



SLOVAKIA

INFOPACK - RECOGNITION OF LEARNING PERIODS ABROAD IN GENERAL SECONDARY EDUCATION

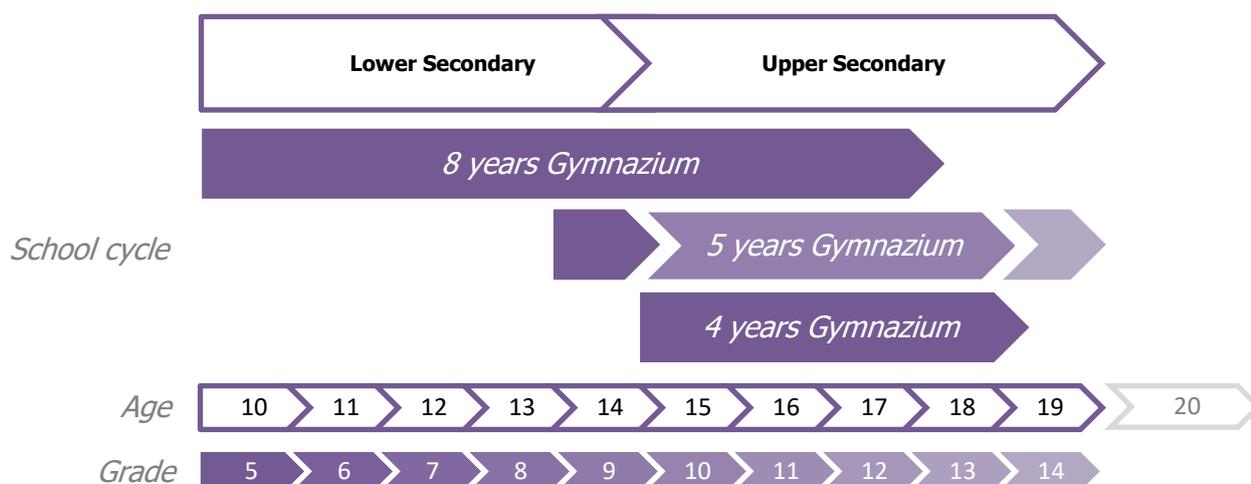
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The information below gives an overview of procedures¹ for the recognition of learning periods abroad in general secondary school. It can be consulted by pupils, as well as their families and teachers, who are or plan to be involved in long-term individual pupil mobility programmes abroad. Please note that this general overview does not include details on different programme types (which may be run by governmental agencies, civil society organisations, private companies or schools themselves) and such information can be obtained directly with the provider of the respective mobility programme.

¹ Based on data gathered in February 2021.

GENERAL SECONDARY EDUCATION SYSTEM



In Slovakia, education is compulsory until 16 years of age (end of 10th grade, the first year of upper secondary education). General secondary schools (*Gymnaziums*) provide three types of educational programmes:

- four-year cycle, starting after completing primary education in 9th grade (for bilingual *Gymnaziums* and conservatories)
- five-year cycle, usually bilingual, starting from 9th or 10th grade. If pupils start in 10th grade, they study for a further year.
- eight-year cycle, starting in 5th grade of primary education. In this case pupils study one year less overall

Graduation and Certification

The school leaving certificate is awarded to pupils who pass the final examination (*Maturita*), and the National Institute for Education is responsible for setting the target requirements for each subject. Pupils can be tested on any content of the four-year school cycle.

Maturita has two parts: written (March) and oral (end of May). Compulsory subjects are Slovak language and a foreign language and then at least two other subjects, for a maximum of five. Only Slovak, foreign languages and Mathematics are assessed in the written exams, and the other 2-3 subjects are tested orally. Pupils receive their result as a percentile so they can compare their performance with pupils from the whole country.

The school leaving certificate also shows the average grades from the previous year, however these marks do not count towards the *Maturita*.

The school leaving certificate provides access to higher education, and universities usually hold entrance examinations. *Maturita* grade counts for university entrance, and depending on the admission rules and the studies chosen, also marks from the 4 years of upper secondary school, and marks in specific subjects might be considered.

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For more information on the structure and features of the different national education systems in Europe please see the Eurydice overview: National Education Systems | Eurydice (europa.eu).

INFORMATION FOR PUPILS GOING ABROAD FROM SLOVAKIA

Age and grade

Pupils go abroad when they are in 10th, 11th or 12th grade². Most pupils go abroad during the second last year of school, when they are 17/18 years old.

Registration in the sending school

According to the Education law³, you must obtain permission from your school principal in order to go abroad for an exchange programme. You continue to be enrolled in your school in Slovakia while abroad.

Funding for the sending school

Schools are funded on the basis of the number of pupils enrolled on the 15th of September each year. For pupils enrolled as studying abroad schools receive 10 % of the funds they would receive were the pupil studying in the school full time⁴.

RECOGNITION OF LEARNING PERIODS ABROAD

The following information addresses learning periods abroad lasting either less than 5 months, or between 5 months and a full school year. According to the analysis conducted, there is no information available on recognition procedures for periods abroad shorter than 5 months and finishing after the end of the school year in Slovakia. In fact, mobility programmes foreseeing these timings and durations are not usually offered.

