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Mapping and stock taking of Scouts for Green Apprenticeship

Country Snapshot Slovenia

Developed by: School Center Nova Gorica

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Introduction: definition of the landscape of SDGs and Green Deal implementation in your country across the VET and business ecosystem

Vocational and technical education must adjust and respond quickly to the economic, technological and social changes brought by globalization and individualization, automation, robotization and digitalization of production processes, and the transition to a green economy.

The Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training is responsible for preparing proposals for systemic solutions and measures as well as supporting various education providers and other stakeholders in the field of VET.

The Slovenian Centre for Vocational Education and Training ensures the integration and implementation of the objectives and contents of the VETR in vocational and professional education in various fields:

- Embedding sustainable development content in vocational standards,
- the integration of sustainable development content in VET programs,
- the development of teaching materials to support education for sustainable development.
- advising and proposing measures to improve the implementation of the VETR objectives.

Several projects in the VET system aim to transform vocational education to be sustainable and pursue a green deal (within schools, Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training, Ministry of Education, National Education Institute Slovenia, etc.). Erasmus's projects are very important, also for promoting green mobility for both learners and teachers.

A vocational standard which is the link between the education system, the labour market, and the economy and links the fundamental purpose of education and the goals of the economy is currently under renovation. They want to change the vocational standards that will follow the sustainable goals and green transition (Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for vocational education and training n.d).

Nowadays, integrating and planning social, environmental, and economic impacts into business processes is essential if a company is to be successful and competitive in the marketplace in the long term. Many companies in Slovenia are proving that sustainable business planning is beneficial and that they can achieve both sustainability and financial success at the same time (Spirit Slovenija, 2020).

Slovenia is gradually making progress in productivity and most of its key factors, but its structural development in terms of transition to innovation-driven growth and circular economy is too slow, and the modernization and transformation processes are too shallow. This is reflected in the relatively slow narrowing of the development gap with the EU average, and the still large development gap with the innovation leaders. The corporate sector has demonstrated a high degree of resilience, as reflected in its ability to cope with cost pressures and its strong financial position; export performance improved until 2021. However, a successful and, from the perspective of further development, urgent transition to an integrated, smart circular economy requires more decisive action. Urgent action is needed to significantly accelerate investments and structural changes in both the government and corporate sectors aimed at a strategic transition to innovation-driven growth and a low-carbon circular economy, accelerated human resource development and strengthening of social capital, and a more agile business environment with a strengthened ecosystem approach (Poročilo o produktivnosti 2022).

Introducing a sustainable approach to the operation of the company can mean gaining a competitive advantage and business success. Many companies have already faced these challenges by introducing a sustainable approach into their strategic and operational operations, thus further training them for successful operations. They introduced various programs: from efficient use (of natural resources), demanding standards of environmental protection, care for employees, cooperation with the local environment, and fair trade to the integration of cellular systems and models for a sustainable approach or social responsibility.

Achieving a sustainable future represents an organizational challenge and new changes. The biggest focus is on senior management, which is key to realizing a sustainable future. There for, the initiators and those who have the greatest influence on the realization of the goals must give clear instructions and guidelines. However, the excellence of all employees in the chain of organizations and that everyone works towards common goals is crucial.

The success of the transition to a low-carbon circular economy can be measured in terms of emissions, energy, and material productivity. Slovenia lags behind the EU average in all three areas. Of particular importance is the conservation of biodiversity and natural resources, including through sustainable agriculture and forestry. To achieve the ambitious targets set, it will be crucial to use all available financial resources effectively and to achieve a system change towards clean and efficient solutions through new knowledge, innovation, and sustainable investments (Poročilo o produktivnosti 2022).



Quantitative indicators on indicators on SDGs and Green Deal implementation in your country across the VET and business ecosystem in Slovenia

Slovenia, as one of the signatory countries, is fully committed to all the goals of Agenda 2030, which it is one of the most comprehensive action plans to date. The Government of the Republic of Slovenia has until now carried out two voluntary reviews of the implementation of the goals in the 2030 Agenda in Slovenia. The first one (Voluntary National Review for Slovenia 2017) she presented at the political forum for sustainable development at a high level between 10 and 19 July 2017 in New York and second one in July 2020. An overview of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the national level in Slovenia is being prepared by the Government Service Republic of Slovenia for Development and European Cohesion Policy (SVRK).

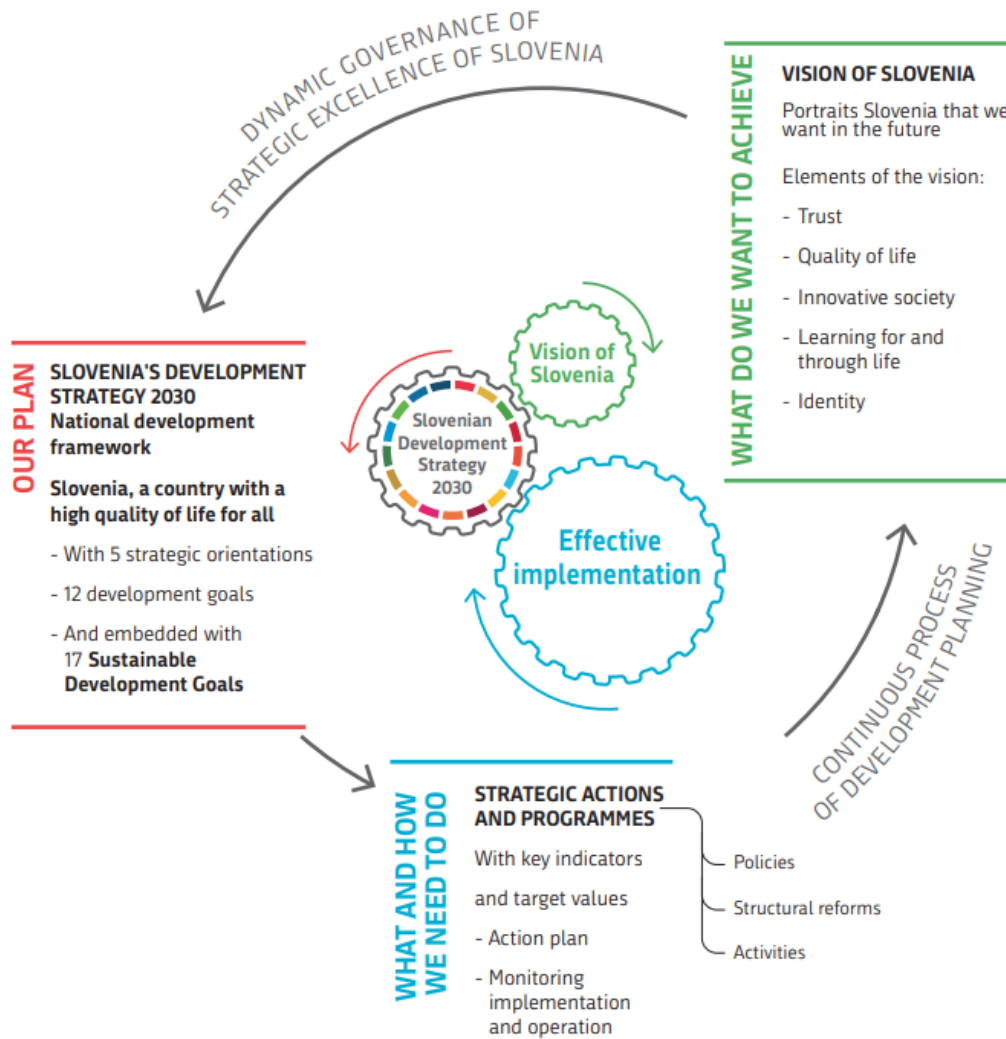
The Development Strategy of Slovenia 2030 is the overarching development document of our country, which is at the forefront quality life for all and includes the sustainable development goals of Agenda 2030 in its contents. In the second the voluntary national review of the achievement of Slovenia's sustainable development goals shows the state and progress in achieving the goals of sustainable development. Designing document was based on an inclusive approach, active participation of stakeholders and vulnerable groups and consultation with various stakeholders (local, regional and national bodies, civil society, company) (Uresničevanje agende 2030 n.d).

