public libraries for national communities, programme of public libraries for the support of the development of librarianship activities in the border area and for co-financing the purchase of a library bus, and similar tasks.

⁹⁰ At the time of its establishment, Article 28 of Organization and Financing of Education Act explicitly stipulated the establishment, activities and tasks of the National Education Institute Slovenia pertaining to advisory work in the field of pre-school, primary and secondary education, in the field of education in student housing, in the field of education of children and the young with special needs, as well as the tasks in the field of professional and vocational education referring to basic education subjects. Article 53 of Fiscal Balance Act (Official Gazette of the RS, No 40/12) amended the text of Article 28 of Organization and Financing of Education Act but this modification had no impact on the tasks of the National Education Institute Slovenia.

The mission of the National Education Institute Slovenia is to contribute to quality of schooling and education and to improve the level of knowledge through research and development, preparation of professional bases for deciding on the matters under the authority of professional councils, monitoring the experiments and amending the existing programmes and introducing new ones, organising and providing regular professional education and training of teachers, headmasters and other professionals, drawing up professional bases for decision-making at the level of school policy, and through cooperation with other Slovenian and international institutions⁹¹.

For achieving long-term, medium-term and annual objectives, the work of National Education Institute Slovenia is focused on those fields that are pointed out as significant for schooling and education as in accordance with the results of the latest studies, implemented and current international comparative studies, secondary analyses (surveys such as PISA, PIRLS, TIMSS and other), new comparative studies, as well as in line with the results of national examinations (external assessment/knowledge testing, general and vocational baccalaureate), and other professional bases.

In order to achieve its mission and to carry out its tasks, the National Education Institute Slovenia cooperates with other institutions operating in the field of schooling and education which is also laid down by the Act establishing the National Education Institute Slovenia⁹². The cooperation in the field of development of reading literacy in children refers mostly to participation with the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, the National Examinations Centre and the Educational Research Institute⁹³.

Responsible persons of the National Education Institute Slovenia in the period covered by the audit and during the audit implementation itself were the following:

- mag. Gregor Mohorčič, director, from 7/7/2010 to 7/7/2014;
- dr. Vinko Logaj, director, from 7/7/2014.

⁹¹ Annual working, financial and staffing plans of the National Education Institute Slovenia for the period from 2015 to 2018.

⁹² Decision on Establishment of the National Education Institute Slovenia, No 021-04/95-6/1-8 as of 6 July 1995, No 024-13/2000-1 as of 19 October 2000, No 024-13/2002-2 as of 6 November 2000, No 024-13/2001-1 as of 26 July 2001, No 024-13/2001-4 as of 30 January 2003, No 024-13/2001-7 as of 18 November 2003, No 01403-44/2005/5 as of 22 November 2005, No 01403-3/2007/6 as of 23 January 2007, No 01403-168/2009/5 as of 5 January 2010 and No 01403-25/2016/4 as of 28 July 2016.

⁹³ The National Education Institute Slovenia cooperates also with the Faculty of Education of the University of Ljubljana, the Faculty of Education of the University of Maribor, the Faculty of Education of the University of Primorska, the Slovenian Institute of Adult Education, the National School for Leadership in Education, the Centre of school and extra-curricular activities, the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training and the Centre of the Republic of Slovenia for Mobility and European Educational and Training Programmes (CMEPIUS), [URL: <https://www.zrss.si/o-nas/partnerji>], 27/8/2020.

2.4 Slovenian Book Agency

The Slovenian Book Agency is a body governed by public law established by the Government of the Republic of Slovenia. Slovenian Book Agency Act and Public Agencies Act⁹⁴ serve as the legal bases for its establishment and operation.

In line with Article 4 of Slovenian Book Agency Act, the Slovenian Book Agency carries out tasks in the field of encouraging, promoting and issuing high-quality books, selecting projects in the field of books, granting working scholarships to best authors in literature, paying royalties to the authors, as well as ensures conditions for the development of reading culture, promotes the development of bookshop network, provides conditions for better access to books, participates in planning of strategic guidelines pertaining to the field of books that are subject to several public policies and influence the position of books respectively literature in general, facilitates the visibility of literature and its development.

Slovenian Book Agency consists of 3 expert committees⁹⁵ (expert bodies) competent for expressing opinion and making assessments regarding programme and project proposals pertaining to the field of books in the procedures of allocating public funds, proposing culture policy and other development measures pertaining to the field of books, as well as for implementing other tasks in line with the Act establishing the Slovenian Book Agency⁹⁶ (Decision on Establishment of the Slovenian Book Agency⁹⁷, Statute of the Slovenian Book Agency⁹⁸).

Slovenian Book Agency does not have internal organisational units, it is, however, organised by its fields of work and operations.

Responsible persons of the Slovenian Book Agency in the period covered by the audit and during the audit implementation itself were the following:

- Aleš Novak, director, from 15/2/2013 to 1/1/2018;
- Renata Zamida, director, from 1/1/2018.

⁹⁴ Official Gazette of the RS, No 52/02, 51/04 – EZ-A and 33/11 – ZEKom-C.

⁹⁵ Expert committee for book and magazine production in the field of literature and the humanities, Expert committee for literary events and reading culture development and Expert committee for the international promotion of Slovenian literature and the humanities.

⁹⁶ Article 2 of Slovenian Book Agency Act.

⁹⁷ Official Gazette of the RS, Nos 57/08 and 68/13.

⁹⁸ [URL: http://www.jakrs.si/fileadmin/datoteke/Nova_spletna_stran/O_agenciji/Pravne_podlage/Statut_Javne_agencije_za_knjigo_Republike_Slovenije.doc], 27/8/2020.

3. PLANNING OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF READING LITERACY IN CHILDREN

In order to answer the audit question, *whether the activities for the development of reading literacy in children were appropriately planned*, the Court of Audit reviewed:

- was reading literacy in children recognised as an important value/priority;
- did objectives pertaining to the development of reading literacy in children at the same time contribute to the implementation of the Strategy 2030 and the Agenda 2030;
- were responsibilities of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, the Ministry of Culture, the National Education Institute Slovenia and the Slovenian Book Agency clearly delimited;
- was professional and equitable implementation of activities ensured;
- was the selection of the activities for the development of reading literacy in children founded on the professional bases⁹⁹ supported by data and analyses.

3.1 Strategic and development planning

The following paragraphs explain how the objectives and activities pertaining to reading literacy in children were included in the documents of development and strategic planning, namely whether reading literacy in children was recognised as an important value/priority and whether objectives pertaining to the development of reading literacy in children at the same time contributed to the implementation of the Strategy 2030 and the Agenda 2030.

Slovenian Development Strategy 2030

Reading and reading literacy are included in the umbrella development and strategic document of the Republic of Slovenia, i.e. Strategy 2030. Reading literacy is explicitly mentioned within the second objective "knowledge and skills for quality living and work" which determines the average PISA result¹⁰⁰ as the performance indicator in achieving this objective. Other objectives of the Strategy 2030 do not refer to reading literacy. The Court of Audit nevertheless estimates that reading literacy is substantially related at least to the first objective "healthy and active living", the third objective "decent existence for all", the fourth objective "culture and language as the basic elements of the national identity" and to the seventh objective "inclusive labour market and quality of the jobs".

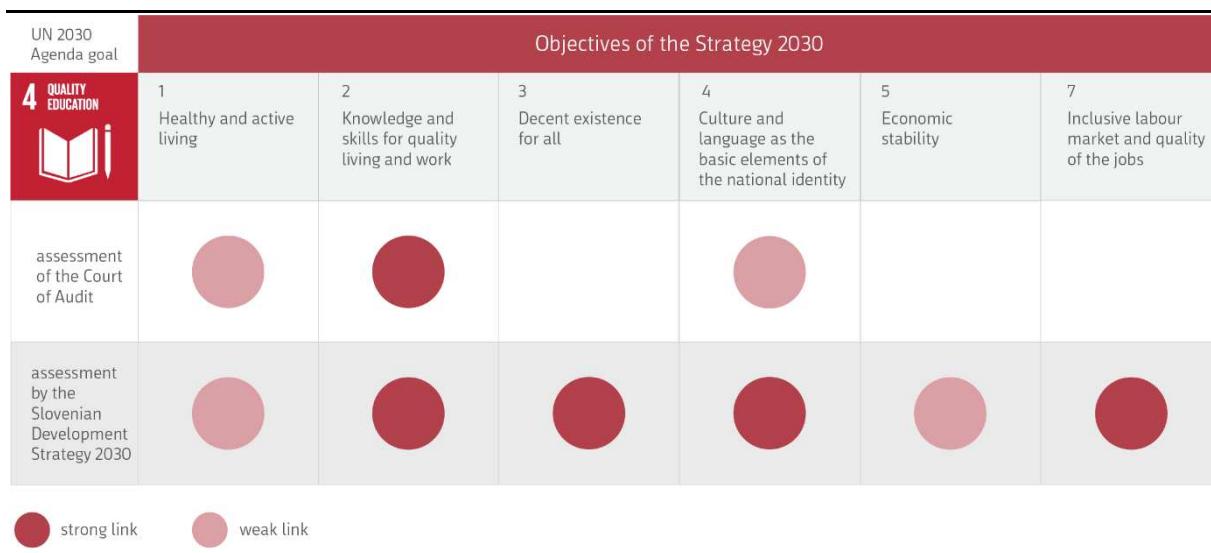
⁹⁹ International studies PISA, PIRLS, Educational Research Institute studies, proposals for improvements and similar.

¹⁰⁰ Average results in mathematics, reading and natural science.

The Strategy 2030 defines lifelong learning and training as the values crucial for the development of society, knowledge and skills for living and working in the knowledge society. Reading, mathematical, digital and financial literacy should bring about the empowerment of every individual to be able to effectively and responsibly participate in the society. Reading literacy is considered as the pre-condition for developing other types of literacies. Empowered individuals show greater concern for their health, they understand better the importance of active living and better face the challenges of poverty and material deprivation. In accordance with the Strategy 2030, national culture and the Slovenian language are the elements of cultural and economic progress of the society. Appropriate level of language competence is a pre-condition also for efficient participation in the field of economy – as a tool of communication, promotion of creativity, innovation and responsibility. Only those individuals that possess an adequate level of reading and writing literacy are capable to participate in the inclusive labour market and have the ability to respond to thereto related opportunities. To this end, the interest of the complete society is to set reading literacy as the value of society and the objective at the highest level reaching beyond the horizontal and vertical divisions of fields.

The importance of reading literacy was recognised by the United Nations member states quite some time ago and was thus included as a key objective and indicator in the Agenda 2030, namely under the fourth sustainable development goal "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all". Figure 4 presents how the objectives of the Strategy 2030 are linked to the fourth sustainable development goal of the Agenda 2030.

Figure 4: Linking of the objectives of the Strategy 2030 with the fourth sustainable development goal of the Agenda 2030



Source: Strategy 2030.

Figure 4 presents also the view of the Court of Audit on the links between the objectives of the Strategy 2030 with the fourth sustainable development goal and reading literacy. The Court of Audit assesses that the high level of reading literacy has positive and much greater influence on the achievement of strategic objectives as presented in the Strategy 2030.

By using the same performance indicators, namely PISA – average results in mathematics, reading and natural science, the Court of Audit estimates that there is a direct link between the Agenda 2030, the Programme of the European Union Education and Training 2020 (link to point 1.2.2.1 of this report) and the Strategy 2030.

Recommendation

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport and the Ministry of Culture should within the framework of their activities and communication with the public raise public awareness about the importance of the high level of reading literacy (in children) and give specific attention to motivation of the adults who, as part of family or other environment, have an important impact on children's reading culture and their understanding of importance of reading literacy.

Resolution on the 2014-2017 National Programme for Culture

Exercising of the Public Interest in Culture Act (Figure 1) represents the basic and fundamental act regulating the position and the significance of language in the Slovenian society, since it recognises the Slovenian language as one of the state-building and cultural assets due to its historical importance.¹⁰¹ For achieving the public interest in culture, the aforementioned act foresees the preparation of 4-year national programmes for culture which are considered strategic and planning documents providing detailed definition of objectives, holders and measures the State aims to achieve in the prescribed period in the individual area of culture¹⁰². All (resolutions on) national programmes for culture so far dedicated special chapter to the Slovenian language which distinctively includes also reading literacy.

In the introduction to Chapter 13 Slovenian language of the ReNPK 14-17 it is stated that the objective of the endeavours to increase the level of literacy should be to ensure equal participation in society to all speakers, both in intra- and intercultural context. The main emphasis regarding language policy in the field of language education in the Republic of Slovenia is placed on the Slovenian language. Learning Slovenian as the first language was long considered an activity planned, directed and evaluated by teaching professionals and other therefor competent institutions. There exists a growing interest and a greater number of discussions involving representatives from wider area of Slovenian studies (such as teachers, parents, educators, psychologists and similar) who all draw attention to the lack of research, independent monitoring of teaching plans, lack of harmonisation between terminology and methodology of teaching Slovenian and foreign languages, and the lack of more cross-curricular approach focusing on organising learning within and across subjects¹⁰³. Objectives of the ReNPK 14-17 are divided into 3 levels: level of individual fields of culture, level which intertwines with all other areas of culture and the level closely examining structure-related objectives. Issues of reading literacy development are referred to within 2 transverse levels of culture crucial for its development, namely the field of librarianship activities and the field of the Slovenian language as well as arts and cultural education.

Figure 5 summaries the areas, objectives and measures of ReNPK 14-17 pertaining to the development of reading literacy.

¹⁰¹ Articles 8 and 10 of Exercising of the Public Interest in Culture Act.

¹⁰² Articles 10 to 13 of Exercising of the Public Interest in Culture Act.

¹⁰³ ReNPK 14-17, Chapter 13 Slovenian language.

Figure 5: Areas, objectives and measures for the development of reading literacy taken from ReNPK 14-17

	LIBRARY SERVICES	SLOVENIAN LANGUAGE	ARTS AND CULTURAL EDUCATION
OBJECTIVES	Better accessibility of services provided by library public service	Development of language competencies of all groups with the aim of increasing the level of reading literacy	Development and promotion of reading culture
MEASURES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to enhance coordinated development of public libraries in less favourable environments with poor library network • to increase quality and accessibility of basic activities of public libraries, tailored to the needs of users 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to amend strategy in order to strengthen literacy by 2016 • to participate in international studies of reading literacy on a regular basis • to amend legal bases and standards for the improvement of language competence at all levels of education • to provide training to educators on a regular basis • to promote the development of reading culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to set up a national coordinating body of all stakeholders responsible for reading literacy • to implement multiannual intersectoral projects which promote reading culture in institutions of arts and cultural education and beyond • to define criteria for winning a title of a reading-friendly city • developing and networking related to best practice applicable to families, intergenerational integration, vulnerable groups and other individuals that shall be carried out by public libraries and cultural institutions • public call for multiannual projects for the development of reading culture for public and specialised libraries

Source: ReNPK 14-17.

Proposal NPK 18-25 discusses reading literacy within the context of adopting the strategy for the development of reading literacy and defines it as a basis for increasing the level of reading culture which is one of the key factors of reading literacy. Achieving the public interest in the field of books for maintaining and developing reading culture is the responsibility of the Slovenian Book Agency¹⁰⁴. The vision of the culture policy by the year 2025 as provided for in the proposal NPK 18-25 foresees that special attention should be paid to the practices enabling direct contact with authors and users of cultural assets which include social relationships and maintenance of reading culture and dialogue that are to a large extend provided through public librarianship activities.

Resolution on the National Programme for Language Policy 2014-2018

Article 26 of Public Use of the Slovene Language Act stipulates that formulating language policy and providing opportunities for its development is the responsibility of the ministry competent for culture, while other ministries competent for certain fields in which the aforementioned act imposes on them particular obligations regarding the use of the Slovenian language should only participate in those

¹⁰⁴ Article 1 of Statute of the Slovenian Book Agency in connection to the paragraph 2 of Article 1 of Slovenian Book Agency Act and Article 8 of Exercising of the Public Interest in Culture Act.

activities. The ministry responsible for culture frames language policy by outlining national programme for language policy, which is adopted by the National Assembly on a proposal of the Government. The national programme must lay down objectives and measures for a 5-year period together with the required funds and the manner of their provision. The Government is responsible that the national programme is carried out, while the National Assembly monitors its implementation on the basis of annual reports on the implementation.

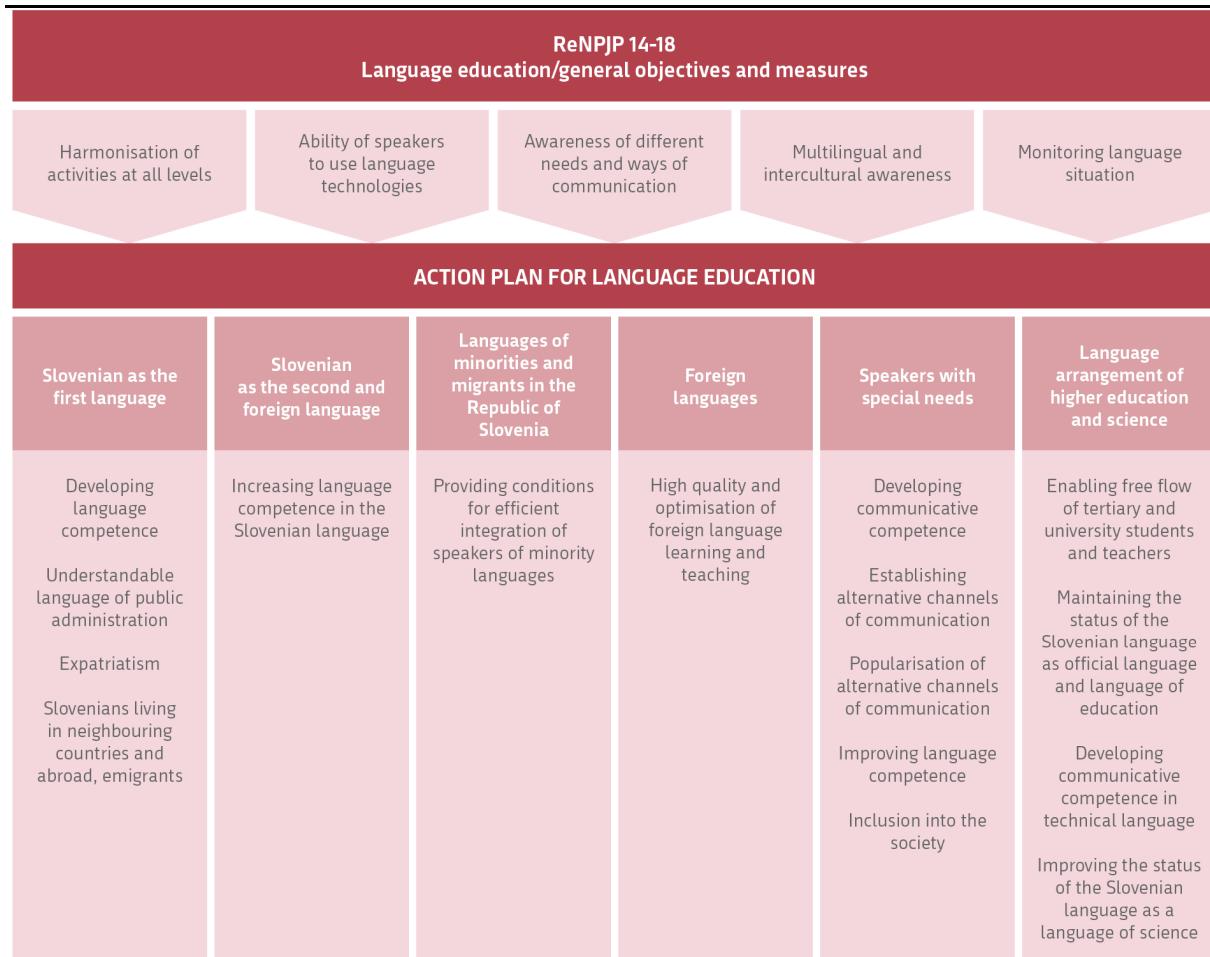
The principal objective of Slovenian language policy, as laid down by ReNPJP 14-18, is to create a community of independent speakers with Slovenian language skills proficiency, sufficient level of knowledge of other languages, high level of language confidence and adequate level of openness for language and cultural diversity. Language policy is an integral part of other policies, from school policy to economic policy (Figure 11), and is especially closely linked to cultural policy.

The reasons that were considered when preparing ReNPJP 14-18 were considerably changed social and political circumstances (globalisation, interculturalism, multilingualism) which caused that good functional literacy is no longer enough. The ReNPJP 14-18 developers thus aimed to set up such educational system that will enable the young and the adults to be able to develop and show their linguistic and communication potential in the Slovenian language to a maximum extent, to develop themselves as language-competent individuals and, according to their own needs, equip themselves for the purpose of efficient communication, namely to be able to express themselves in public in formal situations in a clear, understandable and acceptable manner, and to familiarise themselves with other types of communication.

On the basis of these findings, results of studies and the set objectives, the ReNPJP 14-18 foresaw the action plan for language education to define a new concept of Slovenian language teaching as the first language and to lay down the measures for Slovenian language teaching as a second language of children and young migrants who are being integrated in the Slovenian educational and schooling system, as well as of adults. ReNPJP 14-18 especially highlighted that well developed language competence in the first language, which is not Slovenian in the case of minorities (except Italian and Hungarian) and migrants, is a key element for the development of language competence in the Slovenian language. The resolution thus also pointed out that an action plan for language education must foresee better possibilities for learning the first language/mother tongue for other migrants and minority groups in those areas where the State or local community recognizes such needs. The concerned possibility is to go hand in hand with parallel learning or improvement of the Slovenian language as the second or third language.

Figure 6 shows chapters and objectives connected to the development of reading literacy in children as laid down in ReNPJP 14-18 and Action plan for language education (link to point 4.1 of this report).

Figure 6: Chapters and objectives connected to the development of reading literacy in children as laid down in ReNPJP 14-18 and Action plan for language education¹⁰⁵



Sources: ReNPJP 14-18 and Action plan for language education.

Based on the experience upon the expiry of ReNPJP 07-11 and considering the fact that it will be necessary to gain new and overall insight into the developments in the concerned field prior to the adoption of a new national programme for language policy, the ReNPJP 14-18 developers already upon its preparation included in it the measures enabling the conduct of studies and overall review of situation in the area of the Slovenian language not later than 1 year before drawing up a new national programme for language policy. To this end, especially important are the measures referring to the preparation of action plans for language education and language learning equipment that shall be introduced by the minister responsible for culture in cooperation with the minister responsible for education and science by clearly specifying specific objectives, indicators and holders thus enabling monitoring the implementation of measures and their effects. Coordination and heading of the Interdepartmental Working Group for

¹⁰⁵ [URL: http://mk.arhiv-spletisc.gov.si/fileadmin/mk.gov.si/pageuploads/Ministrstvo/raziskave-analize/slovenski_jezik/Akcijska_nacrta/ANJI.pdf], 27/8/2020.

monitoring the Slovenian language development in the Republic of Slovenia¹⁰⁶ (hereinafter referred to as: Interdepartmental Working Group), which was established by the Government on 19 March 2014, was taken over by Slovenian Language Service.

