



European  
Commission

# Erasmus+ National Policy Reviews 2024 Sri Lanka

**Erasmus+**  
Enriching lives, opening minds.





## Sri Lanka

### Contributor

ENFP for Sri Lanka: Sasika Liyanage  
Ministry of Education

This national policy review provides a detailed analysis of Sri Lanka's educational policies and their alignment with the Erasmus+ programme. It offers official, first-hand information into the country's engagement with Erasmus+ from 2021 to 2024, highlighting opportunities for improvement and identifying strategies to enhance integration and outcomes. Prepared and submitted by the Erasmus+ National Focal Point, this review contributes to ongoing efforts to strengthen international cooperation and to maximise the benefits of the Erasmus+ programme in Sri Lanka.

---

## Reviews of policies, initiatives, projects, and/or stakeholders

---

In Sri Lanka, several government bodies are responsible for overseeing and regulating the higher education and vocational education sectors. These organisations ensure the quality and standards of institutions within their respective jurisdictions. State universities, campuses, HE institutes, and vocational training institutes fall under their authority, which govern their operations and maintain educational standards across the country.

### Ministry of Education, Higher Education Section (MOHE)

The Ministry of Education's Higher Education Section is responsible for guiding the formulation, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of educational policies, programmes, and projects. This includes oversight of primary, secondary, tertiary, and vocational education, ensuring that educational standards and objectives are met across all levels.

<https://moe.gov.lk/>

### University Grants Commission (UGC)

The University Grants Commission is the top governing body for universities in Sri Lanka. It was established on 22 December 1978, under the Universities Act No. 16 of 1978. The UGC's responsibilities include planning and coordinating university education, allocating funds to HEIs, maintaining academic standards, regulating the administration of HEIs, and overseeing student admissions to these institutions.

<https://www.ugc.ac.lk/>

### Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission (TVEC)

The Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission was established in 1991 as the leading authority in Sri Lanka's technical and vocational education and training sector under the Tertiary and Vocational Education Act No. 20 of 1990. Its main responsibilities include formulating policies, planning, ensuring quality, coordinating, and developing tertiary and vocational education across the country.

<https://www.tvec.gov.lk/>

### National Education Commission (NEC)

The National Education Commission was established under the National Education Commission Act No. 19 of 1991. Its primary role is to advise the President on all aspects of educational policy to ensure continuity and adaptability in the education system. The NEC reviews and analyses existing policies and plans, recommending changes as needed to align with society's evolving needs.

<http://nec.gov.lk/>

### National Institute of Education (NIE)

The National Education Institute was established in 1986 under Act No. 28 of 1985 and serves as the apex body responsible for shaping the nation's educational landscape. The Institute's key responsibilities include developing curricula for national general education at the primary, secondary, and post-secondary levels. Additionally, the NIE is mandated to provide quality teacher education and facilitate the professional development of educators across the country.

<https://www.nie.ac.lk>

### Vocational Training Authority (VTA)

The Vocational Training Authority was established on 16 August 1995 under the provisions of the Vocational Training Authority of Sri Lanka Act No.12 of 1995, intending to provide skills for employment. The Manpower Division, the training arm of the Labour Department, which was running Technical and Vocational training programmes in many parts of Sri Lanka, converted to the newly constituted Vocational Training Authority (VTA). This made vocational training more accessible to rural youth and depressed segments of the country..

[www.vtasl.gov.lk](http://www.vtasl.gov.lk)

### National Apprentice and Industrial Training Authority (NAITA)

The National Apprentice and Industrial Training Authority was established in 1990 under the Tertiary and Vocational Education Act No. 20 of 1990. It succeeded the National Apprentice Board (NAB), founded in 1971, to coordinate and regulate enterprise-based apprenticeships. NAITA's mandate is broader, focusing on various aspects of industrial training and apprenticeships across Sri Lanka.

[www.naita.gov.lk](http://www.naita.gov.lk)

### National Science Foundation (NSF)

The National Science Foundation (NSF) in Sri Lanka operates under the Science and Technology Development Act No. 11 of 1994 and adheres to the National Science & Technology Policy. Its key roles include:

- Supporting research, development, and innovation to foster a knowledge economy.
- Facilitating capacity building and infrastructure development.
- Promoting technology transfer and knowledge sharing in science and technology.
- Enhancing the quality of life through advancements in these fields.