For the purposes of transparency, inclusive preparation and the possibility of further monitoring of the implementation of the agenda for sustainable development until 2030 and individual sustainable development goals, was established in 2020 special website (<https://slovenia2030.si/>). Data on the movement of all indicators can be found on it for Slovenia from 2015 onwards (the monitoring of some dates back to the period before the adoption of the Agenda for sustainable development until 2030), the course of the process of inclusive preparation, reports from individual consultations and a tab with current content, examples of good practices and challenges faced by individual segments companies or businesses in Slovenia (Implementacija ciljev trajnostnega razvoja, 2020).

Slovenian development framework until 2030

On 7 December 2017, the Government of the Republic of Slovenia adopted Slovenian Development Strategy 2030, the umbrella development framework of the country, which puts the quality of life for all at the forefront. With five strategic orientations and twelve interrelated development goals, it lays new long-term development foundations for Slovenia, and by including the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations, it ranks Slovenia among the countries that have recognized the importance of global responsibility to the environment and society.





The preparation of a new long-term development strategy for the country was required, as Slovenia has changed its development foundations after the crisis, and new global trends and challenges arose.

While designing the development path to a better life for all the people of Slovenia, which is defined by the Vision of Slovenia, we are at the same time aware of our co-responsibility in the global environment. Slovenian Development Strategy 2030 therefore also includes the implementation of the global development plan of the United Nations – the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The quality of life for all the people of Slovenia will be reflected in

- better opportunities for work, education and creativity,
- a more dignified, safe and active life in a healthy and clean environment,
- more active involvement in democratic decision-making and co-management of society.

The strategic orientations of the state to achieve a better quality of life are

- an inclusive, healthy, safe and responsible society,
- learning for and through life,
- a highly productive economy that creates added value for all,
- well-preserved natural environment and
- high level of cooperation, competence and governance efficiency.

In the implementing of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Slovenia has shown through various legal bases and adopted strategies that it is ready to enter a decade of concrete measures that will make a key contribution to more effective achievement of the sustainable development goals. Even though it has achieved some set goals (early), it still records a gap between the set indicator values until 2030 and the actual situation in several areas. Systematic and effective implementation of the Slovenian Development Strategy 2030 is crucial for the development of Slovenia (Strategija razvoja Slovenije 2030, 2017).

In the field of sustainable development, Slovenia ranks 15th among 163 countries. It achieves the best results in eliminating extreme forms of poverty, ensuring decent work and economic growth, and in the field of industry, innovation and infrastructure. Progress has also been made in the past year in strengthening peace, justice and strong institutions.

This is what this year's report on achieving the goals of sustainable development of the 2030 Agenda, published by SDSN (Sustainable Development Solutions Network), says.

In achieving the goals of sustainable development, Slovenia recorded progress in all indicators, except for the corruption perception index, where the country's rating dropped significantly.

SLOVENIA

OECD Countries

OVERALL PERFORMANCE

COUNTRY RANKING

SLOVENIA

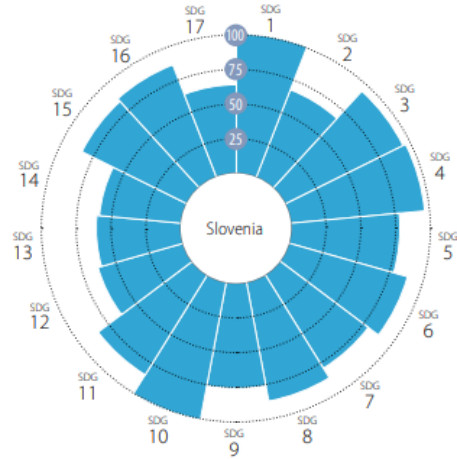
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COUNTRY SCORE



REGIONAL AVERAGE: 77.2

AVERAGE PERFORMANCE BY SDG



SDG DASHBOARDS AND TRENDS



(Sustainable Development Report Slovenia 2023)

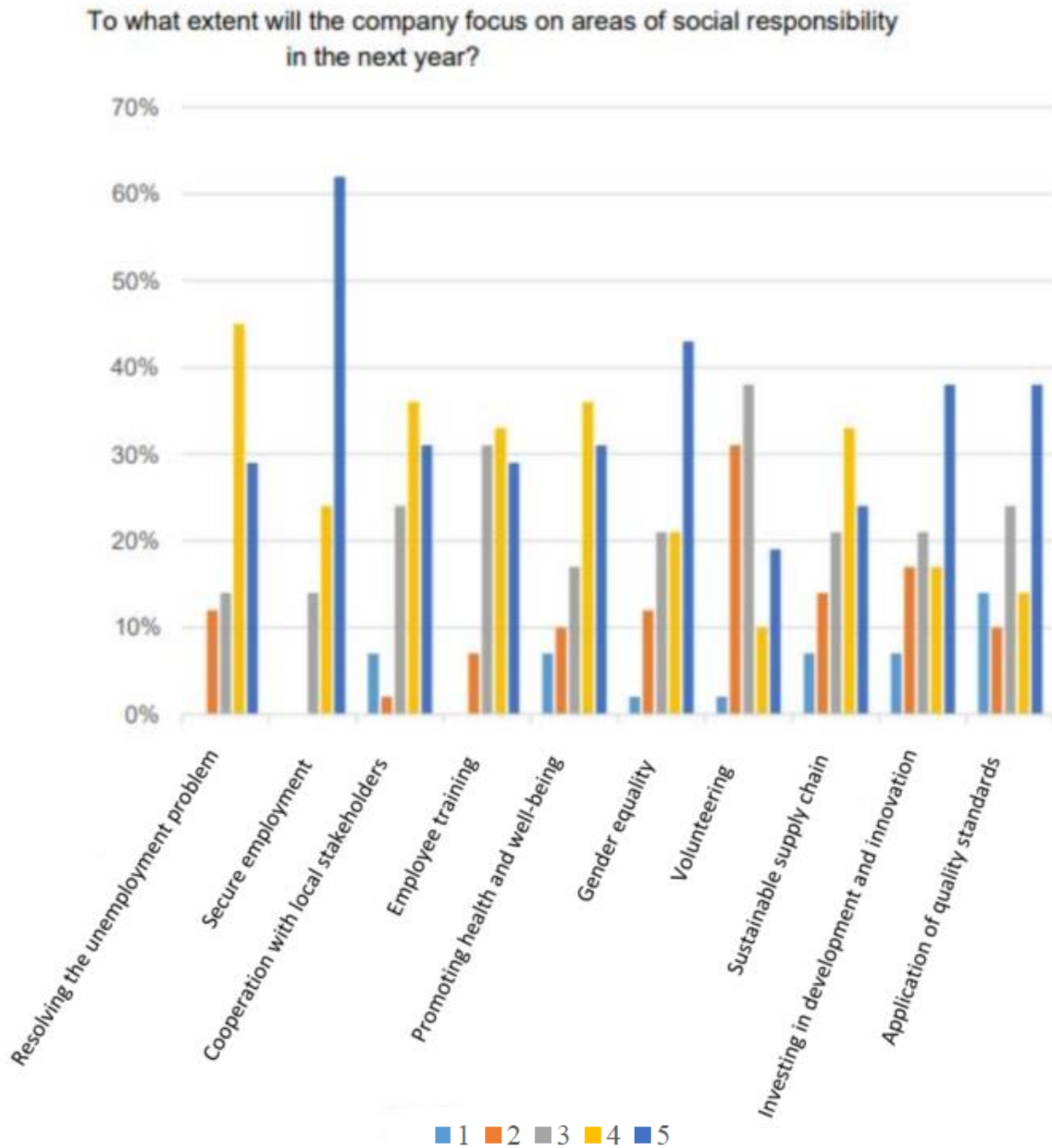
In business ecosystem through their activities, companies influence the degradation of the environment and social and economic issues. Due to increasing transparency and growing social expectations for sustainable responsible behaviour, companies are often forced to engage in sustainable operations, which aim to reduce negative impacts on the environment, community and economy, while simultaneously achieving profit. Despite the fact that various researches emphasize the positive effects of sustainable business on company performance, it is important to point out that the connection between company performance and sustainable business is complex and that sustainable business does not necessarily guarantee that the company will also operate successfully.