The draft of ReNPJP 19-23 was prepared by the Ministry of Culture in November 2018 and was designed in a way to maintain the continuity with the former resolution. On the basis of measures laid down in ReNPJP 14-18, there was a study on the appropriateness of the then language policy¹⁰⁷ carried out in the years 2016 and 2017 for the purpose of formulating the best possible new policy (thoroughly considered and systematically arranged language situation). This study was the first in the Republic of Slovenia that was empirically supported. In addition thereto, there were also other smaller-scale studies carried out (Slovenian Research Agency, ministries, European Union) and a public consultation was organised by the Ministry of Culture in January 2019¹⁰⁸. One of the main conclusions of the consultation was that the ReNPJP 14-18 was still relevant and that, rather to draw up a completely new programme, only in the current programme already existing chapters should be updated and amended where appropriate due to the new circumstances in order to avoid too strong influence of interests of each time participating individuals, while the rest shall remain unchanged. Such approach was in line with the guidelines of the then applicable ReNPJP 14-18 which strongly encouraged the action plan developers to be long-term oriented, thus taking into account the period of 5 to 10 years in producing solutions, where appropriate.

Similar applies to the field of reading literacy since it is stated in the introduction of the ReNPJP 19-23 draft that, despite the fact the PISA 2015 results regarding reading literacy (more under point 1.2.3.1 of this report) for the Republic of Slovenia revealed a much different picture than the one from the year 2009, it would be reasonable to wait at least for the results of PISA 2018 in which reading literacy was defined as an emphasised field for the first time after 2009. The performance of Slovenian children in PISA 2015 was considerably better than in 2009 and 2012, however, PISA 2018 shall offer more data and information on the background elements of reading literacy development, thus helping to clarify the changes in the achievements. Education experts as well point out that it is necessary to examine the obtained results through a longer period of time in order to arrive at the right answers¹⁰⁹.

¹⁰⁶ Interdepartmental Working Group consists of the representatives of the following institutions: Slovenian Language Service, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Public Administration, Administration Academy, Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Ministry of the Interior, Government Office for National Minorities, Government Office for Slovenians Abroad, Ministry of Economic Development and Technology, Secretariat-General of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia, Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, Slovenian Research Agency, Slovenian Book Agency.

¹⁰⁷ Target research project Language Policy of the Republic of Slovenia and the Needs of Users, Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Fran Ramovš Institute of the Slovenian Language; research report, October 2017.

¹⁰⁸ [URL: http://mk.arhiv-spletisc.gov.si/fileadmin/mk.gov.si/pageuploads/Ministrstvo/slovenski_jezik/2019/Zbornik_posvet_o_novem_NPJP_2019_.pdf], 27/8/2020.

¹⁰⁹ Education experts emphasise that the continuity of cooperation in international studies is of crucial importance since it enables the evaluation of the effectiveness of the applied policies (effective/ineffective) in the field of education respectively it enables the testing of other (cultural, economic, social) changing influences connected with cognitive and non-cognitive achievements of primary and secondary school students. Individual cycles may serve as the basis for quality in identifying intervention measures in the short-term period. Several cycles together may serve as the basis for assessing the effectiveness of policies in the mid-term and long-term period and for monitoring how different background elements link with the achievements of children due to constantly and (rapidly) changing society.

The main purpose of the activities included in the draft of ReNPJP 19-23 is to rear and to encourage self-sovereign, self-confident and self-motivated users of the Slovenian language and to promote the development of communication skills and competences of all individuals. This approach brings to the forefront the concept of family literacy which promotes and encourages the positive attitude towards language and language culture within a family which is considered an important factor behind the success of children during their education.

Among the holders of active language policy the draft of ReNPJP 19-23 puts much stronger emphasis than previous resolutions on the role of public and school libraries as elements of a public system which may among others directly contribute to the use, development and preservation of language, to the development of reading literacy of all target groups, lifelong development of reading culture, and to the provision of support to family literacy. However, the measures concerning libraries are intentionally not included in the draft of ReNPJP 19-23 in order not to interfere or overlap with the draft of ReNPK 18-25 which examines such measures and the field of libraries in more detail.

Measure taken by the Ministry of Culture

In December 2019, the draft of ReNPJP 20-24 was subject to interministerial respectively intersectoral harmonisation, in February 2020, the harmonised motion for a resolution was submitted to the Government¹¹⁰.

Proposal of the National Strategy for the Development of Reading Literacy

In connection to the drawing up the Action plan for language education, the ReNPJP 14-18 lays down that the ministry responsible for education in cooperation with other competent sectors respectively bodies prepares amendment to the National Strategy for the Development of Reading Literacy from 2006, focusing especially on the aspect of reading literacy since the results of international studies, such as PIRLS 2011 which included 10-year-olds and PISA 2009 and PISA 2012 which included 15-year-olds, delivered under-average performance of Slovenian children and adults¹¹¹.

Also ReNPK 14-17 saw amending of the strategy for improving reading literacy by 2016 as one of the measures within the objective of developing language competence of all groups of speakers with the aim of increasing the level of reading literacy (Figure 5).

In February 2014, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport held a consultation on the concerned issue to review the work and activities in the field of reading literacy. Experts from various professional fields participated and shed some light on the issue in question, each from their own point of view, and presented the projects of the institutions they work for, their advantages and disadvantages, as well as introduced initiatives. Developers of the National Strategy for the Development of Reading Literacy from 2006 were also present, providing critical evaluation of effectiveness of the implementation of the National Strategy for the Development of Reading Literacy from 2006 in addressing literacy development, especially the development of reading literacy, as well as proposed modifications. They established that the activities were only partially implemented, in isolation from each other and without deep insight and

¹¹⁰ [URL: <https://www.gov.si/zbirke/projekti-in-programi/oblikovanje-novega-nacionalnega-programa-za-jezikovno-politiko/>], 27/8/2020.

¹¹¹ Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (hereinafter referred to as: PIAAC survey) is carried out under the authority of OECD, [URL: <https://www.oecd.org/skills/piaac/>], 27/8/2020.

application of best practice. It was estimated that the objectives of the National Strategy for the Development of Reading Literacy from 2006 were not enough programme-oriented which was later confirmed also by Slovenian surveys carried out in the concerned field. Especially pointed out were inadequate consideration of reading literacy and practice in teaching plans for primary schools since they were not focused on the review and the evaluation of educational/teaching materials, textbooks and schoolbooks and failed to commit all teachers¹¹² to the development of literacy in all school subjects. There was not enough emphasis given to the education and training of teachers as regards reading literacy and its importance, there was also lack of regular professional training of teachers in general. Additionally, the measures of the National Strategy for the Development of Reading Literacy from 2006 failed to appropriately establish connections with the promotion of reading literacy in children at schools and within a family also due to incoherence between programmes and measures. The developers of the National Strategy for the Development of Reading Literacy from 2006 were thus summoned towards more focused and thorough planning of measures for the development of reading literacy in children¹¹³.

Working group for the review and supplementation of the National Strategy for the Development of Reading Literacy from 2006 was appointed on 17 July 2014 for the period of 4 years but did not start to carry out its activities before February 2015. The reason for the delay was dependence of the working group operations respectively planning of future activities in the field of reading literacy in children upon financial perspective 2014-2020, namely on sufficient European funds¹¹⁴. At the beginning of its operations, the working group reviewed all by then prepared respectively implemented projects, measures and studies in the Republic of Slovenia acquired by the group members at their organisations.

In the continuation, this report briefly looks at the key phases in the procedure of amending the National Strategy for the Development of Reading Literacy by the end 2018. The first proposal of the National Strategy for the Development of Reading Literacy for the period 2018-2030 was prepared on 5 April 2017 and submitted for public discussion. The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport as developer and coordinator of the amendment to the existing Strategy sought for the new Strategy to be officially recognised and used as multisectoral national plan for the development of reading literacy in the entire Slovenian society. It therefore decided to draw up a document in a way to be suitable for the submission to the Government for approval along with all the required accompanying documents determining the budgetary commitments that were to be guaranteed for achieving the proposed solutions. These documents were still subject to the process of harmonisation at the end of the period covered by the audit.

In the time of preparation of the proposal of the National Strategy for the Development of Reading Literacy, the ReNPJP 14-18, which refers to the PISA results from 2009 that caused concern due to below-average results and which foresees amendments to the National Strategy for the Development of Reading Literacy within the framework of the Action plan for language education, expired.

¹¹² In this report the term *teacher* is applied uniformly to both teachers and educators (educational and schooling system), where appropriate.

¹¹³ Raising literacy levels, Journal of expert consultation on reading literacy, Ministry of Education Science and Sport and National Education Institute Slovenia, February 2014.

¹¹⁴ Report of the working group for the review and supplementation of the National Strategy for the Development of Reading Literacy for the years 2015 and 2017, Ministry of Education, Science and Sport.

The Ministry of Culture, however, already prepared the draft of ReNPJP 19-23 which directly refers to the strategy for the development of reading literacy and includes implementation thereof under the foreseen measures.

In order for the proposal of the National Strategy for the Development of Reading Literacy from 2017 to address the issue of reading literacy as comprehensively as possible, the working group for the review and supplementation of the National Strategy for the Development of Reading Literacy from 2006 consisted of 18 representatives from different institutions. The basis was the definition of the reading literacy which takes into account its nature, as well as the importance of reading literacy as a skill of an individual. Reading literacy is therefore defined as continuously evolving respectively developing competence of an individual to comprehend, critically evaluate and use written information. This competence includes also developed reading skills, (critical) comprehension of the read, perception of reading as a value and motivation for reading. As such it thus represents the foundation for all other literacies (for example, mathematical, natural science and digital) and is of key importance for the development of the potential of an individual and its successful active participation in the society¹¹⁵.

The definition of reading literacy is the result of the development and expert findings applied in international studies (PIRLS, PISA, PIAAC), and takes into account its multidimensional and multisectoral nature.

Proposal of the National Strategy for the Development of Reading Literacy was additionally supplemented and amended by the end of 2018, somewhat supplemented and amended was also the definition of reading literacy. Proposal of the National Strategy for the Development of Reading Literacy as of 27 November 2018 defines reading literacy as a competence in such a way to include developed reading skills, (critical) comprehension of the read and reading culture (perception of reading as a value and motivation for reading). However, the term reading culture is not included in the definition of reading literacy provided in the proposal of the National Strategy for the Development of Reading Literacy from 2017.

*Explanation of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, the Ministry of Culture and the Slovenian Book Agency
When referring to the development of reading culture, different forms of promotion of reading, development of the readers' need to read and perception of reading as a value are actually addressed. The term reading culture appears in different forms reflecting one's attitude towards reading, interest for reading and different types of reading activities, as well as the development of reading and the readers. Reading culture plays an essential role in the development of reading literacy which encompasses language (the ability to express, listen, comprehend and speak) and thus includes also the familiarization with and understanding of literature. Reading literary is a key element of reading culture and vice versa.*

Thought the past, experts mostly dealt with the cognitive aspects of reading. After 1990, motivation and enthusiasm for reading, which could be understood as one's reading culture, were brought to the forefront. The achieved level of one's reading literacy strongly depends on its abilities and on motivation for reading respectively reading culture. In addition thereto, it is not to forget about one's interest and attitude towards reading, as well as importance of reading and values one attributes to respectively connects with reading.

¹¹⁵ Proposal of the National Strategy for the Development of Reading Literacy, Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, 5 April 2017.

When referring to the relation between reading culture and reading literacy, it could best be presented by a spiral: developed reading culture means developed interest for reading, one's internal need for reading which consequently leads to the increased reading activity. The latter represents the fulfilment of one's need for reading and at the same time the increased reading comprehension and reading competence. Increased reading competence urges one's need for additional, more demanding reading. Development of one's reading culture reflects not only in the increased reading activity (number of books read, number of books bought, number of books borrowed in libraries, number of books in one's personal library/at home and similar) but also in better quality of the read texts which is undoubtedly one of the most important objectives of the developed reading culture. The connection between reading culture and reading literacy may be described as developmental and procedural relation. It is namely the process that evolves in interdependence of one's past experience, as well as the dimension that never ceases to develop and complement, thus having specific characteristics at each level of development.

Reading and the development of positive attitude towards reading (reading culture) must be set as an important objective in an individual educational and wider social system in order to actually develop and raise the level of literacy in the society. All the aforementioned is appropriately emphasised in the proposal of the National Strategy for the Development of Reading Literacy for the period 2018-2030 and shall be included in the action plans which shall be, in line with the Strategy, prepared at the intersectoral level immediately after the adoption of the document by the Government.

At first sight, the definition of reading literacy as laid down in the proposal of the National Strategy for the Development of Reading Literacy as of 27 November 2018 seems more clear since it consists of 3 key elements respectively defined categories and is thus considered better from the previous one. The Court of Audit estimates that the detailed analyses of responsibilities, tasks and activities for the development of reading literacy in children as conferred to different stakeholders by strategic documents does not offer a fully precise answer to what reading culture is and what are the key conditions that must be ensured for its development. Reading culture is only defined as an attitude of individuals and society towards books and reading. The Court of Audit additionally estimates that in strategic documents reading culture is neither appropriately connected to reading literacy nor presented in a balanced manner in relation thereto. Furthermore, conditions for the development of reading culture are also not clearly determined. Expert community recognises reading culture as a background element of reading literacy development. This is why the Court of Audit believes that more precise and uniform definition should be necessary especially from the aspect of literacy and the selection respectively quality of reading materials that contribute to the promotion of reading literacy in children.

Recommendation

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport and the Ministry of Culture should in their strategic and implementing documents precisely and uniformly determine respectively define reading culture in relation to the (development of) reading literacy in children.

One of the reasons for drawing up the National Strategy for the Development of Reading Literacy was also the indicator provided by the Strategy 2030 which is directly linked to reading literacy. The second objective "knowledge and skills for quality living and work" clearly points out reading literacy as a performance indicator. It was also emphasised that the Republic of Slovenia aims to maintain its position among the first quarter of the EU states on the basis of the average PISA results. Other, more strategic objectives of the reading literacy development defined in the proposal of the National Strategy for the Development of Reading Literacy are formulated in a way to take into account the importance of reading literacy for the entire society. Their purpose is to develop skills, competences and attitude towards reading-related knowledge which shall enable healthy, environmentally friendly and socially responsible

attitude and lifestyle and work, as well as efficient and creative professional and social engagement (sustainability). The fourth objective of the Strategy 2030 "culture and language as the basic elements of the national identity" justifies the development and preservation of the Slovenian language also as the key factor respectively element of national identity.

For the Republic of Slovenia to achieve this, the proposal of the National Strategy for the Development of Reading Literacy foresaw the following objectives:

- to establish efficient social framework for the development of reading literacy;
- to develop reading literacy in individuals whose roles, needs and requirements change throughout different stages of life and thus to enable continuous development of society and economy;
- to increase accessibility to books and other reading materials and
- to give more attention to certain age groups/target groups within the educational system.

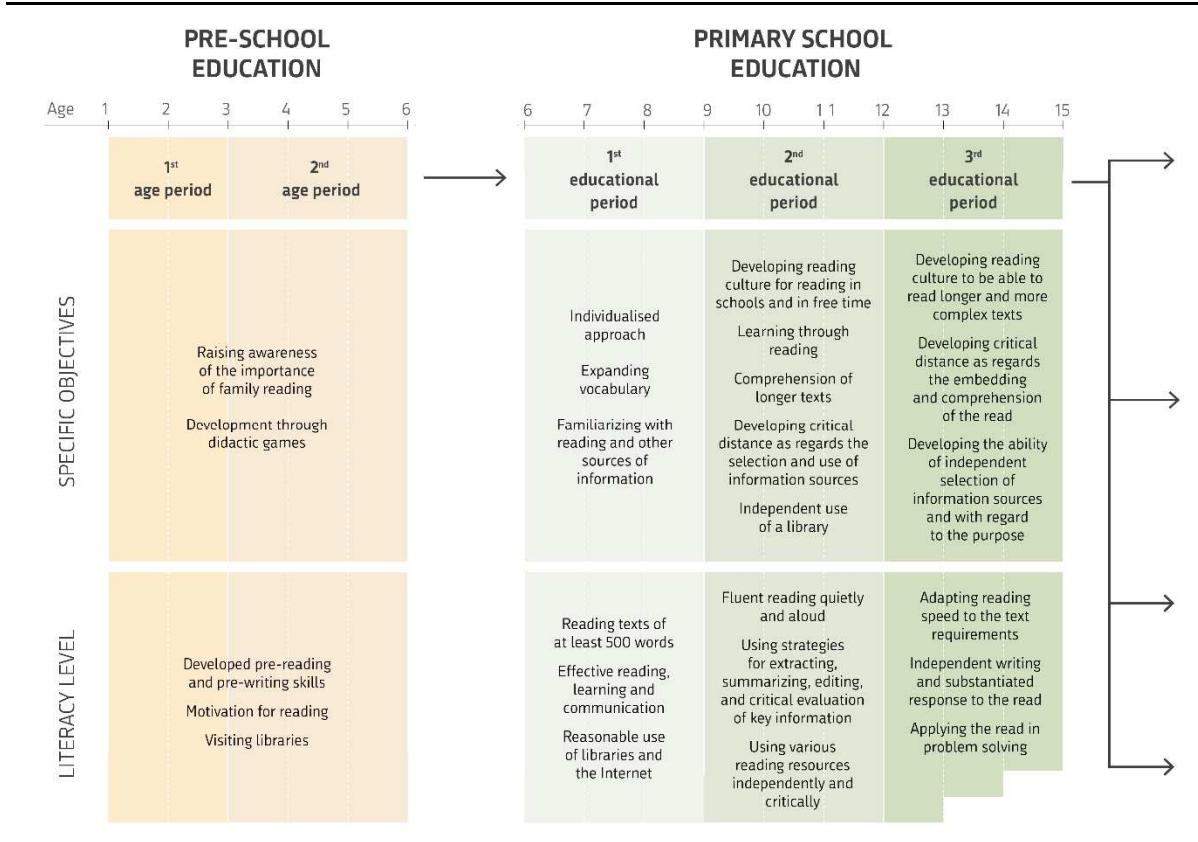
In order to achieve the above objectives, taking into account the proposal of the National Strategy for the Development of Reading Literacy, approaches and measures shall be adopted by considering the following basic fundamental principles:

- reading literacy as a lifelong right, responsibility and value;
- raising awareness and promotion of the importance/meaning of reading literacy;
- overall approach;
- accessibility, equality and equity;
- individualisation and personalisation;
- scientific excellence;
- high expectations and standards;
- diversity of reading;
- planning, evaluation and self-evaluation.

Objectives and literacy levels are further defined by age brackets of one's development, namely from the pre-school period to adulthood. To schematically show specific objectives and planned literacy levels, they were summarised and divided into groups for the purpose of this report (Figure 7).

Figure 7 presents pre-school and primary school education objectives by the age of children, summarised in accordance with the proposal of the National Strategy for the Development of Reading Literacy.

Figure 7: Pre-school and primary education objectives and literacy levels by the age of children – summarised in accordance with the National Strategy for the Development of Reading Literacy



Source: proposal of the National Strategy for the Development of Reading Literacy.

According to the estimation of the Court of Audit, the proposal of the National Strategy for the Development of Reading Literacy failed to consistently apply the terms reading literacy and literacy. To fully understand the objectives of the Strategy it is thus necessary to assume that the objectives and literacy levels as determined in the Chapter 6, regardless of the title Objectives and literacy levels, actually refer to the objectives that should be achieved in the field of reading literacy. Additionally, the proposal of the Strategy somewhat unclearly defines the relations between specific objectives and literacy levels, since it is again necessary to assume that the objectives of the Strategy do not refer to the implementation of the listed activities but are the substantial results which are determined as literacy levels in addition to individual activities.

From the reports of the working group for the review and supplementation of the National Strategy for the Development of Reading Literacy¹¹⁶ it is evident that the text of the proposal of the National Strategy for the Development of Reading Literacy was drafted in August 2017 and was appropriate for further consideration but some problems occurred regarding the status of the concerned document. According to the opinion of the Legal Department at the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, the Government

¹¹⁶ Report of the working group for the review and supplementation of the National Strategy for the Development of Reading Literacy for the year 2017, Ministry of Education, Science and Sport.

did not have the power to adopt such document without explicit lawful authority. It thus proposed the following 3 options:

- the document National Strategy for the Development of Reading Literacy shall become a constituent part of the resolution of the Ministry of Culture on language policy;
- the document shall be transformed into a resolution (a document on the basis of which the National Assembly assesses the existing situation, establishes policy and adopts national programmes in individual fields¹¹⁷) and shall be submitted (via the Government) to the National Assembly for adoption or
- the document (under different title) shall be submitted to the Government for adoption; the Government could for example adopt a decision on measures and objectives for increasing reading literacy or a decision to take note of the measures and objectives set by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport within the framework of its powers and responsibilities in order to increase the level of reading literacy.

The Legal Department at the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport later offered a new option enabling the text of the proposal of the National Strategy for the Development of Reading Literacy to be treated as a government document and was as such submitted to the Government for consideration.

Measure taken by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport submitted the Proposal of the National Strategy for the Development of Reading Literacy for the period 2019-2030 to the Government on 10 December 2019.

At its 55th regular session as of 19 December 2019, the Government adopted the National Strategy for the Development of Reading Literacy for the period 2019-2030 in a form proposed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport¹¹⁸. With the adoption of the National Strategy for the Development of Reading Literacy for the period 2019-2030 also a new definition of reading literacy was approved.

Recommendation

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport should upon possible preparation of a new White Paper on Education therein include the objective of developing school libraries.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport and the Ministry of Culture should in their implementing documents develop a uniform approach to the development of reading literacy in such a way to ensure the activities to be planned in coordination and cooperation with all stakeholders (public and school libraries, Slovenian Book Agency, National Education Institute Slovenia, Educational Research Institute, National Examinations Centre, National School for Leadership in Education and other) and to enable coherent implementation of activities, as well as complementation of results and objectives in several directions and at various levels.

¹¹⁷ Article 109 of Rules of Procedure of the National Assembly (Official Gazette of the RS, Nos 92/07 – official consolidated text, 105/10, 80/13 and 38/17).

¹¹⁸ URL: <https://www.gov.si/novice/2020-01-15-nacionalna-strategija-za-razvoj-bralne-pismenosti-za-obdobje-2019-2030/>, 27/8/2020.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport should upon preparation of implementing documents respectively action plans for the National Strategy for the Development of Reading Literacy in the period 2019-2030 at the level of individual activities for the development of reading literary clearly define the objectives of those activities and the expected way of transferring them into practice.

3.2 Responsibilities and activities for the development of reading literacy in children

Clearly defined powers respectively responsibilities and tasks of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, the Ministry of Culture, the National Education Institute Slovenia and the Slovenian Book Agency concerning the development of reading literacy in children in acts of establishing, statutes, regulations or other thereto pertaining documents regulating operations of the aforementioned bodies are important for good planning of activities. The audit thus reviewed how the strategic documents respectively their action and implementing plans pertaining to the field of reading literacy development in the period covered by the audit defined the objectives and activities of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, the Ministry of Culture, the National Education Institute Slovenia and the Slovenian Book Agency, as well as time limits for their implementation.

In the field of strategic and development planning the care for language in the Republic of Slovenia is regarded as explicitly multidimensional asset, which also reflects in the fact that reading literacy in not only dealt with within the field of education and culture but also within the field of healthcare, work, family, social and foreign affairs.