<http://www.nsf.ac.lk>

### National Youth Services Council (NYSC)

The National Youth Services Council in Sri Lanka has been established to guide the country's youth in the proper direction and enable them to empower themselves to their fullest potential while contributing to the nation's prosperity.

It was established under the Volunteer National Youth Services Act No. 11 of 1967 and revised by Act No. 52 of 1968. Over the years, its activities expanded beyond volunteerism. Subsequently, the scope was revised under the Youth Services Council Act No. 69 of 1979, which gave it the status of a fully pledged youth development organisation.

[www.nysc.lk](http://www.nysc.lk)

### South Asia Qualifications Reference Framework (SAQRF)

The South Asia Qualifications Reference Framework aims to enhance the recognition of higher education qualifications across South Asian countries. This framework supports:

- The internationalisation of higher education by facilitating agreements with regional and global conventions.
- The New Delhi Declaration on Education (31 October 2014), which emphasises quality education, cooperation, and mutual recognition of qualifications.

- The SAARC Framework for Action on Education 2030, which focuses on improving accessibility, quality, and mobility in education.

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) is working on a framework to standardise and compare qualifications across South Asian countries. This SAQRF will help compare qualifications from different countries and acknowledge all types of learning, including formal, informal, and non-formal education. It is a first step toward creating a broader regional and global qualification system.

South Asian Qualifications Reference Framework - Sri Lanka (SAQRF Referencing Report-Sri Lanka) combines the National Vocational Qualifications Framework (NVQ), Sri Lanka Qualifications Framework (SLQF) and other SAARC countries along with responses from SAARC countries. The ILO has been engaged in the process of endorsing the SAQRF by providing its technical assistance.

<https://www.ilo.org/resource/news/towards-south-asian-qualification-reference-framework>

### **Ratification of Asia-Pacific Regional Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications in Higher Education (Tokyo Convention) - Currently in the Initiative stage**

A National Information Centre (NIC) will be established to manage and regulate the recognition of qualifications from all higher education institutions in Sri Lanka, including public universities, private degree-granting institutions, and universities established by law. This centre aims to support the objectives of the Tokyo Convention by providing a central resource for qualification recognition and regulation. Establishing the Information Centre (NIC) is one of the main objectives of the Tokyo Convention.

The proposed NIC will be established as a division within the Quality Assurance and Accreditation Commission (QAAC), pending approval by the Ministry of Education. This centre will include a designated officer representing Sri Lanka in the Asia-Pacific National Information Centre network.

Once Sri Lanka approves the Tokyo Convention, it must assess and recognise qualifications from other member countries, including those of refugees and displaced persons. The country will also strive to provide employment opportunities based on these recognised qualifications.

The Asia-Pacific Regional Bureau for Education at UNESCO Bangkok will offer technical support for establishing the National Information Centre (NIC) in Sri Lanka. This assistance will be crucial until Sri Lanka ratifies the Tokyo Convention and will help implement the Convention's policies. Given Sri Lanka's strong education statistics, ratifying the Tokyo Convention is a key goal. The Ministry has appointed a five-member steering committee to develop the plan for ratification.

[https://apnnic.net/tokyo\\_convention\\_overview/](https://apnnic.net/tokyo_convention_overview/)

### **Establishment of Quality Assurance and Accreditation Commission on Higher Education (Bill on Higher Education (Quality Assurance and Accreditation))**

The Bill on Higher Education (Quality Assurance and Accreditation) has been developed over several years by the Legal Draftsman's Department in collaboration with the University Grants Commission (UGC) and the Ministry of Higher Education. This Bill proposes the creation of the National Quality Assurance and Accreditation Commission for Higher Education, which will serve as the national authority responsible for overseeing the quality and accreditation of all HEIs in Sri Lanka.

The main objectives of the Commission include:

- Establishing a system of quality assurance and accreditation based on good governance to maintain high standards of educational qualifications in HEIs
- Acting as the apex body for quality assurance and accreditation at the national level.