In one of the researches, which was carried out as part of the Master's work on the population of the 500 fastest-growing companies in Slovenia in 2019, they determine to what extent fast-growing companies in Slovenia focus on various areas of social responsibility and the protection of the natural environment in the

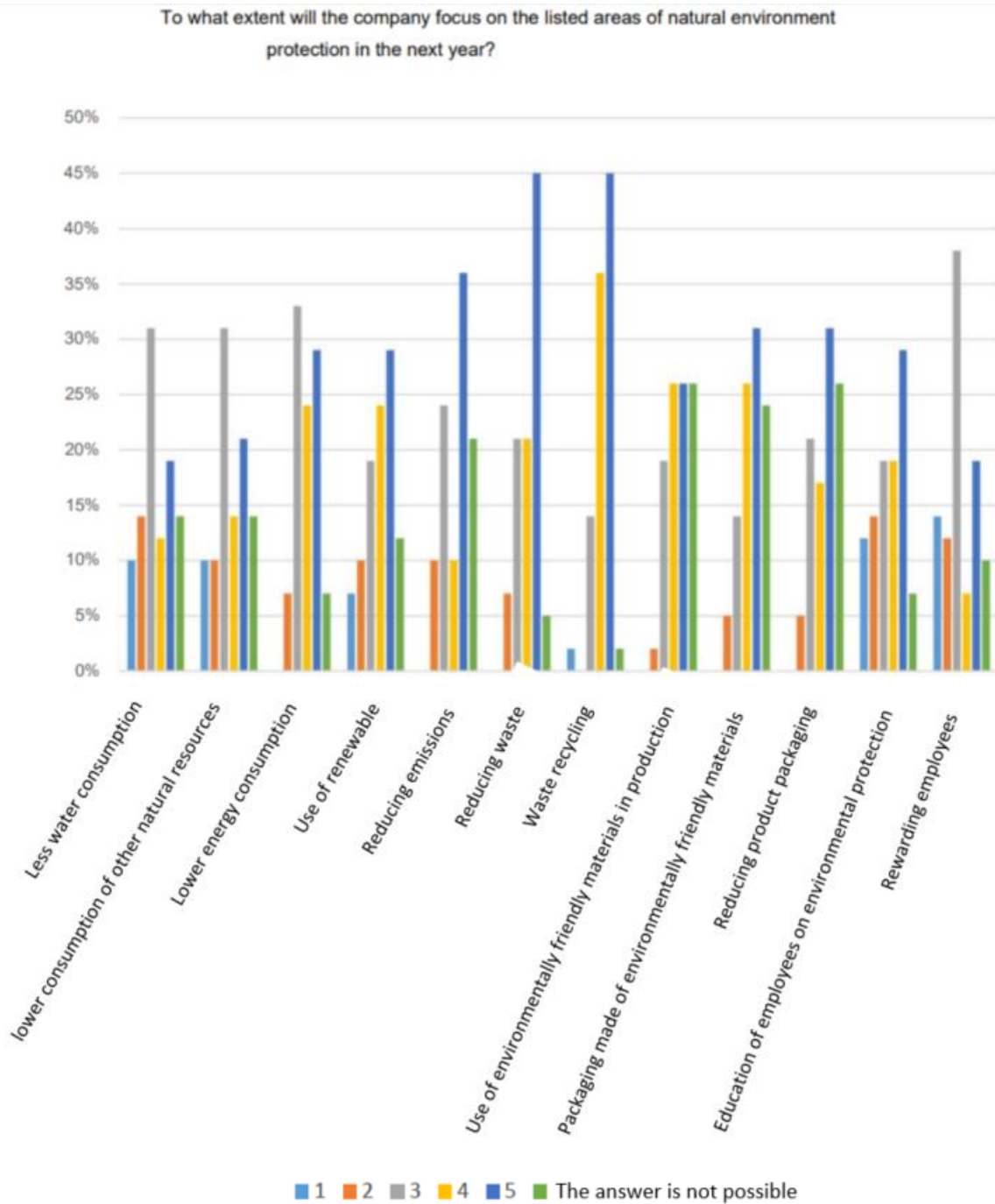
coming year, and which are the most important factors that affect the sustainable business operations of companies. In the research, the sample included 42 companies.

Most companies in the sample are engaged in wholesale and retail trade, transport, storage or catering (24%), followed by manufacturing activities, mining, and other industry (19%), construction (17%), professional, scientific and technical and other various business activities (14%), information and communication activities (10%) and agriculture, hunting, forestry, fishing (2%). 14% of the respondents answered that they are engaged in other activities that were not defined among the possible choices. These companies identified as their activity: manufacturing of goods not elsewhere classified (2%), electronics (2%), transport (2%), printing activities (2%), metal processing (2%) and services (2%). None of the companies in the sample is engaged in financial and insurance activities or in real estate business.