All national bodies in the Republic of Slovenia are direct holders of language policy. Within the national framework, language policy is formulated in a way to enable relevant holders in individual fields to take over the responsibility for its implementation as well as the budgetary responsibility, and in addition thereto the powers to propose its content. In terms of content, reading literacy is a multisectoral field, the planned activities related thereto are thus horizontally and vertically divided among stakeholders from different areas of operation. However, the largest scope of activities and financing falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, the Ministry of Culture, the National Education Institute Slovenia and the Slovenian Book Agency.

Responsibilities and activities of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport

The following tasks of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, namely its Sector for education are especially closely related to the development of reading literacy in children:

- performing professional, administrative and technical work for the Professional council for general education, the Profession council for adult education and the Professional council for vocational and professional education;
- carrying out tasks on the basis of Rules on updating the education process¹¹⁹ and Instructions on procedures for the development, adoption, and publication of officially recognised educational programmes¹²⁰;

¹¹⁹ Official Gazette of the RS, Nos 7/14 and 27/17.

¹²⁰ Official Gazette of the RS, No 5/11.

- setting out guidelines for the preparation of annual working plans of the institutes defined in Article 28 of Organization and Financing of Education Act (National Examinations Centre, National Education Institute Slovenia and Educational Research Institute) and monitoring the implementation of the adopted annual working plans;
- preparing professional bases for decision-making, planning and implementing activities in individual fields of education policy, as well as coordinating work of different groups appointed by the competent minister or the Government for the purpose of education;
- cooperating in the preparation of national programmes and action plans pertaining to the field of education which are drawn up by other ministries;
- coordinating and monitoring international studies serving as the basis for the education policy planning;
- participating in the preparation of professional bases for the absorption of the European Cohesion Policy funds, as well as planning and implementing procedures and monitoring development programmes and projects in cooperation with the Service for the Implementation of Cohesion Policy¹²¹.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport cooperates with other scientific and research, as well as professional institutions¹²² when carrying out the tasks and achieving objectives in the field of reading literacy development in children. Those institutions in the field of reading literacy development are especially National Education Institute Slovenia, Educational Research Institute, National Examinations Centre, National School for Leadership in Education.

Responsibilities and activities of the Ministry of Culture

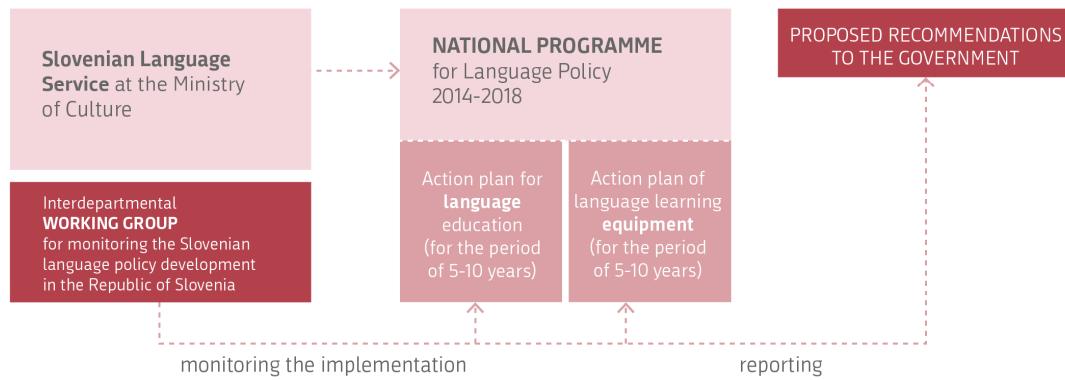
Slovenian Language Service at the Ministry of Culture is the key body responsible for coordination of Slovenian language policy.

Figure 8 presents the system for implementation and monitoring the implementation of ReNPJP 14-18.

¹²¹ [URL: http://mizs.arhiv-spletisc.gov.si/si/delovna_podrocja/sluzba_za_mednarodno_sodelovanje_in_evropske_zadeve/], 27/8/2020.

¹²² Faculty of Arts of the University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Education of the University of Ljubljana, Slovenian Book Agency, National and University Library, and Slovenian Institute of Adult Education, etc.

Figure 8: The system for implementation and monitoring the implementation of ReNPJP 14-18



Source: ReNPJP 14-18.

The purpose of establishing the Interdepartmental Working Group in 2014 was to enable individual national authorities as the key holders of language policy to actively participate therein and take over the responsibility for its implementation, as well as the powers to propose its content in their respective field of operation through their representatives.

Diverse and inclusive structure of the Interdepartmental Working Group reflects multisectoral nature of language policy and enables each individual sector to express its point of view concerning the implementation and monitoring of language policy, as well as to share its position with other stakeholders. Views, opinions and proposals are in the process of their exchange as part of the overall and comprehensive approach appropriately incorporated into recommendations, assessments and identified needs in the field of language policy implementation. The task of the Interdepartmental Working Group is to prepare annual reports for each year on the implementation of measures pertaining to language policy objectives and to formulate and submit proposals to the Government.

Developing and implementing librarianship activities, being the key factor in developing reading literacy in children, falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Culture which carries out the following thereto related tasks:

- defining and monitoring legal arrangement of the respective field;
- monitoring and analysing circumstances, laying down criteria and formulating proposals of annual and multiannual plans for (co-)financing cultural projects and programmes in the field of librarianship activities;
- expressing opinions on the proposals for library materials which are further discussed by the Government and the National Assembly and their working and consultative bodies;
- preparing professional and legal bases pertaining to the field of librarianship activities;
- conceiving development projects for establishing culture policy in the field of librarianship activities;

- developing and launching initiatives for measures promoting the development of a national library, public libraries and specialised libraries in cultural institutions, and encouraging participation of libraries in a mutual bibliographic system;
- cooperating with other national bodies and bodies of local communities concerning the issues of public service system in the field of librarianship activities;
- independently performing and participating in carrying out the tasks within the budget implementation, namely in the part pertaining to the allocation of funds for (co-)financing cultural programmes and projects from the field of librarianship activities, as well as making ongoing and periodic assessment of the use of public funds in terms of purpose/eligibility, legality, economy and efficiency;
- keeping the prescribed and relevant records and participating in the development of joint data collections.

Responsibilities and activities of the National Education Institute Slovenia

The National Education Institute Slovenia among its other tasks carries out development and advisory work for professionals and heads of the kindergartens and schools and also in the field of professional and vocational education referring to basic education subjects; it prepares, participates in and proposes the programmes to be adopted by the minister responsible for education and the Professional council for general education; it monitors and develops textbooks and other teaching technologies; it prepares and issues expert literature and materials for professionals and carries out development and research work related to drawing up and implementation of programmes for regular professional training of professional workers and to the development and introduction of methodological and didactic approaches at kindergartens and schools, as well as carries out thereto related advanced training for headmasters¹²³.

Long-term objectives of the National Education Institute Slovenia as defined in annual working plans of the National Education Institute Slovenia for the period from 2014 to 2018 are as follows¹²⁴:

- taking care for the development and preparation of professional documents and bases for setting systemic conditions for further development of high-quality education and schooling in cooperation with the competent ministry and other institutions;
- developing efficient practice of high-quality educational work in cooperation with other educational and schooling organisations;
- monitoring and evaluating the novelties in the field of education and schooling;
- promoting professional development of all professional workers and headmasters;
- participating in international activities in the field of education and schooling;
- cooperating with Slovenian schools and other educational and schooling institutions abroad (in Italy, Austrian Carinthia and the Porabje region);
- carrying out other tasks in the field of public services within the limits of public powers.

¹²³ Article 2 of Decision on Establishment of the National Education Institute Slovenia as of 6 July 1995, Decision amending the Decision on Establishment of the National Education Institute Slovenia as of 3 January 2003 and Decision amending the Decision on Establishment of the National Education Institute Slovenia as of 28 July 2016.

¹²⁴ Annual working, financial and staffing plans of the National Education Institute Slovenia for individual years for the period from 2014 to 2018, [URL: <https://www.zrss.si/o-nas/temeljne-naloge/ldn>], 27/8/2020.

All the above objectives are closely connected with the measures and activities necessary for the development of reading literacy in children as part of the task of developing different types of literacy. Direct connection is additionally expressed in the selection of goals and tasks the National Education Institute Slovenia defines each year in its annual working, financial and staffing plans within the framework of its medium-term annual plans for the period of 4 years.

In the medium-term, i.e. period between 2014 and 2018, the topics pertaining to the development of reading literacy were also included among the tasks of the National Education Institute Slovenia for fulfilling the long-term objective concerning the development of efficient practice of a high-quality educational work in cooperation with educational and schooling institutions, whereby the implementation of tasks was directed towards the development of didactic strategies in the field of literacy (reading, national science, mathematical, financial) and didactic competencies.

In the annual working plan of National Education Institute Slovenia for 2014¹²⁵, these topics were included in the medium-term objective concerning the development and implementation of an integrative curriculum, more specifically for the year 2014 the topics were addressed under the task 12 Developing cross-curricular competencies, namely:

- 12.1 Emerging respectively early literacy in kindergarten,
- 12.2 Reading literacy,
- 12.5 Developing competencies and literacy by curriculum profiling and integration.

At the level of annual objectives in the period from 2015 to 2018¹²⁶, the concerned topics included in the annual working plans of the National Education Institute Slovenia for that period were addressed under the tasks for achieving the objective pertaining to building up approaches for developing all types of literacy at the complete vertical level of education and schooling.

Responsibilities and activities of the Slovenian Book Agency

Slovenian Book Agency Act lays down the provision of conditions for the development of reading culture as one of the tasks of the Slovenian Book Agency, but does neither specifically define the term of reading culture nor determine the conditions the Slovenian Book Agency should provide for the development of reading culture. As explained by the Ministry of Culture, the responsibility for the field of reading culture development was transferred from the Ministry of Culture to the Slovenian Book Agency with the establishment of the Slovenian Book Agency as an independent agency in 2009. The field thus covers the tasks concerning the provision of conditions for the development of reading culture, as well as thereto related responsibility. However, despite examining other legal and strategic bases, such as National Strategy for the Development of Reading Literacy, strategic documents of language policy and Slovenian

¹²⁵ Annual working plan for 2014, [URL: <https://www.zrss.si/zrss/wp-content/uploads/ldn-fn-2014-brez-imen.pdf>], 27/8/2020.

¹²⁶ Annual working plan for 2015, [URL: <https://www.zrss.si/zrss/wp-content/uploads/ldn-in-fn-2015.pdf>]; Annual working plan for 2016, [URL: <https://www.zrss.si/zrss/wp-content/uploads/ldn2016-sprejet-splet.pdf>]; Annual working plan for 2017, [URL: <https://www.zrss.si/zrss/wp-content/uploads/ldn-in-fn-2017-20170327.pdf>]; Annual working plan for 2018, [URL: <https://www.zrss.si/zrss/wp-content/uploads/ldn-2018-lekt.pdf>], 27/8/2020.

Book Agency Strategic plan 2015-2019¹²⁷, the Court of Audit was not able to unambiguously establish which were those conditions necessary for the development of reading culture that should be provided by the Slovenian Book Agency in accordance with Article 4 of Slovenian Book Agency Act.

In accordance with the Strategic plan 2015-2019 of the Slovenian Book Agency, the role of the agency, by taking into account ReNPK 14-17, shall primarily be to respond to the challenges related to the increase of sales of books and their accessibility, development of electronic publishing, strengthening reading culture and coherent cooperation among stakeholders in the field of publishing.

The main objectives set by the Slovenian Book Agency in the field of development of all segments of reading culture are as follows:

- raising awareness of the importance of reading and possessing books;
- encouraging and promoting reading and planned development of reading culture at the regional and national level;
- implementing plans and programmes of reading culture that encourage reading among different target groups at the national and regional level and contribute to the development of lifelong reading habits;
- implementing high-quality, recognised and innovative literary events and festivals of national and regional coverage;
- encouraging and coordinating programmes and projects for the promotion of artists, reading and books that foresee participation of different government departments and that take place at the national level, thus linking crucial actors in the field of books, involving all individuals from the author to the reader;
- providing support to the issuing of books and magazines (in printed and electronic form);
- providing support to the operations of bookshops which contributes to the promotion of reading and buying books.

According to its opinion, the Slovenian Book Agency does not have any specific responsibilities from the aspect of literacy and the selection of reading materials contributing to the promotion of reading literacy, since this shall fall under the authority of educational institutions, such as the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, the National Education Institute Slovenia and similar. The Slovenian Book Agency believes that its role is to promote reading and reading culture when children are already literate. All the measures of the Slovenian Book Agency are thus targeted at the already literate groups and are aimed at increasing the level of reading culture and not the literacy in general. The purpose and objectives of the activities of the Slovenian Book Agency for promoting reading culture include the following: development of reading culture among the young and provision of support to Slovenian authors; promotion of distinguished Slovenian authors; encouraging school children to read and to visit public libraries and bookshops; motivating publishers to include greater number of contemporary Slovenian authors in the programmes for youth; promotion of reading and development of lifelong reading habits of various target groups; promotion of the importance of possessing books and personal library.

¹²⁷ Strategic plan 2015-2019 is a basic document for a mid-term planning of guidelines and work of the Slovenian Book Agency. In particular, it defines programme and organisational guidelines, investments and maintenance, as well as staffing plan,

[URL: https://www.jakrs.si/fileadmin/datoteke/Nova_spletna_stran/O_agenciji/Vizitka/Strateski_nacrt_JAK_RS_2015-2019.pdf, 27/8/2020.]

On the basis of its data, the Slovenian Book Agency in the field of providing support to reading culture, mainly through public calls for tenders, fulfils the following objectives:

- implementing cultural programmes for the promotion of reading and development of lifelong reading habits of different target groups;
- implementing cultural programmes for the promotion of reading culture and development of one's attitude towards reading and books;
- implementing cultural programmes which connect different entities in the field of reading culture among each other;
- promoting higher volume of sales of high-quality books and magazines.

In the period from 2014 to 2018, the Slovenian Book Agency implemented all the planned 1-year, 2-year and 4-year calls for tenders for the promotion of reading culture and annually supported 6 to 8 programmes and from 10 to 15 projects (the number of funded projects varied on the basis of available financial sources, merging individual projects into joint projects and similar which is evident from the Attachment 2).

It is stated in the Strategic plan 2015-2019 that for the Slovenian Book Agency to be able to implement those tasks and fulfil objectives it is necessary to introduce measures for ensuring stable conditions for book publishing and production, operation of the network of bookshops, coherent operation of stakeholders, harmonisation of policies and measures, protection of copyrights, improving the position of authors, as well as for ensuring promotional tools and support mechanisms.

Annual reports of the Slovenian Book Agency¹²⁸ suggest that in the period from 2014 to 2018, the Slovenian Book Agency annually allocated for publishing, the network of bookshops and for providing financial support to bookshops from 60% to 80% of its funds. Legal bases for the operation of the Slovenian Book Agency show that the Slovenian Book Agency is a public agency carrying out public services in the field of books which include the provision of conditions for book and magazine publishing in the field of fiction and the humanities, for authors from the field of fiction and the humanities, for translation of works of Slovenian authors into foreign languages, for international cooperation in the field of books, literary festivals and events, development of network of bookshops, development of reading culture, promotion of books, authors and reading, coherent operation of all entities included in the book chain, additional professional training in the field of books, paying royalties to the authors and informatization in the field of books¹²⁹. Since it is not clearly and unambiguously determined which are those conditions for the development of reading culture that must be provided by the Slovenian Book Agency, the Court of Audit is not able to assess whether the Slovenian Book Agency allocates enough funds for the implementation of the tasks for ensuring conditions for the development of reading culture. Based on the review of legal bases for the Slovenian Book Agency operations, the Court of Audit assesses that the task of the Slovenian Book Agency in the field of publishing and network of bookshops is not to preserve publishing as a branch of economy but rather to protect public interest within the respective branch. This means that the Slovenian Book Agency mainly encourages that segment of publishing which is commercially less attractive but of strategic importance for the Republic of Slovenia in terms of

¹²⁸ [URL: <https://www.jakrs.si/o-agenciji/letna-porocila/>], 27/8/2020.

¹²⁹ Paragraph 2 of Article 1 of Slovenian Book Agency Act.

high-quality creative writing, cultural, social and development aspect, particularly in the context of reading culture promotion.

Recommendation

The Ministry of Culture and the Slovenian Book Agency should define the term of reading culture and lay down the quality criteria for reading materials contributing to the promotion of a high level of reading literacy in children.

The Ministry of Culture and the Slovenian Book Agency should unambiguously establish criteria respectively elements for assessing the quality of books and other reading materials.

The Ministry of Culture and the Slovenian Book Agency should provide for the achievement of public interest in the field of books by promoting high-quality production and offer of children's books in the field of publishing and when developing collections and lists of recommended literature of public and school libraries.

The Slovenian Book Agency should in new strategic, action and annual plans clearly distinguish the activities and funds planned for the support of the public service to implement the public interest in the field of development of reading literacy and reading culture from the support to other activities – funds allocated to publishing as a commercial activity.

The National School for Leadership in Education and the National Education Institute Slovenia are responsible for regular education of professional workers in the field of education, while the National Examinations Centre prepares, organises and carries out electronic assessment of the National knowledge testing in the sixth and ninth grade of a primary school, thus bringing about the result *C6044 Providing optimal conditions for the implementation of a primary school programme* and the specific objective of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport *C1602 High-quality implementation of basic educational programmes*¹³⁰.

National School for Leadership in Education is a public institute which, as part of public services, among others provides training for headmasters and other professional workers participating in the process of managing educational and schooling institutes. Pertaining to the development of reading literacy in children, other long-term objectives, on which activities of the National School for Leadership in Education are focused, are important as well, especially the following:

- to improve efficiency of kindergartens and schools in terms of management and organisation;
- to increase the level of quality of training in the field of management and other professional activities of the institute;
- to transfer results of the studies and current theoretical findings and solutions most appropriate in expert terms into practice of managing educational and schooling institutions¹³¹.

Educational Research Institute is a public research institute and autonomous research institution. The mission of the Educational Research Institute is to develop education sciences and appropriate scientific

¹³⁰ Specific objective within the programme *1903 Basic education* and the sub-programme *190301 Implementing primary school educational programmes*.

¹³¹ [URL: <http://solazaravnatje.si/index.php/predstavitev>], 27/8/2020.

methodologies, whereby it promotes inter- and multidisciplinary connections and cooperation with other scientific institutions in the Republic of Slovenia and abroad. It also contributes to the development of teaching practises by disseminating research respectively scientific findings¹³².

Among topics that are subject to research and study of the Educational Research Institute, special emphasis should be given to the following:

- developing and surveying the level of quality of pre-school education;
- monitoring and assessing the efficiency and quality of Slovenian educational system from the international point of view;
- systematic research and development of strategies for social inclusion of children and the young into the educational system, especially of culturally and socially vulnerable groups;
- promoting empowerment of the young for active citizenship;
- developing social, emotional and motivating factors of teaching and learning;
- studying the aspect of multilingualism in the field of education and schooling.

The Educational Research Institute performs its activities as a public service within the framework of a national research programme, especially in terms of providing professional and scientific support to the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport. In addition to the public service, the Institute implements tasks and activities on behalf of other entities in the scope and manner as determined by the development programme and the annual plan.

National Examinations Centre is a public institute whose activities arise from its role of a central institution for external knowledge testing of primary school students, apprentices, secondary school students and adults. In the opinion of the Court of Audit, the main tasks of the National Examinations Centre concerning the development of reading literacy in children encompass particularly the following:

- research and developmental work in the field of external knowledge testing;
- expert, technical and other works related to external knowledge testing;
- performing analyses and statistical treatment of examinations results, as well as preparation and announcement thereof;
- providing catalogues and standards of knowledge, competencies and skills which are a pre-requisite for obtaining an authentic instrument;
- arranging, organising and implementing knowledge examinations;
- arranging, organising and implementing electronic assessment of the National knowledge testing¹³³ in the sixth and ninth grade of a primary school.

¹³² [URL: <https://www.pei.si/pedagoski-institut/>], 27/8/2020.

¹³³ Priorities concerning the implementation of tasks of the National Examinations Centre are to provide an effective implementation of external knowledge examinations, referring to National knowledge testing in this audit. Within the measure *3311-11-0004 Implementation of primary school programmes* laid down in the explanations of a specific part of the budget, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, in the period covered by the audit, provided 2 indicators (direct impacts) pertaining to the National knowledge testing, namely average performance of ninth graders in the National knowledge testing and average performance of sixth graders in the National knowledge testing.

3.3 Professional and empirical bases

The third area in assessing whether the objectives and activities for the development of reading literacy in children were appropriately planned covered the review whether professional and equitable planning of activities was ensured and whether the selection of the activities was reasoned on the professional bases, data and analyses.

Planning of reading literacy development in children was assessed as professional and equitable if: it was designed as horizontal (intersectoral) and included elements of equity (addressing vulnerable groups); cooperation and consideration of expert knowledge and practices were incorporated into planning of activities of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, the Ministry of Culture, the National Education Institute Slovenia, and the Slovenian Book Agency; professional bases, data and analyses intended for designing, planning and selecting activities to develop reading literacy in children existed at the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, the Ministry of Culture, the National Education Institute Slovenia, and the Slovenian Book Agency and were appropriately applied; results of the National knowledge testing of Slovenian children and international studies (PIRLS, PISA) were used as the basis for development and planning and selection of measures and activities. To this end, the Court of Audit examined, whether the key data on performance factors in reading literacy (socio-economic situation, access to books/school lessons, gender) were considered and whether the criteria for selecting and including the measures and projects into development programme plans reflect the position of reading literacy in children (value/priority) as defined in strategic documents.

For the effective and efficient achievement of objectives, it is necessary to appropriately plan measures and activities, whereby the appropriate planning shall include/consider all the key elements necessary for the development and implementation of measures and activities. Regardless of the field of operation, these elements shall normally include: in-depth analyses of the situation, planning of substantially appropriate and professionally supported activities, provided financial sources, participation of various experts (from different fields), planning efficient implementation of activities and monitoring effects after being completed.

International studies in which Slovenian children participated (more under point 1.2.3 of this report) represent the principal source of professional and empirical bases in the field of development of reading literacy in children. In addition thereto, Slovenian surveys, analyses and expert findings on the basis of the implemented projects are also important. Every contribution of each stakeholder is important and valuable, thus enabling better insight into the actual respectively current situation and needs for the development of reading literacy in children in the Republic of Slovenia.

The working group for the preparation of the amended Proposal of the National Strategy for the Development of Reading Literacy referred its activities to the National Strategy for the Development of Literacy and considered the then most up-to-date information about the situation in the Republic of Slovenia when making modifications. It namely took into account the documents and other materials that were prepared by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, the Ministry of Culture, the National Education Institute Slovenia, the Slovenian Book Agency, the National Examinations Centre, the Faculty of Education and the Faculty of Arts of the University of Ljubljana, the Faculty of Education in Koper of the University of Primorska, the National and University Library, the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, and the Slovenian Institute of Adult Education on the basis of the implemented projects, studies and analysis.