The same procedures are applied, irrespective of which country the learning period is spent in (EU or non-EU).

Please note that in the case of a mobility within a school-to-school partnership⁵ (e.g. Erasmus+) the learning agreement between sending and host school can be used as recognition tool only for periods shorter than 5 months. For periods of between 5 months and a full school year the procedure described below applies, on the top of a possible learning agreement.

² E. Briga, 'Recognition of school study periods abroad in Europe: An overview and policy recommendations. European Federation for Intercultural Learning', EFIL, Brussels, 2018.

³ Law n. 245/2008, art 147, https://www.vedatechnika.sk/SK/VedaATechnikaVSR/Legislatva/245_2008_skolsky_zakon.pdf

⁴ Information received from the Ministry of Education (MŠVVaŠ SR) on 3 March 2021.

⁵ within a school-to-school partnership, learning outcomes are usually recognised based on a learning agreement developed between the schools concerned.

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Periods of between 2 and less than 5 months

If the period abroad is shorter than 5 months, you are enrolled back in your home school and do not need to provide any transcript of results from the host school. Upon return, you must pass the exams of the first semester and will usually be allowed an additional month to take them.

Periods of between 5 months and a full school year

Recognition is based on your results transcript. This means that you must decide what subjects to study in the host country with the aim of matching them with the national curriculum in Slovakia⁶.

Once you return, you must contact your school principal and provide information on the subjects taken abroad and agree on any additional exams you need to take. You must also send the certificate of school attendance and the transcript of results issued by the host school to the Ministry of Education. You might also be asked to provide a detailed description of the subjects studied abroad⁷.

If the documents are in order validation of the period abroad by the ministry is straightforward. The ministry issues a converted transcript of results (to ensure the results are equivalent to marks in Slovakia), which you in turn present to the school principal who decides which additional exams you need to take (e.g. Slovak language).

This recognition procedure works quite well as most students going on an exchange with non-profit agencies have the year abroad recognised⁸.

Attending an additional year of school is not an acceptable option for pupils and parents as the school cycle is already long enough (e.g. pupils can be 20 years old by the time they finish bilingual *Gymnazium*), therefore recognition of the study period abroad is essential⁹.

INFORMATION FOR PUPILS HOSTED IN SLOVAKIA

Registration in the host school

The vast majority of exchange pupils are not enrolled as regular pupils of the school. If you wish to enrol as a regular pupil, you will have to pass an entrance examination for the secondary school and the school will then be issued with a unique registration number for you.

School principals decide on your placement based on the information from the sending school about subjects attended and marks obtained in the previous years. You may be placed with peers of the same age, but this is not always possible due to the limited number of pupils in each class. You can only be hosted in the 4th and final grade if you are hosted for a trimester or semester since the lessons offered during the second semester of the 4th grade are aimed specifically at preparing pupils for the end-of-school examination.

⁶ Briga, 2018.

⁷ Briga, 2018.

⁸ 95% according to AFS Slovakia

⁹ Briga, 2018.

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Funding for the host school

As exchange pupils are rarely enrolled, schools do not normally receive funding for them¹⁰.

Certification for hosted pupils

If you are not enrolled as a regular pupil, you are not entitled to receive the official transcript of marks in January and June (*Vysvedčenie*). However, some schools will issue this document for you anyway, although teachers claim hosted pupils cannot really be assessed on knowledge given the lack of proficiency in the language of instruction. Therefore, if you receive a transcript of marks, it will probably not be a full reflection of your results. You will however, receive a written evaluation where teachers describe your development in terms of transversal competences and knowledge of the local culture and language, and the subjects you studied. Some exchange organisations also provide a template for this kind of assessment, and most sending schools accept this document for recognition purposes¹¹.

Possibility of graduating in the host country during the exchange

You may complete upper secondary education in Slovakia at the discretion of the school principal who files a request for permission at regional level. However, this is a rare practice.

TESTIMONIAL

Paula from Slovakia: a full school year in France

"These will be the most beautiful months of your life."

I went on exchange to become fluent in French and make new friends.

Before leaving I had to deal mostly with bureaucracy: notifying my school, filling out documents, writing a letter about me and asking my teachers to write a recommendation letter.

I was lucky enough not to have many problems while on exchange and in that case, communicating with my host family always helped. They also helped me a lot overcoming the language barrier. For example, we had an agreement with my host family that whenever I made a mistake, they would correct me. One of my host brothers blamed me (just for fun) for being there eight months and still making mistakes, but on the day of my departure I surprised him and I corrected him. Even French people don't speak correctly sometimes!

¹⁰ Information received from hosting coordinator of AFS Slovakia on 4 March 2021.

¹¹ Ibid.

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Recognition: easier than it seemed

When I came back from France, I could enrol back in my home school. At first it seemed difficult because I had to pass a few exams to continue studying with my peers, but when I look back, it wasn't as hard as it seemed.

I consider the exchange as an important period of self-discovery and adaptation to a new culture. It is an experience that I would definitely recommend and, despite some small obstacles at the beginning like culture shock, they will be the most beautiful months of your life.

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