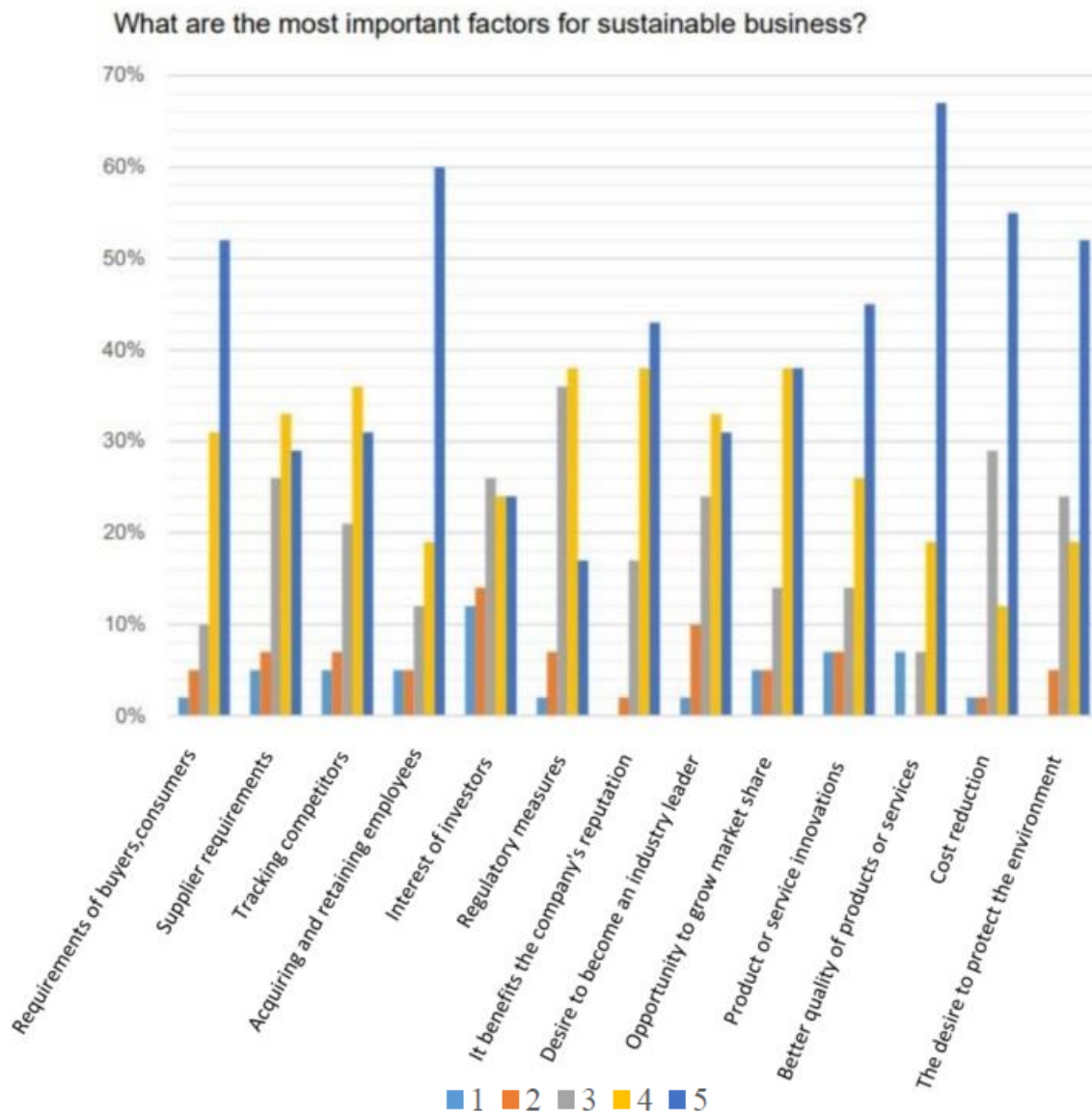
Figure shows the percentage of responses for each sub-question (contained ten sub-questions) on the topic of corporate social responsibility. (Question it was measured by using a five-point Likert scale (where 1 meant "Not a priority at all" and 5 "Very important priority").



The graph below shows the proportion of responses to each sub-question (contained twelve sub-questions) on the topic of protecting the natural environment. (Question it was measured by using a five-point Likert scale (where 1 meant "Not a priority at all" and 5 "Very important priority" the respondents also had the option "Answer not possible" for the question).



The graph below shows the proportion of responses for each sub-question (contained thirteen sub-questions. In this question, respondents had the option of answering "Other", where they could indicate factors that were not covered in the question and assess their impact) regarding the key factors of sustainable business.



The results of the entire survey indicate that fast-growing companies in Slovenia focus to a considerable extent on both socially responsible operations and practices of protecting the natural environment.

The companies in the sample in the field of social responsibility attached the highest importance to secure employment. With a lower degree of certainty, however, we can summarize that companies attached the least importance to volunteering. The results regarding the protection of the natural environment indicate that the companies in the sample attributed higher importance to recycling waste, reducing packaging, using packaging made from environmentally friendly materials and a lower importance of lower consumption of water and raw materials as well as rewarding and training employees.

The results regarding the factors of sustainable business indicate that the companies consider the

requirements of customers and consumers, the acquisition and retention of the desired personnel, the benefits of the company's reputation, better quality of products and services, and the desire to protect the environment among the more important factors. However, they attribute less importance to regulatory requirements and the interests of investors.

Many companies publicly communicate the goals and practices of sustainable business or social responsibility to their stakeholders with the help of various reports. Such practices are especially common in various corporations, but less common in smaller and private companies. Due to the lack of publicly available information, it is therefore difficult to assess the extent to which such companies focus on sustainability and what contribution they have to the environment, society and the economy (S. Mali, 2021).

Green transition of the corporate sector is also accelerated by legislation, and the pressure will increase in the coming period. The Green Deal and the Fit for 55 (2021) package will significantly change the business conditions for EU companies in the coming years. In addition to the more ambitious (macro) environmental targets and the expansion and tightening of the emissions trading system, a few other laws are currently being passed or implemented that will also have an impact on business operations:

- a) In the area of reporting and consequently access to finance under the new EU taxonomy (EC, 2021): sustainability reporting will become mandatory for all large companies and for listed SMEs, but this type of reporting is very likely to prevail in access to all types of financing, as reporting and financing conditions for financial institutions will become much stricter (Also in Slovenia, banks are, for example, already upgrading processes for evaluating clients and transactions).
- b) (Project finance, loans) with sustainable elements, as the Regulation on sustainability related
- c) In February 2022, the EC proposed the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive (EC, 2022), which is expected to improve corporate governance practices to better integrate risk management and mitigation processes of human rights and environmental risks and impacts, including those stemming from value chains, into corporate strategies.
- d) According to the proposed Regulation establishing a framework for setting ecodesign requirements for sustainable products (EC, 2022), the requirements regarding durability, reliability, reusability, upgradability and repairability of products on the EU market, product energy efficiency and recycled content of products are to be extended and tightened, all products are to have their own digital passport in the future, and eco-design and energy efficiency labelling is to be strengthened.
- e) Changes are also expected within individual sectors, in the areas of textiles (e.g. by limiting the release of microplastics and avoiding fast fashion) and construction and also industrial emissions, eco-labelling of products, packaging regulations and the like.