Mapping different qualifications according to the Sri Lanka Qualifications Framework (SLQF) to facilitate cross-mobility.

The final draft of the Bill has been submitted to the Attorney General's Department for clearance.

[https://documents.gov.lk/files/bill/2019/6/26-2019\\_E.pdf](https://documents.gov.lk/files/bill/2019/6/26-2019_E.pdf)

### **Introduction of Minimum Standards and Periodic Review Guidelines (Specified Authority Rules No. 01 of 2013 - Existing)**

The development of “Minimum Standards for Institutions and Programmes” is nearing completion. These standards are essential for Degree Awarding Institutes (DAIs) to offer recognised degree programmes under Section 25A of the Universities Act No. 16 of 1978. Additionally, guidelines for a 5-year review process have been created. They are currently being reviewed by the Members of the Standing Committee of Accreditation and Quality Assurance (SCAQA) within the Ministry of Education for their feedback.

[https://www.mohe.gov.lk/images/pdf/20131824-21\\_E\\_1.pdf](https://www.mohe.gov.lk/images/pdf/20131824-21_E_1.pdf)

---

## **Projects which are examples of good practice that have been launched in the past three years**

---

### **Interest-Free Student Loans Scheme (Cabinet decision No. CP/17/0707/706/048, 26 April 2017)**

Following this decision, the Interest-Free Student Loan Scheme was launched to help students pursue government-approved degree programmes at non-state higher education institutes. This scheme provides interest-free loans annually to 5,000 students who passed the G.C.E. Advanced Level Examination but could not secure admission to a state university.

Based on the G.C.E. Advanced Level Examination results from 2015 to 2020, six batches of students have been enrolled in 17 non-state higher education institutes through the Interest-Free Student Loan Scheme. Admission was determined by the students’ preferences and their Z-scores. So far, 1,336 students have completed their degrees, and approximately 12,556 are currently studying successfully. Applications for the 2023 student intake are being processed, with interviews underway. This programme enrolls students from all districts across the island, primarily from middle-class or lower economic backgrounds.

[www.studentloans.mohe.gov.lk](http://www.studentloans.mohe.gov.lk)

### **National Policy on Technical and Vocational Education**

In December 2017, the National Education Commission began formulating a new National Policy on Technical and Vocational Education. After extensive discussions, the policy document was finalised, replacing the previous one from 2009. This new policy aligns with the government’s national development strategy outlined in the Public Investment Programme 2017–2020 and the Sustainable Development Goals. It considers the changes in the TVET training system, technological advancements, and socio-economic shifts over the past decade to address access issues and improve the relevance and quality of technical and vocational education in Sri Lanka.

The National Education Commission collaborated with various stakeholders, including the Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission, Ministry of Skills Development and Vocational Training, Ministry of Labour, National Institute of Education, public and private TVET institutions, Industry Sector Skills Councils, and industry representatives like employers’ organisations. Together, they identified issues in technical and vocational education aspects and developed policies and key strategies based on a broad consensus.

<http://www.tvec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Policy-Book-English-web.pdf>

### **National Development Plan for TVET Sector 2023-27 (NPTVET) – Draft**

Economic development relies heavily on a well-supplied labour market with skilled and relevant human resources. Therefore, the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sector must be prioritised. Strengthening this sector will support the growth of various industries and services, reduce unemployment and underemployment, and help formalise the informal labour market by recognising and certifying the skills of its workers.

The first Development Plan for the TVET sector, published in 1995, introduced the registration of vocational training institutes. Since then, the Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission (TVEC) has developed

sectorial and provincial plans to advance Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET). The National Development Plan (NDP) for the TVET sector, aligned with the National Policy on TVET (NPTVET) developed by the National Education Commission (NEC), was created to build a skilled workforce for Sri Lanka's socio-economic development. This plan is the first comprehensive approach that addresses all aspects of skills development and vocational training, fulfilling a long-standing need in the TVET sector.