For the preparation and implementation of the operation Development and applying innovative learning environments and flexible forms of learning to foster common competences, whose framework represents the Operational Programme for the Implementation of the EU Cohesion Policy in the Period 2014-2020, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport performed an analysis¹³⁴ with the purpose to summarise the situation in the field of innovative learning environments and to recognise the need for co-financing from public funds, and to provide an overview of the already implemented projects, professional bases and identified needs by individual fields which are included in the concerned operation¹³⁵. In the field of reading literacy, 2 sources of information were important in the process of planning, namely a public call for the implementation of projects in the field of cultural education and reading literacy and the Empowerment project¹³⁶ that were carried out by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport in the period from 2007 to 2013.

Projects included in the public calls in the field of reading literacy were implemented according to their content, namely to provide models for developing and improving reading literacy in children and models for developing diagnostic tools in the field of reading literacy of all age groups. The analysis of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport examining the situation in the field of innovative learning environments shows that the Ministry is of the opinion that both groups of projects delivered concrete, directly applicable results and at the same time pointed out certain deficiencies and needs to be met for successful further development of the respective field (more about projects under point 4.2.1 of this report). Among the identified deficiencies was lack of cooperation between educational institutes and cultural institutions in training of educators, teachers and parents to be able to recognize (diagnose) speaking competence of reading literacy in children and students.

The Empowerment project was divided into 2 parts in terms of content, namely development of teaching strategies and increasing cultural and social potential. The first part was focused on the development of reading literacy strategies from the pre-school period until the end of a primary school, and on the development of models of cross-curricular approach focusing on organising learning within and across subjects in order to provide support to reading literacy when arranging and organising school work and operations. The second part of the project was aimed at developing models for appropriate treatment of specific groups of students from unfavourable respectively non-supportive family environment and at creating supportive school atmosphere and culture for all. Project results served as the basis for the implementation of several joint professional trainings and publications¹³⁷. Participating schools (42 schools) and analyses of results confirmed that the implemented activities lead to increased interest and motivation for reading and learning, improved reading techniques and thereto related reading comprehension, as well as encouraged reflection of teachers and students on their own work and learning.

¹³⁴ Analysis is made for the purpose of carrying out the operation Development and applying innovative learning environments and flexible forms of learning to foster common competences within the priority axis 10, priority investments 10.1, namely the third specific objective.

¹³⁵ Included are the following fields: reading literacy, language competencies, cultural awareness and expression, informatization of education, natural science competencies and amending secondary school programmes.

¹³⁶ The project was included into the respective operational programme as a direct confirmation of the operation.

¹³⁷ More under point 4.2.1 of this report.

The implementation of the described projects also pointed out the challenges the Slovenian school system must face in order to efficiently contribute to the increase in the level of reading literacy in Slovenian children receptively to the development thereof. It must namely create conducive and inclusive learning environment for deprived groups of students and individuals (also through individual expert support and advice) in order to approach the objective of providing equal educational possibilities to all. However, this can only be achieved through horizontally and vertically harmonised approach, as well as the implementation of a joint national strategy for the development of reading literacy, which uses the identified respectively recognised needs as a basis.

The results of the international surveys PISA 2009 and 2012, PIRLS 2011, the secondary studies on the basis of their results, as well as the experience and findings from the implemented projects all pointed out the need for a new approach towards addressing the field of reading literacy, namely of that kind that shall include all stakeholders and that shall examine respectively tackle unresolved issues comprehensively and efficiently. In February 2014, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport therefore organised an expert meeting respectively discussion on reading literacy in which experts from various fields pertaining to the development of reading literacy participated¹³⁸ (more under point 3.1 of this report).

In March 2015, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport publicly invited all stakeholders towards the joint approach to define needs in the field of reading literacy development and on the basis of the received information related to reading literacy identified where the particular attention should be placed – vulnerable groups, education for teachers and trainers who teach languages and those who teach other subjects, web sources and school libraries.

In the same way as the international studies on reading literacy also analyses of the National knowledge testing in the period from 2014 to 2018 showed that gender-based differences exist¹³⁹. Female students were more successful than male students in the literature and comprehension of literal works and non-literal works and had better descriptive capacity. Male students were more successful when writing texts individually and formulating longer answers. The most plausible reason could be found in different motivation levels for reading as well as experience with reading different texts. The issue of boys' motivation for reading is still considered a challenge, thus some authors offer solutions thereof. In order to balance the differences between genders, some authors propose setting up a diverse learning environment, namely more group activities that encourage all members of the group to cooperate and discuss, more attention to be given to learning styles of boys, creating authority without intimidation and giving advantage to learning on the basis of experience¹⁴⁰.

¹³⁸ The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport and the National Education Institute Slovenia issued a journal of expert meeting discussions which serves as a reference source and as a professional basis for the field of reading literacy, later used in the process of drawing up a proposal of the National Strategy for the Development of Reading Literacy and for designing measures and activities within the programming period 2014-2020.

¹³⁹ Annual reports on National knowledge testing for school years 2013/2014, 2014/2015, 2015/2016, 2016/2017 and 2017/2018, [URL: https://www.ric.si/preverjanje_znanja/statisticki_podatki/], 27/8/2020.

¹⁴⁰ Gurian, M.: *The Minds of Boys: Saving our Sons From Falling Behind in School and Life*, 2012; summarised according to the application for the public invitation Development and implementation of innovative learning environments and flexible forms of learning to promote common competences, applicant: National Education Institute Slovenia, project title: Reading literacy and development of the Slovenian language – OBJEM.

Results of the PISA study 2015 and 2018 also showed that in all participant countries female students performed better than male students, in the Republic of Slovenia in 2015 for 43 points and in 2018 for 42 points, thus our country falls among member states of the OECD that have the biggest difference between females and males¹⁴¹. It would be necessary to undertake further analyses to establish the reasons for the existing differences and ways to efficiently address them. Nevertheless, the indicators of gender-based differences can be appropriately used for identifying possibilities to provide for quality and equity of educational system and procedures also in the Republic of Slovenia. If motivation for reading as the most important differentiating factor is considered, a response can be offered, that is to say that additional attention should be placed on the development of reading culture in children and to show them that the most efficient tool is at their disposal, only to discover world and society, to develop their thoughts and formulate and achieve their ideas, if they perform well at reading literacy.

Recommendation

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport should prepare analytical bases for planning educational policies along with quality analyses of secondary and background elements whereby special attention should be placed on problem areas.

¹⁴¹ In the OECD countries the average difference is 30 points.

4. CARRYING OUT ACTIVITIES FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF READING LITERACY IN CHILDREN

In order to answer the audit question, *whether the activities for the development of reading literacy in children were efficient*, the Court of Audit reviewed:

- whether the activities for the development of reading literacy in children were implemented;
- were the funds for the development of reading literacy in children appropriately planned;
- was complete and professional implementation of activities ensured;
- whether the results of well performed pilot projects for the development of reading literacy in children were transferred to the educational system;
- whether the implemented activities affected the ability to understand the content and the achieved level of reading literacy in children.

4.1 Carrying out activities for the development of reading literacy in children

The key documents that present implementing framework for carrying out activities to develop reading literacy in children are national programmes for culture and national programme for language policy and action plans for their delivery. In the period covered by the audit such documents were Resolution on the 2014-2017 National Programme for Culture and Resolution on the National Programme for Language Policy 2014-2018 and Action plan for language education.

Activities for developing reading literacy in children were also implemented as projects of the European Cohesion Policy (more under points 4.1.3 and 4.2 of this report), among which the most important are the Empowerment project and Reading literacy and development of the Slovenian language – OBJEM (hereinafter referred to as: Objem), financed by the ESF. The project holder or head of the consortium of contractors was the National Education Institute Slovenia for both projects.

The following paragraphs present delivered activities for the development of reading literacy in children as apprehended on the basis of the set system of monitoring and reporting of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, the Ministry of Culture, the National Education Institute Slovenia and the Slovenian Book Agency. The Court of Audit reviewed whether the funds for the development of reading literacy in children were appropriately planned, whether the professional bases were considered, whether all key

respectively systemic conditions for development of reading literacy in children were provided¹⁴² and whether the needs of the vulnerable groups were considered.

4.1.1 National Programme for Culture 2014-2017 implementation

At the level of strategic planning and policies the activities of ReNPK 14-17 related to the development of reading literacy and reading culture are presented under point 3.1 of this report. The Ministry of Culture annually reported to the Government on the implementation of the National Programme for Culture and achievements of the objectives from the programme by reporting on the implementation of the national programme for culture and afterwards the Government reported to the National Assembly thereof.

Reports on the implementation of the National Programme for Culture 2014-2017¹⁴³ were prepared in line with Article 13 of Exercising of the Public Interest in Culture Act and follow the structure of ReNPK 14-17 that includes 26 chapters on fields of culture and arts along with objectives, measures and indicators. Presented indicators and measures in reports are related to the period from the year 2014 to the year 2017.

Figure 9 presents implementation of ReNPK 14-17 by measures, objectives and indicators that were identified as most closely related to reading literacy development in children, i.e. in the period when ReNPK 14-17 was valid (achieved values at the end of 2017).

¹⁴² Accessible pre-school education of high quality, public and free of charge primary school including school libraries and developed system of public libraries.

¹⁴³ Report on the implementation of National Programme for Culture 2014-2017 in 2014, Report on the implementation of National Programme for Culture 2014-2017 in 2015 and Report on the implementation of National Programme for Culture 2014-2017 in 2016 and 2017.

Figure 9: Implementation of ReNPK 14-17

LIBRARY SERVICES			SLOVENIAN LANGUAGE			ARTS AND CULTURAL EDUCATION		
Better accessibility of libraries for all			Strengthening linguistic competences of all speakers to raise the level of reading literacy			Strengthening and promoting reading culture		
INDICATOR	Objective	Achievement	INDICATOR	Objective	Achievement	INDICATOR	Objective	Achievement
share of registered users of public libraries	27%	23%	ranking of the Republic of Slovenia according to the PISA and PIAAC surveys	upper third of participating countries		share of participation of children/the young/families in the projects of reading culture	+ 20%	slight decrease in the number of members and borrowing
working hours of public libraries per potential user	700 s	663 s	number of surveys from the field of education	-	0	number of multiannual intersectional state projects of reading culture	to increase the number	the same
number of employed in the libraries	-	1.539	number of programmes for training of educators	-	3	number of best practice projects at the state and regional level	+ 10%	in the same frames
net area per 1,000 potential users	0.6 m ²	0.5 m ²	number of programmes for strengthening reading culture	-	65	number of local communities obtaining the title of reading-friendly city	20	17
share of state funds for the operation of public libraries	10%	7.35%				number of co-financed projects in public libraries for strengthening reading culture	5	0

Source: Report on the implementation of National Programme for Culture 2014-2017 in 2016 and 2017.

From the Report on the implementation of National Programme for Culture 2014-2017 in 2016 and 2017 it is evident that 44% of objectives from ReNPK 14-17 were not reached: one half due to lack of financial sources, but it is not quite clear what are the reasons for other derogations. Among the measures that were not fully implemented due to the lack of funds there are also measures in the field of libraries (reducing public co-financing of programmes of public institutes; link to point 4.1.4 of this report) that are closely related to the development of reading literacy.

The National council for culture¹⁴⁴ that is an independent body directing the national strategy for culture in its opinion on implementing ReNPK 14-17 particularly stressed the need to undertake an in-depth analysis of the reasons for exceptions from the set objectives in the final analysis of implementing ReNPK 14-17,

¹⁴⁴ Article 16 of Exercising of the Public Interest in Culture Act defines that president and 6 members of the council are appointed by the National Assembly upon the proposal of the Government among the persons who are publicly recognised for the period of 5 years and can be re-appointed. Funds for administrative support are provided by the Government.

namely whether the lack of political will and ambitions caused such situation. The Committee on Culture at the National Assembly discussed the Report on the implementation of National Programme for Culture 2014-2017 for 2016 and 2017 in February 2019 and in its report summarised the findings of the Report on the implementation of National Programme for Culture 2014-2017, namely the reasons for not fully implementing the measures were mainly 2: the need to adopt new or amend the legislation, as well as lack of funds.

Recommendation

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport and the Ministry of Culture should actively and timely monitor effects of implemented projects in the field of reading literacy development in children and should provide for continuous and systematic implementation of those projects that give positive results, enable reliable identification and planning of needs in the field of reading literacy development in children.

During the period when ReNPK 14-17 was valid the Exercising of the Public Interest in Culture Act¹⁴⁵ was amended. It clearly defined strategies of cultural policies and the role of the action plan for the implementation of the national programme for culture, furthermore, Exercising of the Public Interest in Culture Act prolonged the period of reporting on the implementation of the national programme. The reasons for the changes were experiences gained when implementing programmes that showed 4-year period to be too short for the delivery of key changes or major investments. Since 2018, national programmes for culture should be adopted for the period of at least 8 years, the Government should adopt 4-year action plans for their implementation where measures, objectives, scope of funds and time for their achievement are defined. The Government reports to the National Assembly on the implementation of the programme for culture every 2 years.

For the year 2018 and the period that followed, the national programme for culture was not adopted. Policy and objectives outlined in ReNPK 14-17 are implemented in line with the provisions of the Exercising of the Public Interest in Culture Act from 2016.

4.1.2 National Programme for Language Policy 2014-2018 implementation

ReNPJP 14-18 in chapter 2.1.2 Common objectives and measures defines common objectives, measures, service providers and funds that should be allocated by the holders of the objectives (and measures) for their implementation. Hereby, in ReNPJP 14-18 in chapter 1.4 Holders of activities pertaining to language policy it is defined that in ReNPJP 14-18 only the additional funds were foreseen separately that would have to be provided for the implementation of each measure, but funds for regular programmes were not included at the institutions for which the ReNPJP 14-18 planned that certain measures should be undertaken.

ReNPJP 14-18 defined the creation of 2 harmonised, independent and complete language planning national documents as a starting step of the implementation to achieve the objectives, namely Action plan for language education and Action plan of language learning equipment¹⁴⁶. Measures related to reading

¹⁴⁵ Act Amending the Exercising of the Public Interest in Culture Act (Official Gazette of the RS, No 68/16).

¹⁴⁶ [URL: http://mk.arhiv-spletisc.gov.si/fileadmin/mk.gov.si/pageuploads/Ministrstvo/Razpisi/2017/JR-ESS-Ranljive_skupine_govorcev/Akcijski_nacrt_za_jezikovno_opremljenost.pdf], 27/8/2020.

literacy and reading culture are included in the Action plan for language education adopted by the Government on 11 March 2015, however, in order to monitor the implementation of the language policy and thus action plans the Government on 19 March 2014 established the Interdepartmental Working Group (link to point 3.2 of this report). The group consists of representatives of those bodies from the executive branch and holders of public authorities whose activities are most closely connected to language policy issues.

In the period from 2014 to 2018, the Interdepartmental Working Group annually prepared structured reports on the effectiveness of the implementation of the National Programme for Language Policy 2014-2018 where both action plans were considered and joint reports on how to improve implementation of the ReNPJP 14-18 objectives were proposed. Reports on effectiveness of the implementation of the National Programme for Language Policy 2014-2018 were first discussed and approved by the Government as a responsible body for the implementation of the ReNPJP 14-18 and later submitted to the National Assembly almost half a year after the year the report was related to¹⁴⁷.

Figure 10 shows the implementation of ReNPJP 14-18 by indicators.

¹⁴⁷ The Government adopted the reports for 2014 on 24/6/2015, for 2015 on 7/7/2016, for 2016 on 8/6/2017, for 2017 on 14/6/2018, and for 2018 on 27/6/2019.

Figure 10: Implementation of ReNPK 14-18 by indicators

Slovenian as the first language	Slovenian as the second and foreign language	Language of minorities and migrants
Developing language competence of speakers	Developing language competence in the Slovenian language	Strengthening language competence of speakers
evaluation of teaching plans, materials, classes and external examination of the Slovenian language	monitoring and evaluation of classes of the Slovenian language for students and migrant students	encouraging libraries to include library material in the languages of migrants
change of teaching plans on the basis of surveys, evaluations and analyses	Systemic classification of teaching the Slovenian language as the second language in kindergarten, primary and secondary school	Promoting multilingualism
systemic measures for the quality of teaching of the Slovenian language	defining the scope, forms and norms of teaching the Slovenian language (as the second language in Slovenia)	promoting learning languages of migrants as optional subjects
informing and educating teachers	defining competences of teachers of the Slovenian language (as the second language)	
	raising awareness of the process of learning the Slovenian language (as the second language) and the role within schooling	
	training of teachers for the efficient work with children, speakers of the Slovenian language (as the second language)	
	preparation of teaching materials	

 OBJECTIVES
  ACTIVITIES
  completely
  partially
  not implemented

Source: ReNPK 14-18.

Reports on effectiveness of the implementation of the National Programme for Language Policy 2014-2018 follow the structure of ReNPJP 14-18 and include the presentation of all measures of holders of individual objectives as defined in the Resolution along with the presentation of each measure and short description of the implementation and the amount of used funds and the assessment of the effectiveness of the objectives in cases the activities were not part of the regular activities of the respective body. Recommendations of the Government are a part of the report and were proposed to holders of individual objectives as defined in the ReNPJP 14-18. Reports on effectiveness of the implementation of the National Programme for Language Policy 2014-2018 for all years (2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018) found out the same weaknesses, and also recommendations remained the same in content through the years showing that the situation did not change a lot.

Recommendations that were adopted by the Government on the basis of the reports on the implementation were:

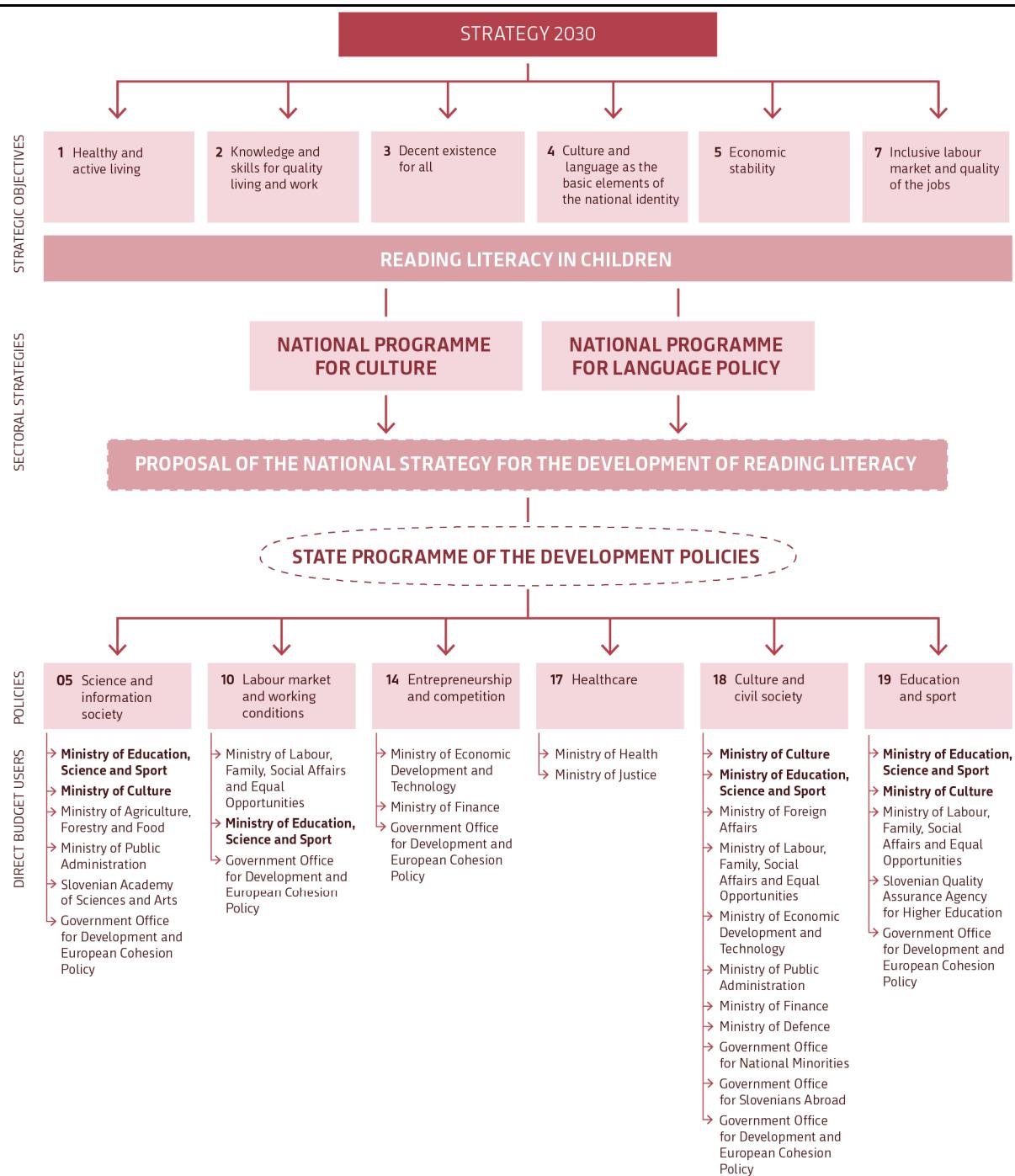
- all responsible ministries and other bodies should pay more attention to the content and finances of the language policy and implementation of the objectives;
- financial sources should be increased for activities in the field of language learning equipment, whereby special attention should be placed on the development of the Slovenian language in the digital environment, apart from the content the stress is on the coordinated action of ministries and governmental bodies (development of the linguistic sources and technologies; open access to information and data developed by public funds);
- continuously taking care of the preservation and development of the Slovenian language in the public, mainly in public administration, focusing on the use of formal language and on excellence as well as quality of all types of texts in the field of public administration;
- public servants should be encouraged and informed about multicultural aspects of language policy (minorities, migrants, vulnerable groups, language courses);
- organising periodic evaluation working meetings at the level of state secretaries and directors of governmental bodies.

The period of the validity of the documents expired in 2018, by the end of the period covered by the audit new documents were not adopted. The Government in December 2019, i.e. after the period covered by the audit, adopted the National Strategy for the Development of Reading Literacy 2019-2030 (more under point 3.1 of this report).

4.1.3 Financing the development of reading literacy in children

Available financial funds and systemic assurance of financing are key elements for the implementation of policies or programme and usually the key factor identifying which planned activities shall be carried out. When developing reading literacy, it is necessary to consider scientific knowledge and developments that stress multidimensionality and multidisciplinarity of reading literacy (more under point 1.1 of this report), namely its recognised horizontal nature that is reflected in the integration and interplay of substantive issues and also in financing the activities (Figure 11).

Figure 11: Relations between the development of reading literacy, the Strategy 2030 and budget planning in 2018



Sources: Strategies, Public Finance Act¹⁴⁸ and explanation of policies for the adopted budget of the Republic of Slovenia for 2018.

¹⁴⁸ Official Gazette of the RS, Nos 11/11 – official consolidated text, 14/13 – corr., 101/13, 55/15 – ZFisP, 96/15 – ZIPRS1617, 13/18.

Figure 11 shows that the development of reading literacy in children in 2018 was fostered by 6 policies and 16 direct budget users who realised their financial plans and work programmes. The audit reviewed activities of the 2 most important, namely the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport and the Ministry of Culture.

In the period covered by the audit, the scope of the available and earmarked funds changed and the auditees were affected by the altering of the scope of funds, i.e. when providing their activities. Those were implemented in smaller scope than planned or were not implemented at all, even though the planning documents foresaw that best practice from pilot projects need to be included among permanent activities. Therefore, the need to thoroughly reconsider language policy related to financing of planned activities for the development of reading literacy in children in future should be met by the policy developers.