At the same time, consumers, investors and employees increasingly expect a focus on sustainability, which will become an even more prevalent trend in the future, partly due to generational effects.

In Slovenia, 49% of consumers consider ESG criteria important, 20% take them into account in their purchasing decisions, 12% see them as a reason to change their brand or supplier, while only 6% are willing to pay a price premium of more than 3% for products that meet ESG criteria (Poročilo o produktivnosti, 2022).

Sustainable transformation of the business sector Slovenia is not yet exploiting its full potential when it comes to activities related to the circular economy, environmental protection and resource management. Although at 1.3%, the share of GDP generated by activities related to the circular economy (These are

activities related to recycling (of waste and materials), repair, maintenance) methodology in Slovenia is the second highest in the EU (1% of GDP), it remained unchanged in the decade after 2010. On the other hand, Slovenia lags significantly behind in broadly defined activities related to environmental protection and resource management, ranking 19th (1.6% of GDP compared to 2.3% in the EU as a whole), and the share has actually been declining since the peak in 2014 (1.8% of GDP), indicating significant untapped potential. Data on employment show a similar picture: Slovenia ranks 8th in terms of the share of employees in activities related to the circular economy in total employment (2%; EU: 1.8%) and 7th in activities related to environmental protection and resource management (3%; EU: 2.2%). However, in the case of the former indicator, the share has been decreasing since 2015, while in the case of the latter it has remained stable, meaning that it has not increased, widening the gap with the leading countries (Finland, Estonia and Luxembourg).

Slovenia is making progress in the field of eco-innovation but not fast enough to narrow the gap with the EU average over the last two years. According to the Eco-Innovation Index (EC, 2022e), Slovenia improved its position from 16th to 11th place in 2018–2020, and since then the gap with the EU average has remained unchanged. Progress is the result of increased eco-innovation inputs (in particular government investment in environmental and energy research), the impact of which is mainly reflected in the increased number of scientific publications in the field of eco-innovation, while companies have also stepped up their efforts to obtain environmental certificates. At the same time, the changes presented are not (yet) reflected in improved resource efficiency or socio-economic outcomes, where Slovenia still lags noticeably behind. Case studies in Slovenia also show that better results can be expected if input increases, and that sustainability and social orientation are also reflected in a higher innovation intensity of companies.

Although the data on internal monitoring of the achievement of carbon emissions and energy targets are very encouraging... According to the EIB (2022), the share of Slovenian companies that have in place internal carbon and energy targets and monitoring increased significantly in 2020. At 57%, Slovenia has the third highest share of such enterprises and among large enterprises this share is the second highest in the EU, which represents significant progress compared to the situation a decade ago. According to this share, Slovenia is now 18 p.p. above the EU average and lags only 7 p.p. behind the leader Sweden (Poročilo o produktivnosti, 2022).

In Slovenia, it is also very important to achieve the goals of sustainable development and the Green Deal, the functioning regional development policies which promote sustainable development in the broadest sense, realise development potentials and eliminate development barriers in all Slovenian regions while preserving resources and opportunities for the development of future generations. There are great differences in regional development in Slovenia and we are particularly active in the priority regional policy areas. In these areas we implement special measures and coordinate key projects. In areas with high unemployment we implement programmes for promoting competitiveness.

Within the regional policy we stimulate the development of social entrepreneurship, cooperatives and economic democracy. One of the incentives is the transfer of unneeded state-owned assets to municipalities and public funds when they can be used in new development projects. The Slovenian Regional Development Fund is responsible for developing incentives.

Regional policy objectives

The vision of regional development is to have effectively managed, dynamic and creative regions with their own identity that are able to recognise and exploit global development opportunities. This regional development is based on economic efficiency, social justice and environmental responsibility.

The promotion of balanced regional development has the following general objectives:

- to increase economic, environmental and social capital in development regions and increase its efficiency in terms of the competitiveness of the economy, the quality of life and the sustainable use of natural resources,
- to eliminate structural problems in disadvantaged areas and reduce their development lag,
- to realise and increase the developmental potential of Slovenian regions through international cooperation (Regional development, 2023).

Sustainable mobility

Within the framework of the aforementioned Slovenian Platform for Sustainable Mobility (<https://www.sptm.si/>), a number of training activities on various topics of sustainable mobility (training on the preparation of municipal integrated transport strategies, evaluation of sustainable urban mobility plans, seminar on planning a healthy city together) are carried out. The portal also offers a collection of guidelines

on sustainable mobility, manuals and other materials. The key task of the state in the field of sustainable mobility and transport policy is to establish an integrated approach to transport and mobility planning with a view to solving the related challenges faced not only by the state but also by the regions and the local communities, and to contribute to their key development potentials (Slovenska platforma za trajnostno mobilnost, 2023).

An integrated transport strategy is the key tool of the new approach to transport planning. It aims to solve transport-related challenges of municipalities, thus helping them achieve their key development potentials. It is oriented towards promoting walking, cycling, public passenger transport and other alternative forms of sustainable mobility while limiting private motorized vehicle traffic. The basis for changing the situation in Slovenia is providing the basic human right to access education, employment and leisure activities to all citizens of the Republic of Slovenia regardless of age and social structure. The social, environmental and economic aspects constitute the foundation for sustainable development.

The Transport Development Strategy until 2030 deals with the transport system in a comprehensive manner, thus enabling greater synergies in achieving the objectives of transport and spatial policies on the national level and of other policies, and greater control of the impact of transport on the environment and the economy (Sustainable mobility, 2023).

Further strengthening of education in the field of sustainable development is essential for a faster sustainable transformation in the face of great needs. In Slovenia, content related to sustainable development is present in primary and secondary education, and the results of the PISA 2018 survey (OECD, 2020) point to gaps in knowledge of climate issues, which are closely related to environmental issues and sustainable development, among fifteen-year-olds and knowledge the impact of economic development on the environment. It is encouraging that the program Integrating climate content into the wider process of development of education is being implemented, within the framework of which kindergartens, primary and secondary schools and educational organizations for adults carry out many

activities (MIZŠ, 2021). In Slovenia, with the great needs of the business sector, the development of employees' digital knowledge and skills is also too slow. At the same time, with the growing difficulties of companies in recruiting ICT experts and the growing needs of the economy for an effective digital transformation, it is imperative to increase enrolment in ICT studies in tertiary education. In addition, the presence of ICT content in the education of children and youth should be strengthened, as Slovenia, unlike some other EU countries, does not have a compulsory computer science subject in either primary (EK/EACEA/Eurydice, 2019) or secondary vocational schools (EK, 2020). The implementation of distance education during the covid-19 epidemic has encouraged the use of ICT in education and increased the need for it, as well as encouraged additional investments for this purpose (Poročilo o produktivnosti 2022).