[https://www.tvec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Development\\_Plan\\_2023\\_27.pdf](https://www.tvec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Development_Plan_2023_27.pdf)

Note: Though these initiatives may not have a direct impact on international credit mobility, Erasmus Mundus or Jean Monnet's Actions immediately, these initiatives may have a long-lasting impact on the higher education of Sri Lanka and in due course will have an impact on the objectives of this Erasmus+ programme.

### National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Operational Manual

The National Vocational Qualifications Framework of Sri Lanka (NVQSL) has been established to support efforts to enhance the development of an internationally competitive workforce in Sri Lanka. The framework is one of the key elements in unifying the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) system, bringing almost all providers under one regulatory and quality assurance framework.

National Competency Standards in Sri Lanka have been established in collaboration with industry experts. These standards include national curricula and quality guidelines for teaching and assessment, all based on a competency-based approach. Learners and workers receive national certification under this system, designed to meet international benchmarks like those in developed countries.

[https://www.tvec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/NVQ\\_Operation\\_Manual\\_2021\\_new.pdf](https://www.tvec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/NVQ_Operation_Manual_2021_new.pdf)

### Reforming the Vocational Education System to Cater to Trends in the Labour Market

Previously, certificates and diplomas from public and private vocational training institutions in Sri Lanka did not align with a qualification framework. This created confusion for youths in choosing quality programmes for their careers and for employers in assessing whether certificates met industry standards.

The National Vocational Qualifications Framework in Sri Lanka aims to standardise technical and vocational education and training to match international standards and support economic and social development. It is based on competency standards set by industry stakeholders and includes both technical and employability skills.

The national vocational qualifications system in Sri Lanka will recognise prior learning based on national competency standards. This process assesses the skills and knowledge an individual has gained through formal or informal training, work experience, or life experiences. It allows for the partial or full completion of a qualification based on these competencies. Recognition of Prior Learning can be combined with formal certification to make assessment decisions.

<https://nec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/5.Re-imagining-Education-in-Sri-Lanka-Vol-II-Core-Group-Reports-by-Presidential-Task-Force.pdf>

### The Skills Passport

The SKILLS PASSPORT is a comprehensive portfolio of skills and qualifications of a worker, acquired informally, along with references. This enables employers and workers in Sri Lanka to compare their skills with various assessment frameworks. It is essentially a «gateway» to finding a job and accessing further training for re-skilling and up-skilling.

This documentation system will ensure that workers' skills, expertise, and experience are recorded methodically, both within and across sectors.

The SKILLS PASSPORT can be linked with a Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) platform, which helps recognise informally acquired knowledge, skills, and competencies through formal assessments and certifications.

<https://www.nsp.gov.lk/>

### Reasonable Adjustments in NVQ Assessment for Candidates with Disabilities

In Sri Lanka, approximately 1.6 million people have disabilities, and 71% of adults with disabilities are not economically active. The challenge is not their talent but the lack of opportunities.

To address this, an initiative has been launched to integrate people with disabilities into mainstream vocational training centres. The Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission (TVEC) has introduced new guidelines to make reasonable adjustments in NVQ (National Vocational Qualifications) assessments for candidates with disabilities. These adjustments ensure that the assessment system focuses on demonstrating skills and competency rather than traditional methods that may not accommodate all learners.

This approach aims to reduce unemployment and improve education levels for people with disabilities by encouraging them to confidently enrol in and complete NVQ courses. It represents a good practice by TVEC to support training providers and assessors in better accommodating and recognising the skills of individuals with disabilities.

[http://www.tvec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/NVQ\\_Circular\\_2020\\_01.pdf](http://www.tvec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/NVQ_Circular_2020_01.pdf)

### Mature Candidate Route Programme

The Mature Candidate Route offers an alternative way to achieve NVQ Level 5 equivalence based on extensive experience in a relevant sector. Introduced by the Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission (TVEC) under NVQ Circular 01/2021, this programme allows experienced craftsmen, especially those in supervisory roles, to be assessed and certified for NVQ Level 5 qualifications. This route acknowledges their practical experience and can enhance their career prospects and employment opportunities.

[https://www.tvec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Mature\\_Candidate\\_Circular\\_Revised\\_2021.pdf](https://www.tvec.gov.lk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Mature_Candidate_Circular_Revised_2021.pdf)