The following paragraphs present the assessment of the funds that were used in the period from 2014 to 2018 for the activities related to the development of reading literacy in children within the financial plan of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport and the Ministry of Culture. Their impact is illustrated (by providing explanations of the auditees) by presenting how the available scope of funds affected the realisation of objectives in the field of the development of reading literacy.

Ministry of Education, Science and Sport

Within the financial plan of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, the activities that were foreseen for the development of the reading literacy in children were in the period covered by the audit financed within the policy *19 Education and Sport* and sub-programmes *190201 Implementing pre-school education, 190202 Increasing the number of children included in the pre-school education, 190301 Implementing primary school programmes*. Table 1 presents activities of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport planned for the development of reading literacy in children and the assessed scope of funds.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport failed to define specific activities or sub-programme where only financing of activities foreseen for the development of reading literacy in children would be included. Thus, it is not possible to define for those activities how much funds were allocated for them, since the explanations of the financial plans and reports did not include those data. Furthermore, other explanations, information and clarifications are missing. Activities for the development of reading literacy in children are of highly horizontal nature. Therefore, only the assessment of the amount of the financial funds of the state budget is presented, which the Court of Audit prepared together with the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, i.e. funds for activities related to the development of reading literacy in children. The assessment (Table 1) does not include supporting activities, maintenance and investments that indirectly attribute to the development of reading literacy in children. The exception is a measure of free of charge kindergarten, whereby the funds in Table 1 include all costs of the measure, since the measure was extremely important for the development of emerging or early literacy in children included in kindergarten.

Table 1: Activities of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport and the assessment of financial funds foreseen for the development of reading literacy in children in the period from 2014 to 2018.

Activity/year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Kindergartens – computer literacy and informatics	11,505	144,996	107,869	102,649	10,716
Development and professional work for kindergartens	30,104	21,452	19,876	23,506	23,521
Free of charge kindergarten	16,927,852	15,412,603	15,275,368	15,341,099	16,048,849
National Education Institute Slovenia	6,227,772	6,127,041	6,577,493	6,792,745	6,847,662
School libraries ¹⁾	-	-	108,155	162,467	162,467
TOTAL	23,197,233	21,706,092	22,088,761	22,422,466	23,093,215

Note: ¹⁾ Attachment 2: Action plan for the implementation of the Librarianship Act – financial structure.

Source: data of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport.

Explanation of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport

Table 1 includes financial data on personnel support, computer literacy and informatics, assessment of the development of school libraries related to financing of public libraries (amendment of the Librarianship Act).

Within the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport some important development projects from the field of reading literacy in children were implemented by using ESF funds. For those projects, the Court of Audit established that the assessment measures were in line with the criteria in the strategic documents. They are presented in Table 2 along with the amount of financial funds.

Table 2: Development projects of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport co-financed by the ESF

Development project	Service provider/holder	Period	Amount of funds in EUR
Project Objem	National Education Institute Slovenia	2014-2020	2,550,000 ¹⁾
Together for knowledge – Implementing activities of supportive mechanisms for obtaining knowledge for the Roma society	Centre of school and extra-curricular activities	2017-2020	6,557,566 ²⁾

Notes: ¹⁾ Planned funds.

²⁾ Value of the project.

Source: data of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport.

Project Objem (more under point 4.2.1 of this report) upgrades some best practices of the previous development project Empowerment (more under point 4.2.1 of this report) and is intended for the general population of children. Project was applied for public invitation for the ESF funds on 4 November 2016, namely the project was at the beginning of its implementation at the end of the period covered by the audit.

In the period covered by the audit, also the measures for the Roma were financed from the ESF that followed the objectives of several fields, namely on the basis of the National programme of measures of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for the Roma minority for the period 2017-2021¹⁴⁹. In the field of education and schooling the following was planned: to improve the educational structure of the Roma, to improve the attendance of the Roma children in the programmes of pre-school education and primary school. As a measure to achieve the objectives in the field of education and schooling of the Roma children the following was defined: the Roma assistants in primary school libraries that can have an indirect impact on reading literacy in children (projects Effective inclusion of the Roma in education and schooling II and Together towards knowledge¹⁵⁰). The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport could not provide an assessment what was the share of funds allocated for the development of reading literacy in the Roma children.

Ministry of Culture

Activities in the field of reading literacy in children were in the period covered by the audit in the financial plan of the Ministry of Culture financed within the policy *18 Culture and civil society* and sub-programmes *180201 Protection of cultural heritage, archives and libraries, 180301 Cultural activities of minorities, 180304 Publishing activities, 180305 Promotion and development of the Slovenian language and 180308 Art programmes*. Table 3 shows activities which were considered by the Ministry of Culture to develop reading literacy in children in the period covered by the audit. The amount of the funds as presented in Table 3 was assessed together with the Ministry of Culture based on the same reasons as at the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport.

¹⁴⁹ [URL: https://www.gov.si/assets/vladne-sluzbe/UN/Dokumenti-Romi/65d892da3a/NPUR_2017_2021.pdf], 27/8/2020.

¹⁵⁰ [URL: <http://skupajdoznanja.si/romski-pomocniki/>], 27/8/2020.

Table 3: The assessed scope of the financial funds from the financial plan of the Ministry of Culture that was in the period from 2014 to 2018 earmarked for the implementation of the activities that affect reading literacy in children

Activity/year	in EUR				
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Activities of public libraries	2,822,045	3,187,954	3,106,617	3,106,641	3,106,640
Cultural activities of minorities	31,900	34,100	34,200	34,991	41,000
Slovenian Book Agency (publishing, network of bookshops, reading culture)	4,460,917	4,588,322	4,762,692	4,790,897	5,058,087
Promotion and development of the Slovenian language	8,000	13,118	18,768	18,768	18,768
Implementing the National Programme for Language Policy	/	11,500	28,020	28,020	49,520
Digitalisation	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	/
Project Cultural bazaar ¹⁾	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000
TOTAL	7,330,862	7,842,994	7,958,297	7,987,317	8,277,015

Note: ¹⁾ By 2016, project Cultural education.

Source: data of the Ministry of Culture.

Table 3 shows that the Ministry of Culture co-finances activities of public libraries, cultural activities of minorities, bookshop network, promotion and development of the Slovenian language, implementation of the national programme for language policy, and digitalisation and education in the field of culture. The Ministry of Culture allocated most of funds within the activities related to the development of reading literacy for the co-financing of activities of the Slovenian Book Agency (reading culture, bookshop network, publishing), public libraries, co-financing activities of developing national programme for language policy and cultural activities of minorities.

Explanation of the Slovenian Book Agency

The Slovenian Book Agency explained that Table 3 presents data for the whole budget of the Slovenian Book Agency that includes also other areas of transfers and programme and material costs, not only reading literacy. In accordance with the assessment of the Slovenian Book Agency, the following data are relevant:

Activity/year	in EUR				
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Slovenian Book Agency (publishing, network of bookshops, reading culture)	321,090	333,200	340,000	339,500	330,800

The Ministry of Culture within the financing of the activities of the public libraries allocates funds for library material, thus co-finances operations of the public libraries. The Ministry of Culture in the field of libraries does not co-finance projects of reading culture. It contributes towards reading literacy and reading culture in children indirectly: by co-financing of purchasing library material¹⁵¹ and by supporting various actions and activities (i.e. Reading friendly municipality)¹⁵². Public libraries whose operations fall under the authority of municipalities are important element for the development of reading literacy, family literacy and also reading literacy in children.

To develop reading literacy in children also other projects within sub-programmes were carried out: *180305 Promotion and development of the Slovenian language* and *180301 Cultural activities of minorities*, as listed in the Attachment 1.

Explanation of the Ministry of Culture

In 2018, on the initiative of the Reading society of Slovenia, Reading badge of Slovenia – Slovenian Association of Friends of Youth, the Slovenian Library Association, Kranj City Library, the Association of public libraries and Maribor Library the action called the National month of joint reading 2018 started. The Ministry of Culture approached towards the activity in 2018 as a partner and supporter, in 2018, the Slovenian Book Agency supported the campaign Reading together (organised by the association Reading badge of Slovenia – Slovenian Association of Friends of Youth in cooperation with partners) that was carried out within the action National month of joint reading 2018 and lasted till the end of 2018. In 2019, after the period covered by the audit, the Ministry of Culture supported the action National month of joint reading 2019 by funds earmarked at the budget item Unexpected action in the amount of EUR 15,000 (Slovenian Book Agency and Ministry of Culture did not publish public invitations in 2019 where all service providers could present the projects; organised by the association Reading badge of Slovenia – Slovenian Association of Friends of Youth in cooperation with partners).

Within the financial plan of the Ministry of Culture and sub-programme *180305 Promotion and development of the Slovenian language*, the European Union co-financed (through the ESF) some of the development projects in the field of the development of reading literacy in children in the period covered by the audit. They are presented in Table 4.

¹⁵¹ To develop reading literacy it is important to acquire appropriate scope of and selection of library material in public libraries. Public libraries have developed policy of managing library collections according to the needs of citizens of local communities and available sources of information. Share of the library materials for pre-school children, school children and youngsters of the library collection in a public library is on average 30%. A library considers a share of those groups among the population and priorities of the library roles, where appropriate. According to the above, a share of funds intended for purchasing library material could be considered as an indirect impact on reading literacy, but it is not possible to define what is the share of funds used for financing the purchase of library material that affects the increase in reading literacy in children.

¹⁵² Librarianship Act defines that public libraries organise specific activities for children, the young and adults that promote reading culture.

Table 4: Development projects in the field of the development of reading literacy in children

Development project	Service provider/holder	Period	Amount of funds in EUR
The Slovenian language at hand	University of Maribor	2017-2021	1,046,805
Web portal Franček, Linguistic consultancy for teachers of the Slovenian language and School dictionary of the Slovenian language	The Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, the Fran Ramovš Institute of the Slovenian Language	2017-2021	880,000
It is easy to read: development of basics, methods, didactic and other tools for easy reading in Slovenia	Institute Risa, Centre for common, functional and cultural literacy	2017-2019	210,342

Source: data of the Ministry of Culture.

An important financial source for the implementation of the activities in the field of reading literacy in children are also municipalities. Most of the activities that contribute to the development of reading culture and of reading literacy in children are financed within the sub-programmes *18039001 Libraries and publishing*, *18049003 Support to national minorities*, *18049004 Programmes of other specific groups*, *18059002 Programmes for the young*, *19029001 Kindergartens*, *19039001 Primary schools*, *19039002 Public music schools*, *19039004 Support services in primary and secondary education* (and other¹⁵³). The amount of funds allocated by the municipalities for the development of reading literacy in children was not assessed by the audit. An approximate amount of funds allocated by the municipalities for the purchase of library material in public libraries according to the data of the Public libraries association and the Ministry of Culture is presented under point 4.1.4 of this report.

4.1.4 System of public and school libraries

The Slovenian Library Association is a professional organisation and has in its publication on the development of libraries and librarianship presented the significance and the role of all types of libraries for the citizens of the Republic of Slovenia: "With the ambition to develop knowledge and skills of the citizens of the Republic of Slovenia perceived as the most important national wealth and potential the libraries should provide to all equal possibilities to access publications and information on various media and meet their cultural, information, education, research, communication and social needs. Therefore, they should enable personal development of each individual regardless their financial, intellectual and other capabilities or needs. Libraries as cultural centres should also in the future promote reading culture and lifelong literacy of the citizens. As specialised information centres they should develop their own information services and materials, as social centres they should enable the users social contacts and exchange of opinions and experience."¹⁵⁴

¹⁵³ Science and technology, Digitalisation and similar.

¹⁵⁴ [URL: <http://www.zbds-zveza.si/?q=node/3/30>], 27/8/2020.

In the Republic of Slovenia, the system of libraries is combined of national library, public libraries, school libraries, university and specialised libraries¹⁵⁵. In the continuation of the report only 2 types of libraries shall be presented: public and school libraries that according to the opinion of the Court of Audit have most direct impact on the provision of the conditions for the development of reading capacities of children and development of reading literacy. The assessment of the organisation and operation of the libraries and library system is not the subject of the audit.

4.1.4.1 Public libraries

On the basis of the Librarianship Act, public libraries carry out library activities as a public service that include: collecting, processing, keeping and providing library material; enabling access to library material and electronic publications; developing library catalogues, data collections and other information sources; providing bibliographic and other information items and services; cooperating in interlibrary borrowing and exchange of information; attracting and educating users; information literacy; protection of library material that is a cultural monument and providing other library and documentary and information work¹⁵⁶. The purpose of the libraries is defined by Article 6 of Librarianship Act, namely a library should in line with the professional principles organise a collection of library materials and sources of information in order to provide individuals and groups of people access and use of their material and information, interlibrary borrowing and externally available information sources. The minimal conditions or standards that must be met by all types of libraries that provide public service are defined by the Rules on conditions for providing library services as a public service¹⁵⁷.

Public libraries standards

In line with Article 11 of Librarianship Act, the development of libraries is directed by standards that represent the optimal objectives to be met by the libraries in a certain period, as well as professional recommendations adopted by the National council of library services. In the period covered by the audit the Standards for public libraries 2005-2017¹⁵⁸ (hereinafter referred to as: Standards 2005) and Professional recommendations and standards for public libraries for the period 2018-2029¹⁵⁹ (hereinafter referred to as: Standards 2018) were valid.

In the Standards 2005, the purpose of the public libraries is defined as informing and meeting the needs for education, culture, entertainment and developing reading literacy¹⁶⁰. The Standards 2005 stressed the basic areas for the creation of the system of public libraries (appropriateness of the development of a library network, building library collection, planning library spaces and equipment, personnel and assessments of the public libraries' operations). They stressed also the meaning of stable progress and harmonised development of all working conditions and quantitative indicators for planning, financing and monitoring of public libraries' operations.

¹⁵⁵ Article 7 of Librarianship Act.

¹⁵⁶ Articles 2 and 16 of Librarianship Act.

¹⁵⁷ Official Gazette of the RS, Nos 73/03, 70/08, 80/12.

¹⁵⁸ [URL: http://nsk-slo.si/images/uploads/02_6_gradivo_standardi_splosne_knjiznice_sprejeti.pdf], 27/8/2020.

¹⁵⁹ [URL: <https://www.gov.si/assets/ministrstva/MK/Zakonodaja-ki-ni-na-PISRS/Kulturna-dediscina/2ffbd52377/Strokovna-priporocila-in-standardi-za-splosne-knjiznice.pdf>], 27/8/2020.

¹⁶⁰ Indicators of public libraries operation refer to the conditions respectively sources for their operation (i.e. space, library collection, personnel) and the use of the library (i.e. indicators of membership, visits and borrowing).

The basis of the Standards 2018 is the mission of the public libraries that promotes the values of development, being informed, education and cultural and social inclusion, as well as social integration (reducing the differences, intercultural connection and the like). Public libraries as the holders of programmes of public service affect the quality of lives of individuals as well as local communities by providing library material and services. They provide the development of the knowledge, culture, spreading democratic decision-making, promote visiting libraries and recognising different literacies and social tolerance. The Standards 2018 define the following roles of a library:

- development of pre-reading literacy;
- reading culture and literacy in children;
- reading culture and literacy in youngsters;
- reading culture and literacy in adults;
- obtaining knowledge;
- information and computer literacy;
- social inclusion;
- knowledge of the national history and traditions;
- information centre of local community;
- informing about public affairs and monitoring current affairs in the society;
- promoting integration and culture of cooperation, as well as creativity in the local community.

In 2018, the Working group for the development of professional recommendations for public libraries at the National council of library services in cooperation with the National and University Library and the Ministry of Culture prepared a survey Achieving developmental guides of the Standards for the public libraries valid in the period 2005-2017¹⁶¹ (hereinafter referred to as: survey on achieving development guides) where it assessed the achievement of the development guides and standards 2005¹⁶².

In the following paragraphs short summaries from the survey on achieving development guides and standards that were assessed as very important for the development of reading literacy in children are presented.

4.1.4.1.1 Geographic accessibility

The survey on achieving development guides showed that public libraries in 11-year period improved the space and geographic accessibility that is at high level, nevertheless the objective was not fully achieved. Among 212 Slovenian municipalities 167 of them have one or more public libraries, 37 municipalities provide library services by library buses or stations of movable collections. 8 municipalities¹⁶³ failed to

¹⁶¹ [URL: <https://cezar.nuk.uni-lj.si/common/files/studije/raziskava-doseganje-standardov-splosne-knjiznice-2005-2017.pdf>], 27/8/2020.

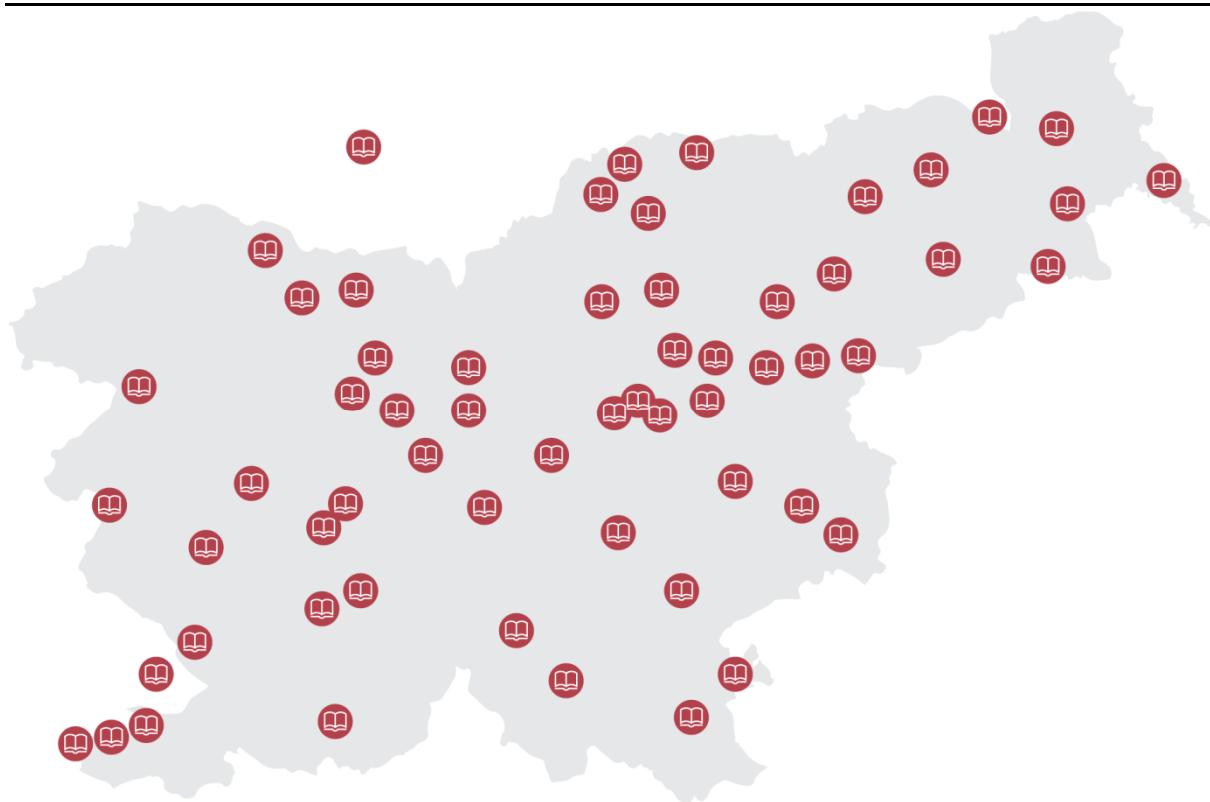
¹⁶² It is necessary to take into account that the review of the achieving the professional standards for the period from 2005 to 2017 is a specific analysis that partly illustrates activities of public libraries to develop reading literacy in children.

¹⁶³ Municipalities of Benedikt and Sveti Jurij v Slovenskih Goricah (belong to Library of Lenart); Municipalities of Križevci and Veržej (belong to Library of Ljutomer); Municipality of Log - Dragomer (belongs to Library of Vrhnika); Municipalities of Radenci and Sveti Jurij ob Ščavnici (belong to Library Gornja Radgona) and Municipality of Velika Polana.

provide their citizens library services, namely 1.09% of population did not have access neither to a library, station of movable collection nor a library bus. In those municipalities until the end of the period covered by the audit there was no general educational library services provided, even though it belongs among the tasks that must be provided by the municipalities in accordance with Article 21 of Local self-government Act. In case the municipality fails to provide library services, they should in line with Article 20 of Librarianship Act be provided by the State.

Figure 12 shows the network of public libraries in the Republic of Slovenia, Republic of Italy and Republic of Austria.

Figure 12: Network of public libraries



Source: data of the National and University Library, Centre for the development of libraries¹⁶⁴.

The survey on the space/geographic accessibility of public libraries that was carried out in 2015 by the Urban planning institute of the Republic of Slovenia¹⁶⁵ assessed the accessibility in 2 ways. The assessment showed that between 72% and 87% of the population is 4 kilometres¹⁶⁶ away from local library, station of

¹⁶⁴ [URL: <http://cezar.nuk.uni-lj.si/statistika/>], 27/8/2020.

¹⁶⁵ Study of the spatial simulation of the network of public libraries, [URL: https://cezar.nuk.uni-lj.si/common/files/studije/studija_prostorske_simulacije_mreze_splosnih_knjiznic.pdf], 27/8/2020.

¹⁶⁶ Standards 2005 foresee that the library sets up a local library in the centre of the catchment area of above 1,500 citizens if the centre of the catchment area lies more than 4 kilometres away from the closest library unit.

library bus, or movable collection located in the area. Review of the distances between the settlements and local libraries presents a poor picture, mainly in the Valley of Kolpa, where the citizens can visit the closest library that is 10 kilometres away in some cases even 20 kilometres away. In this area children can visit school libraries. The accessibility of libraries is further limited by too short or inappropriate working hours of some libraries.¹⁶⁷ Libraries covering smaller catchment areas are open shorter time, causing an obstacle to implementing the mission of libraries.

4.1.4.1.2 Library collection and access to the material

In line with the Standards 2005, a library collection should include various materials in different forms and in the appropriate number in order to satisfy the needs of the local community¹⁶⁸. Article 12 of Rules on conditions for providing library services as a public service defines that public libraries in selecting material should consider the needs of adults, the young and children. A library must dedicate to children and the young 30% of titles in the frame of annual growth if the material is available on the market. The Standards 2005 define this share between 25% and 30%.

The survey on achieving development guides found out that public libraries mainly achieved criteria related to the scope of the library collection. Nevertheless, poor conditions exist in relation to periodical publications and non-book material. The level of growth of the library material in the last years deteriorates compared to when the standards were introduced.

98% of local libraries and all library buses had library material for children and the youth, 5 local libraries (2% of all libraries) lacked library material for children and the young.

The survey on achieving development guides showed that provisions of Standards 2005 on the share of titles for children and the young that should be between 25% and 30% was reached by 10% of libraries (22 libraries out of 225). In local libraries the share of titles for children and the young was as a rule larger (in 75% of local libraries) while in 15% of libraries the share was smaller. The standard on the relationship between the number of expert literature and fiction for the youth (60:40) was met by 9% of all libraries. In 90% of local libraries the share of fiction exceeded 40%. In 74% of local libraries the share of fiction was higher than 40%, in 17% of local libraries the share was lower.