As early as 2008, the Organisation and Financing of Education Act listed among the fundamental objectives of education and training also the “educating for sustainable development and active integration into a democratic society which includes deeper understanding and a responsible attitude towards oneself, one’s own health, other people, towards one’s own and other cultures, natural and social environment, and future generations”. In 2016 and 2017, an analysis of curricula and curriculum documents was carried out in terms of the integration of key concepts and competences of sustainable development, compliance with ESD principles, and the presence of didactic approaches/methods and forms of work aimed at implementing the ESD objectives. Identified shortcomings pertain to the fundamental principles of this educational concept and indicate that sustainable development is not yet taught as a broad and comprehensive concept involving interconnected environmental, economic and social issues, whereas environmental categories are the ones with greatest prevalence. Although presented more frequently, some very relevant environmental categories are not included in curricula and curriculum documents (such as low-carbon economy, adaptation to climate change, sustainable mobility, sustainable construction, circular economy), or are only found in one or two curricula, whereas some other categories are not properly addressed. Analysis of curriculum implementation in a small sample of educational institutions that are on the active side of the spectrum showed that, despite implementing a great diversity of activities and showing a deliberate strategic approach to the introduction of ESD, school environments are nevertheless often limited to one-off environmental actions and only a small part of the activities is aimed at changing mindsets and introducing a systemic approach to sustainable development.

Similarly, the findings of the 2018 PISA survey (OECD, 2020) highlight gaps in 15-year-olds’ knowledge of climate issues, which is closely linked to environmental issues and sustainable development, and in their knowledge of the impact that economic development has on the environment.

To improve the situation, the Climate Goals and Content in Education (2022–2023) project, funded by the Climate Change Funding Programme, is underway. The key activities of the project are the development and implementation of an integrated programme of public awareness-raising and education on climate change in the context of education for sustainable development. Detailed guidance will be provided as part of the curricula, the development of educational institutions or organizations, and the training of teachers and other staff. Moreover, public institutions will develop new teaching materials, manuals and didactic kits for programme implementation, or update the existing ones.

Planned activities also include an update to national guidelines for education and training for sustainable development, educational programmes, curricula and other curriculum documents and materials comprising climate objectives and content. Also included is the preparation of a draft plan for introducing the programme in preschool education, primary and secondary schools and other educational organizations in Slovenia, establishing a systemic approach to education and training and raising awareness

about climate change, and developing competences for the transition to a low-carbon economy and society.

In addition, activities are underway to integrate sustainable mobility into the education system under the Operational Programme for the Implementation of the European Cohesion Policy. In 2021, the Behaviour and Education Culture Strategy for Sustainable Mobility of Children and Adolescents in the Education System until 2024 was developed to guide leaders and experts in developing and strengthening knowledge and skills and awareness-raising regarding the importance of sustainable mobility and introducing children to the broader framework of sustainable mobility. National conferences on Implementation of Sustainable Mobility in Education are held annually, and manuals on sustainable mobility have been prepared for secondary school teachers.

The Eco-school programme, coordinated by the DOVES-FEE association, is Slovenia's most established programme among the ones that follow the objectives laid out in the documents on environmental education and education for sustainable development. The programme has been implemented in 1995 and is supported by the European Commission and the UN. Its objective is to systematically promote environmental education and raise awareness among young people, especially about the importance of protecting the environment and human health. Over the years, Eco-Schools have had a tremendous impact on environmental awareness of the population, especially young people, and Slovenia is considered to be one of the most successful countries regarding the implementation of this programme.

In line with the NECP and the Slovenian Development Strategy (SDS), the Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP) allocates a share of research, innovation and education resources to the green transition. The plan lays out actions for all levels of education.

- Renovating the education system for the green and digital transitions (reformation of curricula and exam catalogues in selected areas, setting up a comprehensive support environment)
- Modernisation of secondary vocational training and vocational education including apprenticeships

(Slovenia's Eight National Communication and Fifth Biennial Report, 2023).

Qualitative descriptions of SDGs and Green Deal implementation in your country across the VET and business ecosystem in Slovenia

As part of the qualitative research, we interviewed 10 various representatives of vocational education and training and company representatives (5 from VET system and 5 from business system). We also analysed examples of good practice, and which sector is more advanced than others. Based on the research, we came to different conclusions:

Interviewees from the VET system (we interviewed VET teachers, Erasmus + project managers, employees at the Institute of the RS for vocational education and training), have explained that the level of awareness of sustainable development and the Green Deal is still low, but is gradually increasing. This was confirmed by almost all interviewees within the scope of the research. Awareness is increasing especially in the field of goals that include caring for vulnerable groups, health, a good working environment, saving water, and preserving life in its and other ecosystems. Recently, they have noticed that there is a special emphasis on saving energy and water (energy-saving light bulbs, turning off lights, energy-saving taps...). They emphasized that they are getting involved in more and more initiatives and projects that support sustainable development and the green agreement in the field of VET system.

The interviews from VET system also said, that they often involved in initiatives when it comes to a day of the year, for example: “water day”, “health day”, etc. They emphasized, that is most awareness in schools in the field of climate change, clean water, and life on land.

Some interviewees from VET system (who works on Erasmus+ projects) also pointed out the importance of the involvement of vocational schools in green travel (green Erasmus), which promotes knowledge, skills and attitudes towards climate change and sustainable development. They emphasized that the program increase the number of opportunities for mobility in green areas, which are of strategic importance for the sustainable development of our planet, with a special emphasis on rural development (sustainable farming, natural resource management, soil protection, bio-agriculture). They described one example: in the mobility of professional staff (teachers) in education, they can choose topics (e.g. installation of irrigation systems, production of feeders for livestock from bark) of sustainable development on portals such as eTwinning, School Education Gateway, ePale... and according to these obtain additional funds for green mobility, which are dedicated to the implementation of the sustainability goals. In addition, everyone has the opportunity to participate in mobility (especially marginal groups, vulnerable groups, disabled people, etc.). In 2021, organization CMEPIUS also published the publication Zeleni Erasmus+ - a manual for the implementation of environmentally friendly practices in the projects of the Erasmus+ program (Publication Zeleni Erasmus+ <https://www.cmeplus.si/objave/dokument/zeleni-erasmus-prirocnik-za-implementacijo-okolju-prijaznih-praks-v-projektih-programa-erasmus-na-podrocju-izobrazevanja-in-usposabljanja>).

Some interviewees emphasized, that vocational education and training is currently under renovation. They presented some very important projects, which strive to renew vocational education and training in the direction of sustainable and green development are:

- Modernization of secondary vocational and professional education 2022 – 2026
- Promotion of excellence in vocational and professional education and promotional activities 2022 - 2026
- LIFE-IP Care4Climate 2022 – 2024
- Climate goals and content in education 2022 – 31.10.2023

- Combined learning model for secondary professional education in the field of mechanical engineering and the development of students' and teachers' competencies for digital education (Academy for combined learning) 2022–2024
- Etc.

We found out from interviews that in the area of the VET system, they are in the phase of placing competencies in the area of sustainability, because they want these competencies to be part of the professional standards.

Based on qualitative research we found out, that in general, there is greater awareness and implementation of practices in the direction of sustainable and green development in business ecosystem than in VET system, anyway exist many opportunities for improvements. We interviewed employees from the field of banking/finance, insurance, logistics, automotive and metal industries. Interviewees from business system said, that many companies where they work, have formulated a sustainable development strategy, where the main goal is economic growth while taking into account the protection of the environment. Some companies are participants of Academy of sustainable business strategies and models (TPSMP Academy), implemented by the SPIRIT Slovenia agency (The public agency of the Republic of Slovenia for the promotion of entrepreneurship, internationalization, foreign investments and technology). Usually, companies design a plan for the sustainable business transformation of the company.