4.1.4.1.3 Libraries equipped with computers

The Standards 2005 defined one personal computer for users (user point) per 1,000 citizens. In 2016, there was in total 0.69 personal computer per 1,000 citizens¹⁶⁹ in public libraries. Only the largest public libraries were quite well equipped with computers.

¹⁶⁷ Survey on achieving development guides.

¹⁶⁸ Standards 2005 define material that should be included in the library collection considering the type (book, serial publications and non-book material), purpose (adults, the youth, referential collection, language group, individuals with special needs, specific collection) and content (expert literature and fiction). They define criteria for smallest scope of material, compilation of collection and scope of growth, as well as write-off.

¹⁶⁹ Data of Mediana: 0.75 computer per 1,000 citizens, the minimum was 0.25 and maximum was 1.52 computer per 1,000 citizens.

4.1.4.1.4 Working conditions

The survey on achieving development guides found out that in 53% of buildings where libraries are located and operate, heating, air-conditioning and lighting are provided at the appropriate level, but almost half of the buildings did not meet the criteria. Such a share of buildings lacking appropriate working conditions is worrying, mainly considering poor geographic accessibility of some of the libraries in some areas.

4.1.4.1.5 Facilities for training and education

According to the survey on achieving development guides the facilities for training and education were provided by 27% of public libraries (54 out of 198 buildings). Bigger libraries had such facilities, since the share of libraries with those types of spaces among the libraries with catchment areas from 1,500 to 3,000 citizens represented only 16%, while the share of libraries with catchment area above 10,000 citizens represented 44%.

As evidenced by available data every public library per year organises approximately 40 cultural, educational and informational events at a library borrowing terminal; on average 35 visitors attend an event. The data of the Association of public libraries show that 65% of events provide for the development of reading culture¹⁷⁰. If the data is considered, the events organised by public libraries in the period from 2014 to 2018 attracted on average 248,430 visits per year.

It is interesting that libraries were better equipped for organising events than with spaces for training and education, since the facilities for organising events were in 44% of libraries (88 of 198 buildings). Similar findings were reached by the Working group of the Association of public libraries that developed Evaluation of the Strategy of the development of the Slovenian public libraries 2013-2020¹⁷¹, where it stated that the biggest risk of the public libraries is represented by events as services, since local environments perceive libraries as their manifestation areas where local communities can promote all types of events and cultural heritage by the assistance of the libraries.

4.1.4.1.6 Evaluation

In accordance with the Standards 2005, the library had to establish and analyse the needs and expectations of the whole community and plan and define services in line with the results of the research and by collecting information on local community. The survey on achieving development guides disclosed that in the period from 2015 to 2018 only smaller part of the public libraries (19%) undertook an analysis of the needs for education, research, culture and entertainment as well as development of literacy in the local community, showing that the majority of libraries failed to systematically approach to determining the needs of the local community.

¹⁷⁰ For example: Expert Wednesdays in Ljubljana City Library, trainings by the Slovenian Library Association, trainings and events organised by Maribor Library (i.e. Centre for promoting reading literacy, information literacy of pre-school children and primary school children) and Kranj City Library.

¹⁷¹ Point 4.1.4.1.7.

4.1.4.1.7 Strategy of the development of the Slovenian public libraries 2013-2020

In 2013, the Association of public libraries adopted the Strategy of the development of the Slovenian public libraries 2013-2020¹⁷² (hereinafter referred to as: strategy of public libraries) whereby it tried to outline a new mission of the public libraries in the period from 2013 to 2020 on the basis of the identified social changes and issues¹⁷³. The strategy of public libraries includes objectives and measures in 4 strategic areas, namely:

- organisation, operation and network of public libraries;
- development of the existing and creating new services;
- acquiring new knowledge necessary for the future operations;
- library as active element in the environment – possibilities for cooperation, partnerships and promotion of public libraries.

Working group of the Association of public libraries prepared Evaluation of the Strategy of the development of the Slovenian public libraries 2013-2020 where it presented such a poor situation in the relations between public libraries and local communities which could cause a threat that public library network could collapse. Funds allocated by the municipalities were reduced at all levels of the operations of public libraries – library material, costs of operations and programming costs¹⁷⁴.

Recommendation

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport and the Ministry of Culture should approach towards the development of public and school libraries in a systemic and inclusive way, namely to cooperate with the local communities, national associations and school headmasters.

The Ministry of Culture should implement (educational and promotional) activities to improve knowledge about the significance of the public libraries.

Table 5 presents funds for the purchase of library material in public libraries in the period from 2007 to 2018.

¹⁷² [URL: https://www.knjiznice.si/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/ZSK_e-katalog_SLO-1.pdf], 27/8/2020.

¹⁷³ Association of public libraries: The Basis for the Strategy of the development of the Slovenian public libraries 2013-2020, 2012.

¹⁷⁴ If the municipality fails to finance the operations of libraries, there are no sanctions foreseen.

Table 5: The funds for the purchase of library material in public libraries in the period from 2007 to 2018
in EUR

Year	Local communities ¹⁾	Ministry of Culture	Total ²⁾	Index – total
2007	4,362,273	3,292,265	8,522,813 ¹⁾	1.00
2008	4,717,957	3,195,320	8,675,426	1.02
2009	4,662,888	3,062,040	8,697,839	1.02
2010	4,798,311	3,012,219	8,574,584	1.01
2011	4,687,674	3,006,417	8,521,817	1.00
2012	4,529,633	2,291,416	7,590,894	0.89
2013	4,418,882	2,303,299	7,586,917	0.89
2014	4,500,869	1,550,000	6,946,318	0.82
2015	4,341,891	1,670,000	6,764,600	0.79
2016	4,272,304	1,741,620	6,770,751	0.79
2017	4,488,958	1,779,590	6,893,567	0.81
2018	4,457,493	1,770,000	6,922,601	0.81

Notes: ¹⁾ Data from the reports of public libraries on purchase of library material.

²⁾ The amount is a joint calculation of all sources of financing: funds of the Ministry of Culture and local communities and funds from other sources (i.e. payments by users for public services, sale of material and services).

Source: data of the Association of public libraries and the Ministry of Culture.

From Table 5 it is evident that the available funds for the purchase of library material from 2012 were reduced. Funds of the Ministry of Culture for the purchase of library material decreased by 30% in 2012 compared to 2007; in 2014 they more than halved compared to 2007. In the years 2017 and 2018, the funds of the Ministry of Culture were increased, but were far from reaching the level from the year 2007. The Republic of Slovenia provided 39% of all funds for the purchase of library material in 2007, while in 2018 it provided only 25.8%.

As the major problem in the relation between the state (the Ministry of Culture) and public libraries is perceived by the Working group of the Association of public libraries in the fact that the legislation did not define shares of co-financing of library material, thus the responsibility of the State is not clearly defined. In the period from 2008 to 2015, the funds allocated by the Ministry of Culture for public libraries had halved, nevertheless the libraries are expected to maintain, develop and keep library services and library network as defined by legislation.

Recommendation

The Ministry of Culture should provide for the necessary substantive and financial support to public libraries in order to enable at least the existing level of public library services.

Systematic evaluations of public libraries operations and their cultural, economic and social effects and impacts of their programmes on the citizens as foreseen by Standards 2005 and Standards 2015 are not carried out¹⁷⁵.

Recommendation

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport and the Ministry of Culture should provide for continuous and systematic observation of cultural, economic and social effects and impacts that (public and school) libraries have on the environment and reading literacy in children and should consider them in the future planning.

4.1.4.2 School libraries

For the development of reading literacy in children the systemic conditions are crucial, besides providing common conditions (accessible pre-school education of high quality, public and free of charge primary school with school library and developed system of public libraries), which means that the development of reading literacy in children is incorporated in the educational and schooling system that strives towards the reduction of the differences among children in their access to material and also offers necessary professional support.

In the Republic of Slovenia, a school library is part of the educational and schooling institution and all students are included. The activities of the school library are implemented in the form of a course at certain subjects or are carried out in the library as mandatory part of the learning process. In the school year 2017/2018, there were registered 821 library borrowing terminals at school libraries¹⁷⁶ with 189,601 potential users within primary schools and primary schools with adapted programmes. In the same year, public libraries recorded 148,825 members in the age from 0 to fulfilled 14 years. The data show the importance of the school libraries in the development of reading literacy, since children can access those libraries regardless their social status, education of parents or place of living.

School libraries are financed from different sources (state budget, European funds, municipal budgets), but the state budget remains the most important source. School libraries do not have a specific budget item, their activities are as supporting services included in all budget items providing funds from the state budget for various types of education and schooling (primary schools, secondary schools, student housing, public music schools, institutions for children and the young with special needs). The weakness of the approach is mainly in the lack of transparency of the financing and decision-making linked to financing, since it is not possible to define how much funds were actually allocated for the implantation of the activities of school libraries.

School libraries are considered supporting activities performed by a school librarian who is a school professional in close cooperation with the teachers and other professionals of the school. Those activities are considered the activities interlinked with the class courses and other forms of education and schooling (activity days, extra curriculum activities, and other forms) where the school librarian carries out librarian

¹⁷⁵ Within the principle of excellence in the field of planning.

¹⁷⁶ Source: data of the National and University Library, Centre for the development of libraries,

[URL: http://cezar.nuk.uni-lj.si/common/files/statistika/2017_2018_SOL_knjiznice_v_stevilkah.xlsx], 27/8/2020.

and pedagogic tasks, implements specific objectives of the librarian and information skills and contributes to information literacy and reading literacy in students.

Table 6 shows data on the average costs for the operation of a school library per primary school in the school year 2017/2018.

Table 6: Average costs for the operation of a school library per primary school in the school year 2017/2018

Type of cost	Average cost per primary school in EUR
Labour costs	27,114
Costs of school library operations	3,592
Investment costs	2,180
Expenditure for purchase of material	4,379
Expenditure for purchase of electronic sources	416
Expenditure for education of the employees	159
Total	37,840

Source: data of the National and University Library, Centre for the development of libraries¹⁷⁷.

The report on the achievements of Slovenian children from PIRLS survey 2011 shows that there were differences between children according to the access to sources of reading and learning at home, nevertheless all Slovenian schools included in the survey regardless their differences, achieved approximately the same average. Comparison of the shares that are presented in the difference of the average achievements among schools as the differences in the achievements of students, is in the international surveys used for establishing actual equality in educational process. The smaller the share of the difference among students in the difference among schools, the more equal is the educational process. For the Republic of Slovenia this share was smaller as presented by the PIRLS 2011 survey, thus relative equality in educational process can be found.

Explanation of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport

Considering the statistic measures of school libraries, currently it is not possible to talk about equal access to material, since there are differences in the size of the library collections as well as in the annual growth.

In the school year 2017/2018, school libraries kept more than 5.7 million units of material, they received more than 150,000 units anew, they wrote off more than 325,000 units of inappropriate, old or damaged material. The average collection of books in primary school library consisted of 13,070 units, the average growth was 381 units. The scope of the library collection and the annual growth are defined by the Rules on conditions for providing library services as a public service. Implementation of the conditions defined by the Rules on conditions for providing library services as a public service

¹⁷⁷ [URL: https://cezar.nuk.uni-lj.si/common/files/studije/solske_knjiznice2017-18.pdf], 27/8/2020.

was calculated for the school year 2015/2016¹⁷⁸. While school libraries as a rule achieved and exceeded the number of units in the collection, the prescribed minimal growth of material was reached by less than one fifth of primary school libraries. Library collection in line with the Rules on conditions for providing library services as a public service was upgraded by at least 1 book per student and 5 books per professional employee of the school and at least 1 title of serial publication annually by only 78 (18%) of 429 school libraries that submitted the data. The best performance was presented by the primary school libraries in the area of Nova Gorica where the norm was reached by 27% of libraries (7 of 26). The poorest results were presented in the area of Maribor where the minimal conditions of growth were reached by 11% of libraries (10 of 89). The deviations were shown also in the size of schools, better results were reached by libraries in the primary schools with at least 300 students (norm was achieved by 28% or 44 of 156 libraries).

School libraries support the educational process by implementing librarianship activities mainly for students and professionals (Article 28 of Librarianship Act). In 2015, the Act Amending Librarianship Act was adopted when school libraries were exempted from the library public service and became a part of the public service in the field of education and transferred to the authority of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport¹⁷⁹. The purpose of the amendments of Librarianship Act was to involve libraries in the school system in a larger extent (changes linked to the development programmes of some schools) and in its organisation, namely by:

- strengthening the role and position of the school libraries;
- setting up strong and permanent professional support for the development of school libraries and
- fully integrating school libraries in the educational and schooling system¹⁸⁰.

Tasks from the previous period for the implementation of the Act Amending Librarianship Act were¹⁸¹:

- adopting Rules on conditions for providing library services in school services;
- adopting strategies of school libraries and development plans of school libraries;
- inclusion of all school libraries in the COBISS system by the end of 2018¹⁸².

¹⁷⁸ Implementing provisions of the Rules on conditions for providing library services as a public service, Lesjak, B., the National and University Library, Centre for the development of libraries, 2017, [URL: https://cezar.nuk.uni-lj.si/common/files/studije/izpolnjevanje_pravilnika_solske.pdf], 27/8/2020.

¹⁷⁹ Report on the implementation of the Action plan for the implementation of the amending Librarianship Act as of 18 February 2019.

¹⁸⁰ As set forth in footnote No 179.

¹⁸¹ As set forth in footnote No 179. Ministry of Education, Science and Sport in cooperation with the National Education Institute Slovenia, the National and University Library and the Institute of Information Science Maribor.

¹⁸² School libraries were after the adoption of the Act Amending Librarianship Act systematically included in the COBISS system.

Action plan for the implementation of the Act Amending Librarianship Act was related to a certain period of time that expired on 18 December 2018¹⁸³. Total amount of the co-financing of all measures was approximately EUR 930,000 out of which funds from the integral budget amounted to EUR 685,577 and EUR 240,000 represented the European funds¹⁸⁴.

In accordance with Article 39.c of Librarianship Act the minister authorised for education in the agreement with the minister responsible for culture and after prior consent of the National council of library services should detail conditions for the operation of school libraries (also for library material, professionals, organisation of the activities and other). According to Article 39.e of Librarianship Act, also the strategy for the development of the school libraries should be adopted. The strategy represents the basis for schools to adopt 3-year development plans of their libraries. A strategy for the development of the school libraries was not adopted by the end of the period covered by the audit, consequently the 3-year development plans of school libraries were not adopted which should be related to the development programmes of schools or forming an integral part thereof. As well, the detailed conditions for the operation of school libraries were not defined. The care for the operation and development of the school libraries was in the period from 2014 to 2018 within the basic legal frame left to be decided upon by headmasters and without specific systemic guides.

In March 2018, a (special) working group was appointed at the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport to develop rules on conditions which was composed of experts of the practical and theoretical background, representatives of the National and University Library and the National Education Institute Slovenia, the Ministry of Culture and the Section for school libraries at the Slovenian Library Association. Additionally, the methodology for the development of the rules on conditions was adopted.

Along with the appointment of the working group for the development of the rules on conditions another working group at the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport for the development of the strategy for school libraries was appointed as prescribed by paragraph 1 of Article 39.e of Librarianship Act. In the preparation process of developing professional basis for the rules on conditions the National and University Library made several calculations, analyses and simulations.

Explanation of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport

Despite all gathered data and analytical material the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport was lagging behind with the adoption of the rules on conditions but there exist objective reasons therefor. Key provision of the rules on conditions is related to defining the scope of the library collection. Until the majority of libraries are included in the COBISS system and new catalogues of library collections of school libraries are made, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport shall not possess the reliable data on current number of units of library material, namely the basic data that is necessary for defining the standard in the new rules on conditions. It is also a predetermined condition for defining demands which are feasible. The COBISS system shall clearly present whether school libraries keep active collections where outdated material is written off, as prescribed by the rules of librarianship. Therefore, special attention must be placed on construction of new catalogues with the stress on the write-off of the material and clearing the collections¹⁸⁵.

¹⁸³ Decision on adopting Action plan for the implementation of the Act Amending Librarianship Act No 612-3/2015/18 as of 13 June 2016.

¹⁸⁴ As set forth in footnote No 179.

¹⁸⁵ As set forth in footnote No 179.

During the development of the school libraries in the Republic of Slovenia there was upon the adoption of the Act Amending Librarianship Act planned to monitor and evaluate school libraries by using indicators from the document Guidelines for school libraries¹⁸⁶ issued by International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions together with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation in 2002 and amended in 2015. Planned monitoring and evaluating of school libraries was not implemented by the end of the period covered by the audit.

Recommendation

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport should pay special attention to foster the implementation of amendments in the field of school libraries that were introduced by the Act Amending Librarianship Act and are focused on the strengthening of the role of school libraries by consistent fulfilment of standards whereby funds should be provided to schools to achieve equal access to library material.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport should introduce activities in the field of school libraries in a systemic way and include them in the school teaching plans as well as systemically incorporate them as one of the basic tasks of schools.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport should consider transfer to the COBISS system in school libraries as priority task.

On the basis of Article 59 of Librarianship Act the Inspectorate for education and sport of the Republic of Slovenia carries out control over the school libraries, while expert control is undertaken by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport in line with indent 2 of paragraph 1 of Article 58 of Librarianship Act. In the years 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2018, there was no control undertaken in school libraries, neither regular nor expert.

Since the Act Amending Librarianship Act was adopted in 2015 that defined conditions necessary for the implementation of library public service in the field of education and schooling and by the end of the period covered by the audit, the Inspectorate for education and sport of the Republic of Slovenia received 15 complaints related to the operations of school libraries.

Report on the implementation of the Action plan for the implementation of the amending Librarianship Act as of 18 February 2019 found out that enforcement of the Librarianship Act in the field of school libraries presented shortcomings. On the basis of the assessment and the fact that the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport failed to adopt the rules on conditions, that the strategy on school libraries was not adopted, that all school libraries are not in the COBISS system, that the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport does not have a complete overview of the school libraries (data on material), the Court of Audit believes that there is a risk that school library system is not operating in order to develop reading literacy and to provide professional assistance in the educational process, i.e. borrowing books, information literacy, possibilities for developing creativity and strengthening motivation for reading and visiting libraries in the scope and ways proposed by the amended Librarianship Act.

¹⁸⁶ [URL: <https://www.ifla.org/publications/node/9512>], 27/8/2020.

Recommendation

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport and the Ministry of Culture should organise periodic evaluation working meetings on the implementation of strategic and executive documents at the level of state secretaries and directors of governmental services and should define unified tools for measuring effects and impacts of the public and school libraries on the environment.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport and the Ministry of Culture should promote cooperation between public and school libraries in the field of reading literacy development in children.

4.2 Projects for the development of reading literacy in children

Within the implementation of the activities for the development of reading literacy in children the Court of Audit was interested in planning and implementing of the development pilot projects and if the results of well-performed pilot projects were transferred to educational system. Therefore, it reviewed whether the activities were performed by service providers who are experts in the concerned fields, how the area of reading literacy in children is included in the course curriculum and education of different stakeholders from the field of reading literacy in children and whether the system of obtaining feedback and as well as ways of integrating insights in planning process was set up.

4.2.1 Development pilot projects

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport wrote in the Journal of the first expert consultation on reading literacy from 2014¹⁸⁷ that reading literacy is affected by several elements, not only school but also wider socio-economic circumstances, gender, social gradient and others. Therefore, in the opinion of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport it is necessary that measures in the field of reading literacy belong to the Governmental policy that combines several areas not only the one covered by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport. The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport believes that the policy must be coordinated among those areas, consistently and above all persistently.

The position of the Educational Research Institute that provides expert and scientific support to the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport is that selected approaches and solutions must be implemented for a longer period of time and should not be amended during that period. This is not true only for school environment but also for the issue of raising awareness about reading literacy in the society. The international research clearly showed the need for such efforts and also the Republic of Slovenia should implement activities for raising awareness about reading literacy – first within the pilot projects that identify appropriate approaches for certain environments, those most successful should be later transferred among permanent tasks of stakeholders.

The key issue is which are those activities that in practice lead the way to foster the delivery of development objectives in the field of reading literacy.

¹⁸⁷ Raising literacy levels, Journal of expert consultation on reading literacy, the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, 7/2/2019, [URL: <https://www.zrss.si/pdf/Za-dvig-digitalne-pismenosti.pdf>], 27/8/2020.

Empowerment project

The first large pilot project in the field of reading literacy development in children in the Republic of Slovenia was the Empowerment project implemented by the National Education Institute Slovenia in the period from 2012 to 2013. The basic intention of the project was to help to provide equal educational possibilities, improve access to quality education and integration of efficient didactic strategies to achieve higher level of reading literacy within formal education. Evaluation of the project¹⁸⁸ showed the best practices that gave desired results in promoting the development of reading literacy in primary school children, and on the basis of the findings the National Education Institute Slovenia then defined several measures and activities that were implemented in the period from 2014 to 2018.

After the completion of the Empowerment project, the National Education Institute Slovenia was given additional tasks of development of different types of literacy. Activities of the National Education Institute Slovenia within the concerned task were implemented as various trainings for professionals, coordination of preparations of complex professional literature based on the knowledge and best practice from the project delivery as well as focused work with managers in educational environment.

In the field of pre-school and primary school education the National Education Institute Slovenia in the school years 2014/2015, 2015/2016 and 2016/2017 actively approached to transfer activities recognised as best practice to all interested schools in the Republic of Slovenia. In order to extend the effects of the project the National Education Institute Slovenia after its completion organised several trainings, such as:

- regular support to local units of National Education Institute Slovenia in the form of expert meetings for headmasters and/or professionals, thematic conferences¹⁸⁹;
- seminars of catalogue of further education and training of the National Education Institute Slovenia¹⁹⁰;
- seminars included in the Catalogue of programmes of further education and training of the National Education Institute Slovenia¹⁹¹.

The National Education Institute Slovenia carries out its activities in several forms, as regular working meetings with teachers at schools (project teams, observing lectures, frontal expert meetings), programmes (form of training that provides new knowledge in certain fields) and trainings (process of obtaining, developing and improving competences of the professionals).

Table 7 shows the list of programmes and trainings that were organised by the National Education Institute Slovenia after the Empowerment project on the basis of the results of the project when best practices of reading literacy development in children were transferred; and the response thereto in the period from the school year 2014/2015 to 2016/2017. The target group of the programmes and trainings represented all teachers and heads of primary and secondary schools regardless their subject matter.

¹⁸⁸ Evaluation report of the project, National Education Institute Slovenia, Nolimal F. et al., Ljubljana 2014.

¹⁸⁹ The National Education Institute Slovenia on its website publishes current offers and archive of some past expert events, [URL: <https://www.zrss.si/ucilna-zidana>], 27/8/2020.

¹⁹⁰ An example of catalogue of further education, [URL: <https://www.zrss.si/ucilna-zidana/izobrazevanja/seminarji>], 27/8/2020.

¹⁹¹ [URL: <https://paka3.mss.edus.si/katis/>], 27/8/2020.

The attendance and implementation of the offered programmes and trainings depends on the interest of schools or teachers and heads. The working meetings at the local units or schools were after the Empowerment project participated by all local units of the National Education Institute Slovenia while the attendance of schools or teachers depended on their own motivation.