In support of the implementation of SDGs and Green Deal in business ecosystems interviews emphasized beside TPSMP Academy also: VISION of Slovenia until 2050 Strategy of smart specialization, Strategy of Slovenia until 2030, Strategy of business excellence until 2030, Strategy of a long-lived society etc. They said that companies are thus involved in various projects, programs and strive to be cleaner, more environmentally friendly, more innovative, etc. They highlighted a few example: investing a lot in infrastructure for cyclists, public transport, purchase of electric bicycles, cars, for employees, company vehicles, car-sharing etc. Energy-saving measures are used (turning off lights, and computers, use of newer and more economical computers) aspect of social responsibility programs is investing in the community, whether it's donations to charity or volunteer work. They said, that today, many companies enter into lasting partnerships with the local community and voluntary organizations in the communities where they operate. Also, the company's impact on society depends on what it produces and how it buys and sells. What value or harm is caused by the main products or services, what is the approach to marketing, advertising and procurement. When acquiring customers, price, quality and service are still important factors for the company, although these are increasingly not the only factors when customers make purchasing decisions.

Investing in social responsibility benefits companies in the long term and contributes to improving the company's performance as well as the wider society.

We interviewed employees from financial sector (from NLB d.d which is the leading banking and financial group in Slovenia). They presented an example of good practice. In the Strategy and Business Development sector, a department called Sustainable Development was established, and its primary role is the coordination of the integration of ESG factors into the NLB Group's business model. They do not yet have the position of director for sustainable development in NLB, but they do have a team of sustainable development coordinators. They have put sustainable principles of business decision-making and actions at the centre of their operations, as they are aware that as a systemically important bank (and in all SEE markets where they operate) they can influence the environment and improve the quality of life in the region.

They implement the sustainability strategy both through their daily moves and actions (for example, the gradual transition to paperless banking as much as possible, which is one of the measures of sustainable operation) as well as through the bank's offer. Last October, for example, they introduced the NLB Green

Housing Credit with special benefits for financing the purchase or construction of a passive house. One of the goals is to introduce sustainable loans for legal entities. They also pledged to gradually reduce their carbon footprint by limiting coal-related operations and funding projects related to the low-carbon economy.

Also some interviews from business sector (Insurance company-Zavarovalnica Triglav) introduce some example how they woven sustainability into every business step. They said, that for the coordination of activities related to the development of sustainable business, it has appointed a special holder of sustainable development at the level of the Group. In caring for the environment, they pay the most attention to solutions for efficient energy use and carbon footprint management, as well as the inclusion of climate risks in the risk management system. They offer insurance for damage events resulting from climate change, as well as insurance for solar power plants and sustainable mobility. The environmental responsibility of suppliers is evaluated with a sustainability questionnaire.

For many years, the group has also been involved in various socially responsible and environmental projects, such as the New Year's prevention campaign For a better tomorrow, the campaign Clean up our mountains, Children of Triglav, Young hopes, Again for a test drive, partnerships in the field of sports. This fall, they launched the Forests of the Heart campaign as part of the Rejuvenate Forests 2021 project. In the field of management factors, they ensure the highest level of compliance with legislation, internal rules and accepted commitments.

They report on their achievements in this area using indicators (in annual reports), and in the future they intend to further upgrade sustainability disclosures. They say that leadership is the key to good sustainable development results. It is also supported by an organizational culture that makes employees aware of the importance of sustainability and positive effects on the environment. Therefore, the Triglav Group improved the organizational culture and encouraged employees to reduce the consumption of paper, electricity, etc.

Based on the questionnaires we can say, that in business sector is the most sustainably active the financial sector - due to regulation and a broad overview of the economy.

Also analyses show that banks and insurance companies are the most active in integrating ESG factors and that they perceive this as a competitive advantage. In addition to the mentioned industries, also perceives positive developments in Slovenia in the high-tech sector and energy. In many companies, this function is performed by marketing managers, but it "exceeds communication, actively includes the very core of business and connects many areas related to business strategy, risk management, finance, development..." (Najbolj aktiven je finančni sektor, 2020).

From the examples presented, we can see that in business sector and VET system pursue the following sustainable development goals, especially: 1. goal-no poverty, 3.goal-health and well-being, 4. goal-quality education, 6. goal- clean water and sanitation, 8. goal-decent work and economic growth, 9.goal-industry, innovation and infrastructure, 11.goal-sustainable cities and communities, 13.goal-climate action and 15.goal-life on land. The problem in the education sector, which some interviewees pointed out is only, that the achievement of the goals of sustainable development are still not systematically included in the curriculum, which they want to implement as soon as possible in the future. Thus, the achievement of the goal in the education sector remains primarily within the framework of various projects and initiatives implemented by each individual school or to the employee. While in business sector is pursuit of SDGs determined at the company level and therefore is the awareness and achievement of goals more effective.

Opportunities: training available and operational tools

During the years of its independence, Slovenia achieved important development goals. We got involved also in the most important international integrations and became an active international partner in global efforts for peace and security, respect for human rights, cultural diversity and the rule of law and to respond responsibly to global challenges and to co-create trends. Slovenia has many natural features, a good location between the Mediterranean, Central and Southeast Europe offers many opportunities, which can be achieved with a good strategic approach should be used even better. A strong national brand ("I Feel Slovenia"), which shows the country's competitive advantages, directs the development of its functional characteristics and gives it an emotional component and personality.

Slovenia is gradually making progress in the area of quality of life and economic development, some pressures on the environment also decrease. Nevertheless, in many areas of economic, social and environmental development, it lags far behind the most developed countries whereby the backlogs of individual regions are different. This limits further development possibilities low productivity, lack of adaptation to demographic changes, further excessive burdening the environment and the low effectiveness of the state in promoting development. Extraordinary Slovenia's involvement in international business is also important for the use of development potential and socio-political environment.

In the future, Slovenia's development will greatly depend on its ability to respond and adapting to trends and challenges in the global environment. The trends point to radical changes especially in demographic trends, pressures on ecosystems, competition for global resources and economic development. Cooperation and connection at the global, European and national level and cross-border cooperation is thus increasingly important (Strategija razvoja Slovenije 2030, 2017).

Strengthening investments in VET system s is essential for developing the skills needed to face the challenges and opportunities of green and digital transformation, a long-lived society and other development trends. In Slovenia many activities aimed at developing the education of children and young people are (co) financed by EU funds, and the dependence of the adult education on these funds is even greater. In the coming years, funds from the Recovery and Resilience Facility and the European Cohesion Policy (SVRK, 2021) will be available to develop skills of children, young people and adults relevant for green and digital transformation and meeting other development challenges.

In the coming years, European cohesion policy funds and funds from the Recovery and Opportunity Plan will be available to develop skills of children, young people and adults important for the digital and green transformation, as well as coping with other development challenges. The partnership agreement between Slovenia and the European Commission for the period 2021-2027 foresees the response of education and training to development gaps (Poročilo o razvoju 2022).

The transition to a low-carbon circular economy, which is associated with short-term cost challenges, is also becoming a source of new competitive advantage and opportunities for companies. While a decade ago sustainability at the corporate level was seen more as a niche concept and a function of public relations, in recent years it has become a prerequisite for the success of business operations and a source of new competitive advantage. In order to maximise their returns in the medium and long term, companies need to also consider optimising operations from the point of view of creating broader economic and social benefits, reflected in compliance with ESG criteria (Poročilo o produktivnosti 2022).

The challenges of sustainable development also bring new opportunities, as Slovenia wants to become a society that can cope with changes and uncertainties challenges and wants to create the conditions and establish a systemic way of sustainable development.

Case Study / Good Practice / Example

ECOSCHOOL PROGRAM

The Ecoschool program is an internationally established program of



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Needs

Faster economic progress limits the economy's low productivity. Raising productivity to a higher level in the long term is primarily limited by structural factors. These are related to human resources, innovation capacity and digitization, as well as institutional inefficiency and an insufficiently stimulating business environment. Low institutional efficiency is characterized by lengthy administrative and judicial procedures, the inefficiency of public spending and management, a high burden of state regulation and a high level of perceived corruption. The level of education of the population has improved considerably, but numerical discrepancies between the supply and demand for knowledge and skills on the labour market remain. In light of demographic changes, which, among other things, will require an increase in the work activity of the elderly, it is also necessary from the perspective of society's response to global trends to strengthen learning for and throughout life. The inadequate educational structure of the employees, together with the modest cooperation between companies and the research sector, adversely affects the innovation activity of companies. Slovenia also lags behind in the development of the digital society, which is the result of low investments in the development of digital skills and technologies and the uncoordinated development of the entire field, despite the relatively even spread of a fast broadband network. An important factor in economic development is also creativity, which comes from, among other things, culture and creative industries, which is insufficiently recognized in Slovenia and means a lot (Strategija razvoja Slovenije 2030, 2017).

In dealing with the challenges of the green transition and the transition to the fourth industrial revolution, there have been some changes in the last period. That's how it will be more funds available for these purposes in the future than in the past medium-term period, the reform part of the Recovery and Resilience Plan (RRP), which can reduce part of the implementation deficit in these areas. Still, ambitious goals for the implementation of the double transition indicate that it will be necessary to achieve them in the future be more supported by systemic measures and resources, which will require finding a balance with the challenge public financial consolidation.

Higher the productivity of the economy is key to increasing the incomes of the population, as well as to maintain public financial sustainability in the face of growing pressures on public financial expenditures in connection with demographic and climate change. To avoid irreversible consequences of climate change must, as at the global level, be carried out as a matter of priority also the transition to a low-carbon circular economy. Action to achieve all of the above changes would also help to increase the resilience of the economy and society against crisis.

Essential is to require an effective adjustment of all types of education and increase in investment in education. Above all, it will be necessary to establish a responsive and partnership based system for forecasting skills needs.

Essential is also for the sustainable transformation of the economy to strengthen the green skills of employees.

For the effective realization of the set goals, it is crucial to follow the directions consistently, monitoring the success of implementation, taking action in the event of deviations and constant adaptation to new ones situation and challenges within Slovenia, within the EU and in the world. There is an urgent need to strongly strengthen the intertwining and coordination between sectoral policies and the drivers of development at different levels, promote an inclusive dialogue, establish a close link between measures and provide support environment for effective strategy implementation (Poročilo o razvoju 2022).

The development of green competences has become and will become crucial in the near future for maintaining added value in the sustainable economy that the EU wants to create. It has become clear that

vocational education and training and businesses must adapt to the uncertainties of the future while contributing to a sustainable society.

The importance of acquiring green knowledge and skills in these unpredictable times, when the demands for more sustainable business and operation are increasingly urgent and changing, is of utmost importance for the education sector, especially for vocational education and training, since the education sector is most closely connected with industry. Green skills and a sustainable economy require the development of high-quality skills in the vocational education and training sector and in the SME sector. More than ever, an agile mindset and willingness to change is extremely important to promote and enable change towards a sustainable and green economy.

Raising the awareness of decision-makers in the educational and economic sectors about environmental and climate change is crucial for changing behaviour and directing existing curricula to be more environmentally friendly and developing new green competencies.



Challenges

An effective and high-quality education system, which the purpose is to prepare the individual for successful work, quality life and participation in society, it is a basic condition for a competitive economy and social welfare. Young people are in school increasingly mobile, the same also after entering the labour market. Connecting science, education and business for exchange and transfer is key knowledge. The level of education among young people is rising sharply, which is from the point of view of providing needs economy, which, according to forecasts, will demand more and more highly educated people in the future workforce, a positive trend. However, they are between labour supply and demand numerous structural discrepancies. These are the result of gaps between acquired knowledge and skills and different needs of employers, which leads to inefficient allocation of labour force. It gets in the way increasing productivity, raises issues of skill utilization, but at the same time implies risk for brain drain. Reducing the knowledge and skills gap also contributes to lower risk social exclusion of individuals.

We will achieve the goal:

- a) with lifelong learning and training as values that strengthen creativity, innovation, critical thinking, responsibility and entrepreneurship, and the inclusion of these contents in education programs at all levels;
- b) by developing knowledge and skills for life and work, by improving reading, mathematical, digital and financial literacy, by promoting global learning and international inclusion and empowering residents to use the latest technologies and thereby reducing the digital gap;
- c) by establishing the concept of sustainable development, active citizenship and ethics as one from the principles of upbringing and education
- d) by ensuring the efficiency and quality of education at all levels and by developing practical and technical knowledge and skills to improve an individual's employability;
- e) by encouraging the less educated and other disadvantaged groups to be included in education and learning for an easier transition and stay in the labour market, by reducing social risk exclusion and ensuring quality of life;
- f) by promoting the development of science and research and connecting the education system with economy in accordance with the needs of the labour market and the development capabilities of the regions (Strategija razvoja Slovenija 2030, 2017).

Development policy measures must be primarily oriented towards structural (smart and green) transformation of the economy for long-term sustained inclusive development and greater quality of life. Determining strategic priorities is especially important in the period when with the reactivation of fiscal rules, the public finance framework is becoming much more restrictive than recent years, when fiscal rules did not apply due to major economic shocks. It requires that improved coordination and strengthened targeting of measures, especially reconsideration an agreement on priority areas of budget spending and spending of EU funds within the framework cohesion policy and the Recovery and Resilience Plan. The necessity of structural transformation economy must also be taken into account when creating temporary measures to mitigate the consequences energy crisis, which would be due to the provision of appropriate price signals in energy use had to gradually move from general to more target-oriented. Among the key areas we emphasize development policies:

- accelerating productivity growth
- accelerated transition to a low-carbon circular economy
- ensuring an inclusive, healthy and active society
- strengthening the development role of the state and its institutions

(Poročilo o razvoju 2022).

In Slovenia we believe in transferring the green inspiration from generation to generation and are ambitiously entering a decade of concrete sustainable development measures. We believe that by working together for the sustainable transformation of Slovenia, we can make a key contribution to co-creating a better and fairer world.



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