Table 7: Programmes and trainings that were organised by the National Education Institute Slovenia after the Empowerment project on the basis of the results of the project when best practices of reading literacy development in children were transferred; and the response thereto in the period from the school year 2014/2015 to 2016/2017.

School year	Response
<i>School year 2014/2015</i>	
Reading learning strategies	school team (up to 70 attendants)
Reading literacy, local unit Maribor	36 attendants
Reading literacy, local unit Murska Sobota	25 attendants
Promoting reading literacy, local unit Ljubljana	up to 80 attendants (members of project teams of 19 schools)
Promoting reading literacy, local unit Novo mesto	38 attendants
Emerging literacy in kindergartens, local unit Ljubljana	27 attendants
<i>School year 2015/2016</i>	
Reading literacy, local unit Murska Sobota	28 attendants
Experience in discovering the use of some reading learning strategies	school team (up to 70 attendants)
<i>School year 2016/2017</i>	
Reviewing reading capabilities at literal and non-literal works	53 attendants
Development of reading literacy in the first educational period	was not carried out due to lack of applications
Developing different types of literacy I	was not carried out due to lack of applications
Developing early literacy and formative monitoring at kindergartens	was not carried out due to lack of applications
Developing different types of literacy II	15 attendants
Promoting reading literacy, local unit Ljubljana	58 attendants

Source: data of the National Education Institute Slovenia.

Kindergarten Curriculum was adopted in 1999 and was not changed since. Kindergarten Curriculum is a national document where basic principles and objectives are defined, while practical delivery of the objectives, selection of topics, methods and ways of work are left to educators to decide upon. In the field of pre-school education there were in the period covered by the audit undertaken individual pilot and other projects that were perceived as best practice and included activities for the development of reading literacy in children (Empowerment project and Development of emerging literacy – more under point 1.2.2.1 of this report) that the National Education Institute Slovenia tried later to transfer through advisory work to heads, professionals and counsellors of the kindergartens in raising the awareness and developing strategies of reading culture and reading literacy in kindergartens.

The Republic of Slovenia does not have a unified teaching plans for primary schools, it has individual teaching plans for all mandatory and alternative classes. Teaching plans by subjects for primary schools are expert documents intended for teachers who undertake classes in primary schools (it is foreseen that they need to know them not to use them obligatory). They were updated in 2011 on the basis of the Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 on key competences for lifelong learning when key competences for the 21st century were included, namely reading literacy in children within the communication skills in the Slovenian language. The changes were directed towards more efficient connectivity of linguistic and literary subjects, simplifying written language objectives and contents, connecting the Slovenian language with other languages, systematic obtaining linguistic and systemic skills, for the literary subjects the stress is on the autonomy of teachers in selecting literal works to be discussed at classes and for home reading. In 2018, the course curriculum for the Slovenian language for primary schools was updated on the basis of the results of the Empowerment project. At the level of teaching recommendations the changes of teaching plans introduced expert findings and results of the Empowerment project, for example teaching recommendations for the second educational period, such as: ability to summarise the topic, sub-topics/key words and key data in the structured form and presentation of individual plan of developing those abilities for each student; reading and listening (with watching) should be equally represented, as well as writing and speaking (teachers should for each student prepare individual plan of developing and upgrading the reading abilities). The PISA 2018 survey that was carried out in 2018 could not reflect upon the effects of the changes of teaching plans for the Slovenian language.

Integration of the operative objectives and contents into learning units is left to be decided upon by a teacher autonomously in its annual preparations and preparations for classes, furthermore standards of knowledge provide a teacher to select appropriate time scale of discussing the topics. All the above show that the decision whether a teacher shall develop reading literacy in children and which educational and didactic methods shall be used in the period from 2014 to 2018 was the autonomy of the teachers¹⁹². In such system the awareness of the headmasters, teachers, school librarians and other professionals on the importance of the education in the field of reading literary development became one of the key

¹⁹² In 2013, the Court of Audit implemented the audit of educational materials for the primary and secondary school, [URL: http://www.rs-rs.si/fileadmin/user_upload/revizija/1141/Gradiva_MIZKSRSP.pdf], 27/8/2020. The Court of Audit established that the area of educational materials is not regulated efficiently and recommended to the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport to provide for appropriate analyses in order to be able to define whether and which subjects and classes need educational materials to provide quality in learning and to define how and when the materials shall be ensured.

elements in developing reading literacy in children. Professional support in different forms of counselling to heads, professionals and counsellors in schools is offered by the National Education Institute Slovenia as the national advisory and research and development body in the field of education and schooling. Along with the advisory work, the National Education Institute Slovenia also prepares different types of trainings in order to explain new findings and practices for professionals as well as publishes expert literature related to development of reading literacy in children. According to the data from the PISA 2018 survey it was established that Slovenian 15-year-olds among all 55 countries included in the comparison assessed their teachers as being less supportive at the Slovenian language classes and had evidently low enthusiasm when teaching the Slovenian language, therefore it is necessary to review in detail the existing practices and find possible reasons for such situation also in the system of encouraging and educating heads and professionals in educational process to introduce new skills and practices in the field of developing reading literacy in children.

Recommendation

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport should review the possibilities for ensuring that reading literacy development becomes the commitment of the educators and teachers regardless their subject, as well as school librarians and other professionals and it should review and assess educational materials, textbooks, workbooks with the stress on their quality and appropriateness to promote development of reading literacy in children.

Objem project

Within the Operational Programme for the Implementation of the EU Cohesion Policy in the Period 2014-2020 the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport published public call the Development and applying innovative learning environments and flexible forms of learning to foster common competences¹⁹³. In May 2017, the National Education Institute Slovenia as the leading partner of the consortium of contractors signed a contract for the implementation of the project Objem to be carried out by 2022.

Trainings in the field of reading literacy prepared by the National Education Institute Slovenia within the project Objem from the school year 2016/2017 to 2018/2019 are presented in Table 8. The target group of those trainings represented all professional workers in the field of pre-school and primary school education, primary music education, vocational training and education, secondary education as well as education and schooling of children and the young with special needs, education in student housing and adult education.

¹⁹³ Official Gazette of the RS, No 68/16.

Table 8: Trainings in the field of reading literacy prepared by the National Education Institute Slovenia within the project Objem from the school year 2016/2017 to 2018/2019

School year 2016/2017	Number of attendants
Learning competence of learning and self-regulating learning I	172
Development of reading literacy in the first educational period	0
Developing different types of literacy I	0
Developing early literacy and formative monitoring at kindergartens	0
Developing different types of literacy II	17
Assessment of written part of the exam and oral exam at the Slovenian language at the vocational baccalaureate	0
School year 2017/2018	
Learning competence of learning and self-regulating learning II	95
Learning competence of learning and self-regulating learning II	67
Ways to improve learning achievements – the Italian language in the first 5 grades: encouraging to understand the texts	0
Development of reading literacy in the first 3 years	148
Developing different types of literacy I	185
Developing different types of literacy II	92
Developing early literacy and formative monitoring at kindergartens	338
Improving learning and process of self-evaluation on the basis of data from external examinations I – the Slovenian language at the graduation exam	21
Improving learning and process of self-evaluation on the basis of data from external examinations II – the Slovenian language at the National knowledge testing	0
School year 2018/2019 ¹⁹⁴	
Developing early literacy and formative monitoring at kindergartens	16

Source: data of the National Education Institute Slovenia.

¹⁹⁴ Considered implementation from 1/9/2018 to 15/10/2018.

In the opinion of the Court of Audit the pilot projects (Empowerment, Objem) could contribute significantly to the proficiency of headmasters, involved teachers, educators and other professionals to systematically develop reading literacy in children¹⁹⁵, nevertheless the transfer of results into practice depends on their motivation and active participation. The Court of Audit assessed that the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport could provide an important impact thereto by its attitude to those issues and by defining policies and activities based on the disclosed weaknesses in the system and practice; furthermore, it could raise awareness among the headmasters, teachers, educators and other professionals in the system of education on the importance of developing reading literacy in children and encourage them to bring about the needed changes.

Recommendation

The National Education Institute Slovenia should continue with its endeavours to better raise awareness among all teachers of different classes on the importance of the development of reading literacy in children and their role in the process with a clear stress that this is not merely the task of the teachers of the Slovenian language.

The National Education Institute Slovenia should, when planning activities for empowering of the headmasters, teachers, educators, school librarians and other professionals for better development of reading literacy in children, closely cooperate with the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport and the Educational Research Institute in order that its activities are coordinated and provide the implementation of activities of the programmes for pre-school children and primary school education and in line with the results of the international surveys.

The National Education Institute Slovenia should continue to define proposals and implement activities for the development of tools or toolkit for educators and teachers to determine reading literacy in children and to monitor their progress.

Table 9 shows the data from the Catalogue of programmes of further education and training of the professionals in the field of education¹⁹⁶ (hereinafter referred to as: KATIS) on the most commonly performed programmes related to reading literacy in the period from the school year 2017/2018 to the school year 2018/2019.

¹⁹⁵ From the beginning of differentiated literacy, training of reading techniques to introducing reading learning strategies and development of metacognition of critical thinking.

¹⁹⁶ [URL: <https://paka3.mss.edus.si/katis/>], 27/8/2020.

Table 9: The most commonly performed programmes from the KATIS catalogue related to reading literacy in the period from the school year 2017/2018 to the school year 2018/2019.

School year 2017/2018	Number of attendants
Development of reading literacy in the pre-school period, Faculty of Education at the University of Maribor	25
Library education school 2018, the National Education Institute Slovenia	80
School year 2018/2019¹⁾	
Development of reading literacy in the first 5 grades, Faculty of Education at the University of Maribor	26
Reading culture of the young – Slovenian cultural heritage, Reading badge of Slovenia – Slovenian Association of Friends of Youth	14

Note: ¹⁾ Realisation by 31 August 2019.

Source: data of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport.

Recommendation

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport should set up a system that shall encourage teachers to introduce new practices that proved appropriate to develop reading literacy in children and where different professionals and experts in the field of education could cooperate with those who review the achieved knowledge of children and develop programmes of qualifications for teachers, and it should provide that this circle is closed.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport should also raise awareness about the meaning of the field of reading literacy development in children and of school libraries and should incorporate those ideas into compulsory education and training of headmasters.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport should be more active in raising awareness among headmasters, teachers, school librarians and other professionals about the importance of reading literacy development in children and should encourage them to actively participate in the expert trainings in the field of reading literacy development.

Project of introducing Quality Assessment and Quality Assurance Model in the field of education

The project of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport that relates also to the field of reading literacy development and is partly co-financed with the ESF started in 2016¹⁹⁷ and was completed in 2019. It could be identified as the pilot project of introducing quality assessment and quality assurance model in the field of education. The project was implemented by the consortium of the National School for Leadership in Education, the National Education Institute Slovenia, the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training and the National Examinations Centre.

¹⁹⁷ Setting up, amending and pilot testing of the quality assessment and quality assurance model in the field of education.

Quality is within the framework of the project understood very widely, nevertheless it can be an appropriate frame for the basic ability related to the reading literacy. Its horizontal multi-nature demands that the educational system acquires it as a value and develops respect towards it, namely to create and provide conditions for schools to ensure the equalisation of children's positions in their possibilities to develop cultural capital, regardless of the culture of their home environment and their socio-economic environment. This project is an example of implementation of the ninth basic principle of the National Strategy for the Development of Reading Literacy. The purpose of the introduction of the project was to define common grounds for quality assessment and quality assurance in the field of educational organisations (kindergartens, primary and secondary schools) and indirectly to evaluate the level of educational system. The key purpose of the model is to dynamically achieve, develop and preserve quality that is based on the internal quality assessment or self-evaluation.

Recommendation

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport and the Ministry of Culture should transfer results of well-performed pilot projects of developing reading literacy in children to the educational system whereby it is crucial that the selected approaches and solutions are performed for a longer period of time and do not change during that period.

4.3 Achieved level of reading literacy in children

The Court of Audit reviewed whether the implemented activities affected the achieved level of reading literacy in children. The Court of Audit also studied whether the strategic and implementing documents of the State provide for conditions that can make a major contribution to raising the level of reading literacy in children and whether reading literacy in children is recognised as a major element of training and educational process, considering the needs of the vulnerable groups. The Court of Audit tried to find out whether the results of international and national measurements show improvements in reading literacy levels in children.

The international surveys, mainly PIRLS and PISA, had in almost 2 decades, since the Republic of Slovenia participates, enabled precise, structured insight in reading literacy in children and background circumstances. Even though the surveys differ in their purposes, they are connected. If the purpose of the PIRLS survey of 10-year-olds is to provide the policy makers and teachers with information on how to improve teaching and learning, the purpose of the PISA survey is to collect data on students' abilities needed for their private and working life and are thus important for the individual and the society. The overall purpose of those surveys is to help to better understand the educational system and results, namely primarily by benchmarks between participating states. This audit monitors the development of reading literacy in children as defined by the PISA survey also because the achievement of the Slovenian children is one indicator of the effectiveness of the implementation of the Strategy 2030.

The results of the PISA 2018 survey show that the achievement of the Slovenian children is higher than the average of the OECD member states, compared to the results of the PISA 2015 survey their achievements are somewhat lower, also the average of the OECD member states is lower (487 points according to the PISA 2018 compared to 501 points according to the PISA 2015). Reading literacy of the Slovenian 15-year-olds was in 2018 almost the same (495 points) as in 2006 (494 points), when the first cycle of PISA survey was undertaken in the Republic of Slovenia. The average achievement in reading literacy was reduced in 2018 compared to 2015 (505 points) being a result of lower achievements at all

6 levels of the international scale, mostly at the second, third and fourth level¹⁹⁸. Somewhat higher is the percentage of children that do not reach the basic level of reading literacy, i.e. the second level of the international scale of the PISA survey, namely 18%. The Republic of Slovenia hereby does not reach the minimum of the target value that was set up by the EU in 2009 as the objective in the Programme of the European Union Education and Training 2020¹⁹⁹, i.e. the share of children with low achievements in the EU member states by 2020 less than 15%. In 2018, the satisfaction of the Slovenian children in reading considering the data from 2009 remained below the average of the satisfaction of children from the OECD member states. The PISA 2018 survey also shows that enjoying reading is an important element of reading success, especially for children from weaker socio-economic and cultural environment. Nevertheless, the Republic of Slovenia belongs among countries where differences between students from socio-economic more or less favourable environments are smaller. However, this does not apply to the achievements of the children with migrant background, since the difference in the achievements of children with migrant background (they represent 8.9% of children in the Republic of Slovenia) and other students from the Republic of Slovenia is higher than the average of the OECD member states²⁰⁰, nevertheless, considering the socio-economic elements the difference is reaching the average of the OECD. The gender-based difference in the Republic of Slovenia is still quite evident and is one of the highest among the OECD member states.

Recommendation

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport should with the assistance of the expert and scientific institutions review the reasons for the lack of appropriate encouragement and motivation in the field of reading literacy in children in the school environment.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport should present findings and proposed measures to improve the appropriate encouragement and motivation in the field of reading literacy in children in the school environment to the headmasters within the National School for Leadership in Education.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport should review the possibilities to reduce the differences in the achievements between the children with migrant background and the rest of the students in the Republic of Slovenia.

¹⁹⁸ Achievements of the children in the PISA survey are classified in a 6-level scale. Students by achieving certain level of the scale pertaining to reading literacy do not only show their knowledge and skills described at the level but also joint knowledge and skills described at all lower levels. All students by achieving third level show also their knowledge and skills described at the first or second level. The levels are presented in detail in the PISA 2018 survey: National report with examples of reading tasks.

¹⁹⁹ Council Conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020).

²⁰⁰ Data from PISA 2018, Figure 13,
[URL: <http://www.oecd.org/pisa/PISA%202018%20Insights%20and%20Interpretations%20FINAL%20PDF.pdf>] and [URL: http://www.oecd.org/pisa/publications/PISA2018_CN SVN.pdf], 27/8/2020. The Republic of Slovenia is one of the countries where among the children with migrant background the share of children coming from less favourable socio-economic environments is among the highest (almost one half). Despite that fact, there is a share of children among them who achieve best results equal to the share of Slovenian children from socio-economic less favourable environments who achieve best results.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport should review why there are still big differences in the field of reading between genders, i.e. in reading achievement and in motivation for reading, and it should thus define measures to reduce them.

The results of the PISA 2018 survey show that the Republic of Slovenia failed to achieve (performance in 2018) the objective from the National strategy 2030 – to be ranked in the first quarter of the participating countries of the European Union (the results from the PISA 2015 survey). The Republic of Slovenia is according to the average achievement in reading ranked 9 among 28 countries of the European Union, namely it falls outside the first quarter. It is necessary to consider that comparison of the average achievements among countries in the PISA survey due to the nature of the survey is relative, since each time different number of countries participate, several countries reach the same average or the average of all countries can be altered, the way it happened in PISA 2018 survey when the average achievement in general in comparison to the PISA 2015 reduced evidently.

The results of the PISA 2009, 2012 and 2015 and secondary studies of the data showed for the Republic of Slovenia that without systemic conditions at the national level, strong professional engagement and strongly supportive educational institutions the improvements of the reading literacy in children cannot be reached. As key systemic conditions for the development of reading literacy in children in the Republic of Slovenia were recognised: accessible pre-school education of high quality, public and free of charge primary school with school library and developed system of public libraries. In that way the development of reading literacy in children can be incorporated in the whole educational system and available to all children.

The results of the international surveys in the period from 2009 to 2012 showed the results of the Slovenian children²⁰¹ and adults²⁰² to be below the average in the area of reading literacy. The Republic of Slovenia in the period from 2010 to the end of 2017 did not have a quality strategic plan of the state (Figure 1), it thus failed a thorough and harmonised development policy at the state level and lacked clear directions in the field of empowerment of children and adults for active inclusion in the society and professional life. Member states of the United Nations recognised the meaning of reading literacy for the development of an individual and the society at the world level some time ago, but in 2015 it was included in the Agenda 2030 as an important, fourth sustainable development goal. Also at the level of the European Union, the European Commission within the programme Education and Training 2020 already in 2009 defined an objective that the share of 15-year-olds who fail to achieve the second level of reading literacy in the PISA survey in 2020 should not exceed 15%.

To develop reading literacy in children from the national point of view the strategic documents²⁰³ somewhat vaguely define performance indicators. The ReNPK 14-17 includes an indicator that the Republic of Slovenia in the PISA and PIAAC surveys should be ranked among the first third of the participating countries. In the last undertaken cycles of the two surveys the Republic of Slovenia failed to achieve the objective, but the Court of Audit assessed that the overall message of the data is not

²⁰¹ Results of the international surveys PISA 2009 and PISA 2012 for 15-year-olds and PIRLS 2011 for 10-year-olds.

²⁰² As set forth in footnote No 111.

²⁰³ The auditees are responsible to define indicators in the strategies, each in the field of their authority. When defining indicators in the state strategy the auditees cooperated within intersectoral cooperation framework.

significant due to the above presented. The Court of Audit believes that it would be more encouraging if the set target values included also the share of children by difficulty levels of reading literacy. It would be necessary that the Republic of Slovenia tries to have as small shares of children at the lowest levels of difficulty as possible, considering the average is higher. Similar weaknesses are evident in the indicator defined in the Strategy 2030 to measure performance of the Republic of Slovenia in the field and within the frame of the second strategic objective "knowledge and skills for quality living and work", namely the Republic of Slovenia is ranked in the first quarter of the EU states with the average result in the PISA survey at all 3 areas of research: mathematics, reading and natural science. In the opinion of the Court of Audit for the development of reading literacy in the Republic of Slovenia it would be more encouraging if at the national level more ambitious objectives would be set than at the level of the European Union within the European cooperation in the education and training²⁰⁴ and there set reference levels for the average performance. The reference level for an individual with poor results at the basic skills, mainly in reading, mathematics and natural science, is that until 2020 the share of 15-year-olds with poor results is under 15%. As said before, in accordance with the data from the PISA 2018 the share of those children in the Republic of Slovenia is 18%.

Recommendation

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport should in cooperation with experts and research institutions discuss and review the results of PISA 2018 survey and long-term trends of achievements of the Slovenian children in the field of reading literacy within the frame of the PISA survey from 2006, 2009, 2012, 2015 and 2018.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport should define such objectives and indicators to measure performance of reading literacy development that shall be clearly directed at increasing reading literacy in all children with special attention on the endeavour of the Republic of Slovenia to have smaller shares of children at the lowest levels of difficulty.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport should present results of the PISA 2018 survey to headmasters of primary schools within the frame of National School for Leadership in Education, as well as trends of achievements of the Slovenian children in the field of reading literacy within the PISA surveys from 2006, 2009, 2012, 2015 and 2018.

²⁰⁴ Council Conclusions of 12 May 2009 on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020).

5. AUDIT OPINION

The Court of Audit reviewed the efficiency of operations of the *Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, the Ministry of Culture, the National Education Institute Slovenia and the Slovenian Book Agency* in planning and implementing activities for the development of reading literacy in children in the Republic of Slovenia in the period from 1 January 2014 to 31 December 2018.

The Court of Audit is of the opinion that the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, the Ministry of Culture, the National Education Institute Slovenia and the Slovenian Book Agency were in the part of their operations referred to planning and implementing activities for the development of reading literacy in children in the Republic of Slovenia in the period covered by the audit *partially efficient*. The opinion is based on the assessment whether the objectives and activities for the development of reading literacy in children were appropriately planned and whether the activities for the development of reading literacy in children were efficient.

Reading literacy is included in the umbrella development and strategic document of the Republic of Slovenia, i.e. the Slovenian Development Strategy 2030. The performance of the Slovenian children in the international survey of reading literacy in children, namely Programme for International Student Assessment – PISA implemented under the OECD is one of three performance indicators of reaching the objective "knowledge and skills for quality living and work" from the Slovenian Development Strategy 2030. By using this performance indicator the direct link was created between the Slovenian Development Strategy 2030, the objective "quality education" from the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Programme of the European Union Education and Training 2020.

In the period covered by the audit the basic documents for planning in the field of reading literacy in children were the Resolution on the 2014-2017 National Programme for Culture (ReNPK 14-17), the Resolution on the National Programme for Language Policy 2014-2018 (ReNPJP 14-18) and the Action plan for language education developed by the Ministry of Culture. Until the end of the period covered by the audit, the new national programmes were not adopted, even though the period of validity of the existing documents expired. The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport approved the National Strategy for the Development of Literacy that was valid for the field of literacy in the year 2006. Updating of the National Strategy for the Development of Literacy was foreseen due to achievements of the Slovenian children that were below the average according the international surveys PIRLS 2011, PISA 2009 and PISA 2012. The amended National Strategy for the Development of Reading Literacy should in a more clear way define the role of all stakeholders in providing conditions for the development of reading literacy. The objectives related to reading literacy in children were indirectly included in the documents of development and strategic planning and in explanations of the financial plans of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport and the Ministry of Culture.

The financial sources of the State budget for the implementation of reading literacy in children in the financial plans of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport and the Ministry of Culture were not planned within the specific sub-programme, rather they were planned within several sub-programmes of the policies, such as sub-programmes *19 Education and Sport* and *18 Culture and civil society*. Therefore, it was not possible to precisely assess how much funds were spent for them. When planning financial sources the needs for the implementation of activities for the development of reading literacy in children were recognised, but auditees considered them differently. The National Education Institute Slovenia allocated funds for the development pilot projects from the European Social Fund. Since it cannot be clearly and unambiguously found out which are those conditions for the development of reading literacy in children that must be provided by the Slovenian Book Agency, the Court of Audit was not able to assess whether the Slovenian Book Agency allocates enough funds for the development of tasks for ensuring conditions for the development of reading culture.

The authorities of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, the Ministry of Culture, the National Education Institute Slovenia and the Slovenian Book Agency in the field of reading literacy development in children were defined in the legislation and strategic documents, and to a lesser extent for tasks directly linked to the development of reading literacy in children. In those documents the deadlines for the implementation were defined as well as the objectives, but not equally precisely. In the legislation and strategic documents the role of the Slovenian Book Agency was poorly defined within the frame of providing the condition for the development of reading literacy in children.

A large scale of studies, surveys and examinations was carried out and the professional institutions thus received enough data needed to assess the circumstances, the needs and to create models of achieving the desired level of the development in the field of reading literacy in children. The results of the secondary studies based on the data from PISA 2009, 2012 and 2009 showed that without systemic conditions at the national level, strong professional engagement and strongly supportive educational institutions the improvements of the reading literacy in children cannot be reached. Systemic conditions for the development of reading literacy in children were recognised: accessible pre-school education of high quality, public and free of charge primary school including school libraries and developed system of public libraries. When the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, the Ministry of Culture, the National Education Institute Slovenia and the Slovenian Book Agency were planning and selecting their activities, they cooperated only partially, in addition correlation between expert knowledge and best practice and planning of the activities was poor too. Moreover, the Court of Audit was not able to verify the systemic approach and transfer of knowledge into the practice. The data about the key performance elements in reading literacy were considered only for certain groups (i.e. for the members of the Roma community) for which specific measures were foreseen. Also for the national projects, when included in the development programme plans, the Court of Audit could not confirm the existence of the specific criteria that would reflect priority position of reading literacy in children, since specific projects and measures linked to the development of reading literacy in children in the development programme plans within the integral funds were not foreseen. For the projects (Objem, Roma assistants) that were included in the Operational Programme for the Implementation of the EU Cohesion Policy in the Period 2014-2020 and financed from the European Social Fund the measures for the assessment were in line with the criteria from the strategic documents.

It was not possible to deduct from the financial statement of the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport and the annual reports of the National Education Institute Slovenia and

the Slovenian Book Agency the implementation of all those activities that were undertaken for the development of reading literacy in children. Monitoring of the activities was provided by reports on the implementation of the ReNPK 14-17 and the annual reports of the Interdepartmental Working Group related to the implementation of the ReNPJP 14-18. Activities for the development of reading literacy in children were implemented by experts of the concerned fields. The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport and the National Education Institute Slovenia developed the curriculum for pre-school education and teaching plans for primary schools and carried out trainings for teachers. The Ministry of Culture along with the Slovenian Book Agency and the National Education Institute Slovenia developed programmes for the arts and cultural education. From the reports on the implementation of the objectives of the ReNPK 14-17 for the years 2016 and 2017 it is evident that 44% of the objectives from the resolution were not achieved. The objectives of the ReNPJP 14-18 that were related to the development of reading literacy were achieved for the most part. Among the activities that were not implemented there were also foreseen systemic measures for the quality of teaching of the Slovenian language. In the period covered by the audit, the system of obtaining feedback as well as ways of integrating new insights from the implemented projects into the planning of activities to be undertaken by the stakeholders while developing reading literacy in children was not set up.

The achieved level of reading literacy of the Slovenian 15-year-olds was in 2018 almost the same as in 2006. There is a larger percentage of children that do not reach the 2 basic levels of reading literacy, namely 18%, thus lagging behind the target value of 15% from the Programme of the European Union Education and Training 2020. Ranked 9 among 28 countries of the European Union, the Republic of Slovenia failed to reach the objective from the Slovenian Development Strategy 2030, namely it falls outside the first quarter. Also, the satisfaction of children when reading that is considered an important element of reading success by the data of the PISA 2018 survey in the Republic of Slovenia remains below the average. The second objective "knowledge and skills for quality living and work" from the Slovenian Development Strategy 2030 includes the elements of providing equality, as demonstrated in the consideration of vulnerable groups. Nevertheless, the Republic of Slovenia belongs among countries where differences between students from socio-economic more or less favourable environments are smaller. The gender-based difference remains relatively high and is among the highest in the OECD member states.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport and the Ministry of Culture were recommended to:

- within the framework of their activities and communication with the public raise public awareness about the importance of the high level of reading literacy (in children) and to give specific attention to motivation of the adults who, as part of family or other environment, have an important impact on children's reading literacy;
- in their strategic and implementing documents precisely and uniformly determine respectively define reading culture in relation to the (development of) reading literacy in children;
- in their implementing documents develop a uniform approach to the development of reading literacy in a way to ensure the activities to be planned in coordination and cooperation with all stakeholders (public and school libraries, Slovenian Book Agency, National Education Institute Slovenia, Educational Research Institute, National Examinations Centre, National School for Leadership in Education and other) and to enable coherent implementation of activities, as well as complementation of results and objectives in several directions and at various levels;
- actively and timely monitor effects of implemented projects in the field of reading literacy development in children and to provide for continuous and systematic implementation of those projects that by the expert opinion give positive results, enable reliable identification and planning of needs in the field of reading literacy development in children;
- approach towards the development of public and school libraries in a systemic and inclusive way, namely to cooperate with the local communities, national associations and school headmasters;
- provide for continuous and systematic observation of cultural, economic and social effects and impacts that (public and school) libraries have on the environment and reading literacy in children and to consider them in the future planning;
- organise periodic evaluation working meetings on the implementation of strategic and executive documents at the level of state secretaries and directors of governmental services and to define unified tools for measuring effects and impacts of the public and school libraries on the environment;
- promote cooperation between public and school libraries in the field of reading literacy development in children;
- transfer results of well-performed pilot projects of developing reading literacy in children to the educational system whereby it is crucial that the selected approaches and solutions are performed for a longer period of time and do not change during that period.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Sport was recommended to:

- upon possible preparation of a new White Paper on Education therein include the objective of developing school libraries;
- upon preparation of implementing documents respectively action plans for the National Strategy for the Development of Reading Literacy in the period 2019-2030 at the level of individual activities for the development of reading literary clearly define the objectives of those activities and the expected way of transferring them into practice;

- prepare analytical bases for planning educational policies along with quality analyses of secondary and background elements whereby special attention should be placed on problem areas;
- pay special attention to foster the implementation of amendments in the field of school libraries that were introduced by the Act Amending Librarianship Act and are focused on the strengthening of the role of school libraries by consistent fulfilment of standards whereby to achieve equal access to library material it should provide funds to schools;
- introduce activities in the field of school libraries in a systemic way and include them in the school teaching plans as well as systemically incorporate them as one of the basic tasks of schools;
- recommend to headmasters to consider transfer to the COBISS system – Co-operative Online Bibliographic System and Services in their school libraries as a priority task;
- review the possibilities for ensuring that reading literacy development becomes the commitment of the educators and teachers regardless their subject, as well as school librarians and other professionals and to review and assess educational materials, textbooks, workbooks with the stress on their quality and appropriateness to promote development of reading literacy in children;
- set up a system that shall encourage teachers to introduce new practices that proved appropriate to develop reading literacy in children and where different professionals and experts in the field of education could cooperate with those who review the achieved knowledge of children and to develop programmes of qualifications for teachers, and to provide that this circle is closed;
- raise awareness about the meaning of the field of reading literacy development in children and school libraries and to incorporate those ideas into compulsory education and training of headmasters;
- be more active in raising awareness among headmasters, teachers, school librarians and other professionals about the importance of reading literacy development in children and to encourage them to actively participate in the expert trainings in the field of reading literacy development;
- with the assistance of the expert and scientific institutions review the reasons for the lack of appropriate encouragement and motivation in the field of reading literacy in children in the school environment;
- present findings and proposed measures to improve the appropriate encouragement and motivation in the field of reading literacy in children in the school environment to the headmasters within the National School for Leadership in Education;
- review the possibilities to reduce the differences in the achievements between the children with migrant background and the rest of the students in the Republic of Slovenia;
- review why there are still big differences in the field of reading between genders, i.e. in reading achievement and in motivation for reading, and thus define measures to reduce them;
- in cooperation with experts and research institutions discuss and review the results of PISA 2018 survey and long-term trends of achievements of the Slovenian children in the field of reading literacy within the frame of the PISA survey from 2006, 2009, 2012, 2015 and 2018;
- define such objectives and indicators to measure performance of reading literacy development that shall be clearly directed at increasing reading literacy in all children with special attention on the endeavour of the Republic of Slovenia to have smaller shares of children at the lowest levels of difficulty;
- present results of the PISA 2018 survey to headmasters of primary schools within the frame of National School for Leadership in Education, as well as trends of achievements of the Slovenian children in the field of reading literacy within the PISA surveys from 2006, 2009, 2012, 2015 and 2018.

The Ministry of Culture was recommended to:

- implement (educational and promotional) activities to improve knowledge about the significance of the public libraries;
- provide for the necessary substantive and financial support to public libraries in order to enable at least the existing level of public library services.

The Ministry of Culture and the National Education Institute Slovenia were recommended to:

- define the term reading culture and quality criteria of reading materials that promote high level of reading literacy in children;
- clearly determine criteria or elements to assess the quality of books;
- provide for the achievement of public interest in the field of books by promoting high-quality production and offering books for children in the field of publishing and when creating collections and making lists of recommended literature for public and school libraries.

The National Education Institute Slovenia was recommended to:

- continue with its endeavours to better raise the awareness among all teachers of different classes on the importance of the development of reading literacy in children and their role in the process with a clear stress that this is not merely the task of the teachers of the Slovenian language;
- when planning activities for empowering of the headmasters, teachers, educators, school librarians and other professionals for better development of reading literacy in children closely cooperate with the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport and the Educational Research Institute in order that its activities are coordinated and to provide the implementation of activities of the programmes for pre-school children and primary school education and in line with the results of the international surveys;
- continue to define proposals and implement activities for the development of tools or toolkit for educators and teachers to determine reading literacy in children and to monitor their progress.

The Slovenian Book Agency was recommended to:

- in new strategic, action and annual plans clearly distinguish the activities and funds planned for the support of the public service to implement the public interest in the field of the developing reading literacy and reading culture from the support to other activities – funds allocated to publishing as a commercial activity.

Legal notice

This report on the basis of paragraph 3 of Article 1 of Court of Audit Act cannot be challenged before the courts and other state bodies.

Tomaž Vesel,
Auditor General

Sent to:

1. Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, by registered mail;
2. Ministry of Culture, by registered mail;
3. National Education Institute Slovenia, by registered mail;
4. Slovenian Book Agency, by registered mail;
5. dr. Jernej Pikalo, by registered mail;
6. dr. Stanislava Setnikar Cankar, by registered mail;
7. dr. Miroslav Cerar, by registered mail;
8. Klavdija Perger, by registered mail;
9. dr. Maja Zalaznik, by registered mail;
10. dr. Uroš Grilc, by registered mail;
11. mag. Julijana Bizjak Mlakar, by registered mail;
12. Gorazd Žmavc, by registered mail;
13. Anton Persak, by registered mail;
14. Dejan Prešiček, by registered mail;
15. mag. Zoran Poznič, by registered mail;
16. mag. Gregor Mohorčič, by registered mail;
17. Aleš Novak, by registered mail;
18. National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia, by registered mail;
19. archive.

7. ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1: Projects of the Ministry of Culture in the field of reading literacy performed within the sub-programmes *180305 Promotion and development of the Slovenian language* and *180301 Cultural activities of minorities*

Project	Service provider/holder	Period of the implementation
Unbundling the language	Association for domestic research	2014
Family Word Olympics	UPI People's University of Žalec	2014
JANES, Research camp of the digital Slovenian for secondary school students	University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts	2015
Popularisation of the linguistic sources and technologies with the help of presentation portal of web linguistic sources for the Slovenian language	TROJINA, institute for usable Slovenian	2015
Linguistic sources at the website: possibilities to use portal Fran, dictionaries of the Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, the Fran Ramovš Institute of the Slovenian Language	The Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, the Fran Ramovš Institute of the Slovenian Language	2015
Intensive beginner course of the Slovenian language for migrant children	University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts (Centre for Slovene as a Second and Foreign Language)	2015
In the hug of words	University of Maribor, Faculty of Education (with Reading badge of Slovenia)	2016-2017
The Slovenian language at hand	University of Maribor	2017-2021
Web portal Franček, Linguistic consultancy for teachers of the Slovenian language and School dictionary of the Slovenian language	The Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, the Fran Ramovš Institute of the Slovenian Language	2017-2021
It is easy to read: development of basics, methods, didactic and other tools for easy reading in Slovenia	Institute Risa, Centre for common, functional and cultural literacy	2017-2019
Synonyms dictionary of the modern Slovenian language From community for community	University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Computer and Information Science	2018-2019
My language in the digital world	University of Maribor	2018-2019
Digitalisation and accessibility of dictionaries	University of Primorska Universita del litorale	2018-2019

Project	Service provider/holder	Period of the implementation
Promotion of language game application for mobile phones	University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Social Sciences	2018-2019
Wikivir – Slovenian literature on the website	Slavic Society of Slovenia	2014-2017, 2018-2019
Summer camps of mother tongue of the Hungarian national minority in the Republic of Slovenia	Institute for culture of the Hungarian national minority of Lendava MAGYAR NEMZETISÉGI MŰVELŐDÉSI INTÉZET LENDVA	2014-2018
Children's newspaper Mri nevi minimulti	The Roma Society of Slovenia	2014-2018
Literary fruits	Vesna Andelković, self-employed in culture	2014
Language workshop of the Roma language – Romani chib	Romano vozo the Roma Association	2015
I like to read and listen too	Multiethnic cultural, educational, tourist and sport association	2015
Literary workshops MIŠ MAŠ	Cultural association Mihajlo Pupin	2015
Hungarian fairytale hours and workshops for pre-school children; fairytale backyard; poetry competition for primary school and secondary school students	Library – Cultural Centre of Lendava – Lendvai Könyvtár és kulturális központ	2015, 2016
Pru Prešerniskru dij – On Prešeren's day	The Roma Society of Slovenia	2014-2016
Children's ticket subscriptions 2016 – literary and theatre workshops	Cultural centre Marija Vera	2016
Fairytales workshops	Association for the development of the Roma minority – Preporod	2017
Feelings 2 (workshop on reading and creativity)	Roma cultural and tourist association Pušča	2017
Ticket subscriptions: Romane vištorije i džilava – literary and theatre workshops	Cultural centre Marija Vera	2017
RomToRom – promoting reading literacy among the Roma	Institute Krpujšnica, institute for the development of culture and education in the countryside, Bakovci	2017
Roma stories: the Roma oral tradition and modern story-telling	Institute for creativity, research and studying Azum	2017
Music literacy of the Roma children in Dolenjska region and 3 rd issue of 16 Slovenian-Roma poems slovensko-romane čhavorikanedžilava	Roma society Amala	2018
Intergenerational workshops: grandparents and grandchildren	Roma cultural, tourist, sport association Amari bas – Naša sreča, Vanča vas-Borejci	2018
Pru Prešerniskru dij – On Prešeren's day	Roma cultural, tourist, sport association Amari bas – Naša sreča, Vanča vas-Borejci	2018
Get to know us – workshops of the Roma history, culture and identity and specific Roma cultural production	Association of the Roma information and scientific and research centre of Slovenia – Anglunipe	2018

Project	Service provider/holder	Period of the implementation
Cultural project Fairytale creation in the Roma settlements in Dolenjska region	Romano vozó the Roma Association	2018
Children's picture dictionary	Multiethnic cultural, educational, tourist and sport association	2018
Fairytale for all generations	Multiethnic cultural, educational, tourist and sport association	2018
Literary workshops for children	Vesna Andelković, self-employed in culture	2018
Heritage of the Society of Kočevar Old Settlers for the young	Association of Kočevar Old Settlers organisations	2018

Source: data of the Ministry of Culture.

Attachment 2: List of the activities undertaken by the Slovenian Book Agency in the field of reading literacy and reading culture in the period from 1 January 2014 to 31 December 2018

Projects of the Slovenian Book Agency in the field of reading culture:

- project Growing up with a book²⁰⁵: for primary school students of the 7th grade and students of the 1st grade of the secondary schools from 2009 onwards;
- Project A Book's Journey²⁰⁶: for the 1st and 2nd three grades of the primary school from 2016 onwards;
- a campaign Closer to a book²⁰⁷: in 2014, the Slovenian Book Agency in cooperation with the RTV Slovenia and the Ministry of Culture carried out national campaign Closer to a book intended for promotion of reading culture, visiting bookshops and other shopping habits related to books;
- intergenerational reading²⁰⁸: in 2014, the Slovenian Book Agency in cooperation with the Reading badge of Slovenia – Slovenian Association of Friends of Youth developed a project Intergenerational integration through literary works whereby groups of young readers from secondary schools, 3rd three years of the primary schools and students and adults from the same town were brought together; the project was carried out with books from the collection Golden reader of the Reading badge of Slovenia – Slovenian Association of Friends of Youth and the project Growing up with a book of the Slovenian Book Agency;
- cooperation with Basketball team of Slovenia: traditional cooperation of the Slovenian Book Agency and the Basketball team of Slovenia in promoting reading and sport within the projects: No game without drama, Growing up with a book, Knjigajmo migajmo, whereby the Slovenian Book Agency for several years in a row has joined sport and books and promotes reading among the young with the assistance of sportsmen as their role models;
- cooperation with the National Education Institute Slovenia: the Slovenian Book Agency at the seminars organised by the National Education Institute Slovenia for teachers who teach the Slovenian language abroad (world and the EU) annually presents and (sometimes also) holds discussions with the authors of the selected books in the project Growing up with a book and presents the project A Book's Journey;
- Project Cultural bazaar: the Slovenian Book Agency coordinates the field of reading culture at the annual Cultural bazaar in Cankarjev dom and within the project prepares different presentations of the authors, books, fields of books in cooperation with the Reading badge of Slovenia – Slovenian Association of Friends of Youth;
- Book night: the Slovenian Book Agency cooperates with several co-organisers and stakeholders in the field when implementing and co-financing all-Slovenian campaign Book night.

²⁰⁵ [URL: <http://www.jakrs.si/bralna-kultura/rastem-s-knjigo/>], 27/8/2020.

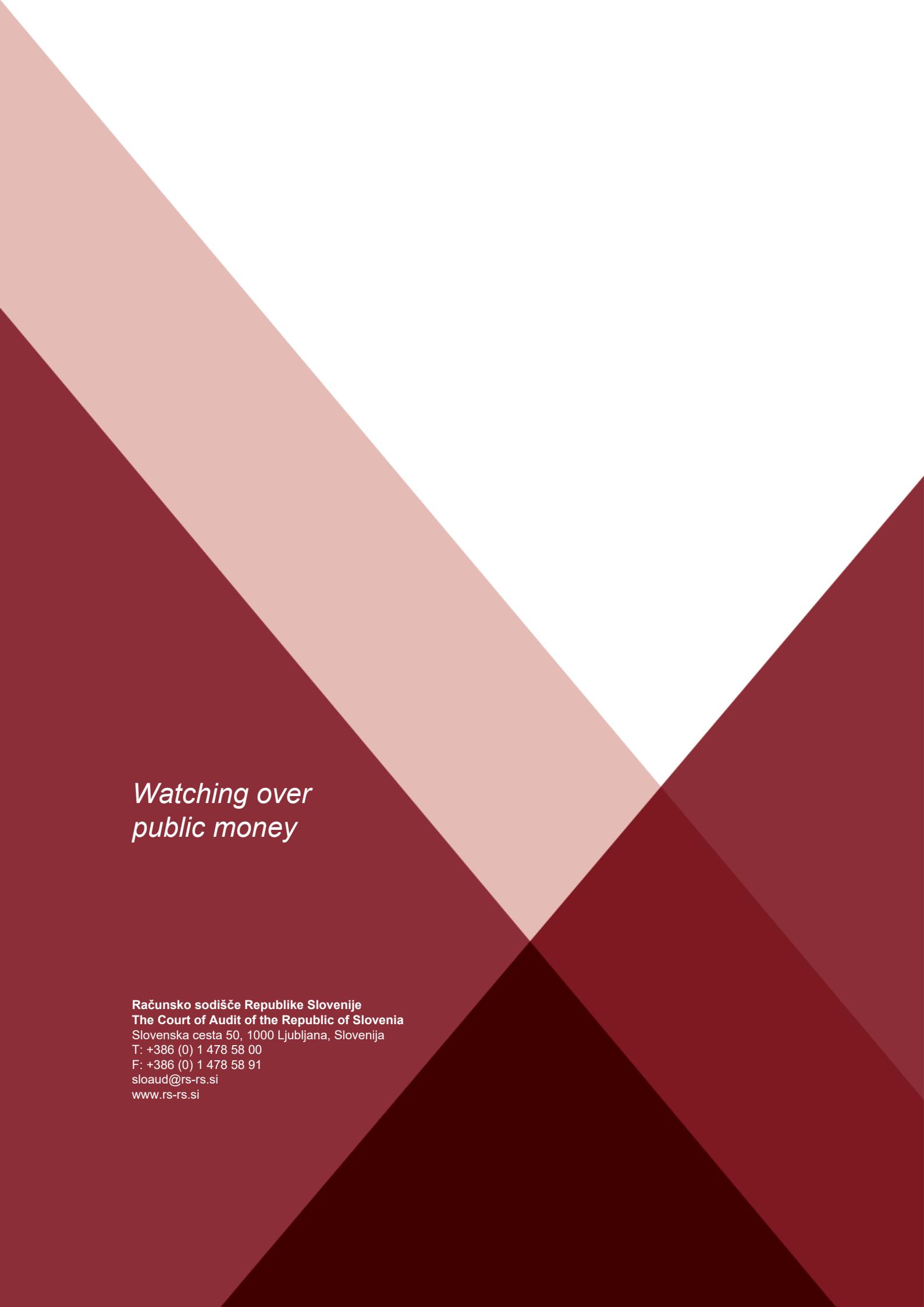
²⁰⁶ [URL: <http://www.jakrs.si/bralna-kultura/pot-knjige/>], 27/8/2020.

²⁰⁷ [URL: <http://www.jakrs.si/bralna-kultura/kampanja-blizji-knjigi/>], 27/8/2020.

²⁰⁸ [URL: <http://www.jakrs.si/bralna-kultura/kampanja-blizji-knjigi/>], 27/8/2020.

The Slovenian Book Agency in the period covered by the audit in the field of reading culture co-financed different programmes and projects by content from the reading literacy and reading culture, namely:

- 2 programmes in the field of book (one 3-year public call and one 4-year public call);
- 4 projects in the field of book (by 2016 the public call was 1-year, from (including) 2016 on it was 2-year);
- 4 projects in the field of bookshops (by 2016 the public call was 1-year, from (including) 2016 on it was 2-year);
- 5 one-year public calls Growing up with a book – primary school, 7th grade and students of 1st grade of the secondary school;
- public call for co-financing of communication actions for promoting reading and buying books, (1-year call, first published in 2018).



Watching over public money

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