

APPENDIX 1

NATIONAL ACTION PLANS FOR RECOGNITION

Guidelines for national action plans to be elaborated under the Bologna Process, proposed by the ENIC Bureau, the NARIC Advisory Board and the Bureau of the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee

1. Legislation

1.1 Lisbon Recognition Convention

The Slovak Republic- acceded to the Lisbon Recognition Convention and ratified it on 13 July 1999. It has added the principles of the Convention to its judicial code and has proceeded according to it.

1.2 Review of national legislation relevant to recognition

Legislation of the Slovak Republic distinguishes recognition of diplomas (recognition for academic purposes) and recognition of professional qualifications (recognition for purposes of performing a profession).

Academic recognition

In general, the recognition of diplomas for academic purposes develops possibilities in the field of education and supports the traditional forms of mobility, when the student completes his study in one country by obtaining the appropriate diploma and transfers to higher cycle in another country, which shall recognize the cycle of education received in the country of origin. In Slovakia, a number of students are interested in such recognition that gradually promote development of close cooperation between educational institutions.

The legislation relevant to recognition in which the Lisbon Convention principles are implemented is as follows :

- **Primary and secondary education** - Act No. 596/2003 of Digest on State Administration in Education and School Self-Government and on the Change and Supplement to Some Regulations, as amended;
- **Higher education** - Act No. 131/2002 of Digest on Higher Education and on the Change and Supplement to some acts and the Decree of Ministry of Education SR No. 238/2005 of Digest on Procedure at Recognition of Diplomas.

Professional recognition

The field of recognition of diplomas for professional purposes is aimed at elimination of obstacles at professional mobility which ensue from existence of differences in national education systems. On the basis of transposition of the respective directives of European Union the Act No. 477/2002 of Digest on Recognition of Professional Qualifications and on Supplement to Act of National Council of Slovak Republic No. 145/1995 of Digest on Administration Fees, as amended (hereinafter referred to as “Act on Recognition of Diplomas”) came into being.

1.3 Bilateral or regional recognition agreements

The Slovak Republic has concluded bilateral agreement on mutual recognition of qualifications with the following EU member countries: Germany, Hungary, Czech Republic, Poland and Memorandum of Understanding with Austria. Out of the third countries the Slovak Republic has concluded agreement with the Croatian Republic and Romania. The Slovak Republic is a signatory of Convention on Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in European Region (Lisbon 1997).

2. Recognition practice

2.1 Criteria and procedures

The competent authorities for recognition of diplomas or professional qualifications in the Slovak Republic are established by the so-called Competent Law. In the light of the above regulation in the field of recognition there are several competent bodies distinguished according to area of competence, namely the Ministry of Education of SR, regional educational authorities according to the permanent residence of the applicant, and higher education institutions of the respective concentration. The processes related to recognition of diplomas are ongoing according to judicial code of the Slovak Republic, that means, the Act No. 71/1967 of Digest on Administration Procedure.

The principles of Lisbon Convention were gradually added to the legislation of the Slovak Republic; at the moment they are being fully implemented.

The legal and administration procedure of recognition is as follows:

Recognition of documents on education of citizens of the Slovak Republic and EU member countries

Primary and secondary schools

In the Slovak Republic the recognition of documents on education of a school-leaver from primary or secondary schools abroad falls within the competence of the regional educational authority (in Slovakia there are 8 regional educational authorities), which will issue a decision upon fulfilling all conditions. Equivalence of documents received in primary and secondary schools abroad is regulated by Act No. 596/2003 of Digest on State administration in education and school self-government and on the change and supplement to some regulations, as amended.

A different procedure is followed in case that it is a certificate received upon completing secondary school which enables an access to higher education study received in the State with which the Slovak Republic has a valid agreement. The certificates are assessed according to the current *agreement* on mutual recognition of equivalence of documents on education. Recognition is not needed, the document is recognized as equivalent and the regional educational authority issues to the graduate a certificate on recognition according to Act No. 596/2003 Digest on State administration in education and school self-government and on the change and supplement to some regulations, as amended.

Higher education institutions

Document on recognition received abroad upon completing higher education of the first, second or third cycle is recognized by the university or higher education institution in the Slovak Republic (20 public universities, 3 State and 13 private higher education institutions) which performs the study programme in the same or relative field of study. Equivalence of

diplomas is regulated by Act No. 131/2002 of Digest on Higher Education and on the Change and Supplement to Some Acts and Decree of ME SR 238/2005 of Digest on Procedure at Recognition of Diploma.

Where there is no institution in Slovakia with the study programme in the same or relative field of study, the recognition is upon Ministry of Education of SR.

At the diplomas from the countries with which the Slovak Republic has a concluded bilateral agreement, the recognition is not needed just like in the case of recognition of documents from secondary school enabling access to higher education study, then the Ministry of Education SR issues the decision on equivalence of the diploma.

Recognition of diplomas from non-member countries:

Primary and secondary schools

In this case also, in the Slovak Republic the recognition of document on education of the school-leaver from primary and secondary school abroad falls within the competence of the regional educational authority which will issue to the student a decision upon meeting all conditions.

Equivalence of documents on education received in primary and secondary schools abroad is regulated by Decree No. 207/1993 of Digest, whereby the details are set down on equivalence of diplomas and on conditions of recognition of equivalence of diploma issued by foreign primary and secondary schools.

If the Slovak Republic has a still valid agreement on recognition of diplomas with a non-member state, the recognition is not needed and the regional educational authority will issue a certificate on equivalence according to Decree No. 207/1993 of Digest, whereby the details are set on equivalence of diplomas and on conditions of recognition of diplomas issued by foreign primary and secondary schools.

Higher education institutions

The diplomas from abroad received upon completing the higher education of the first or second cycle are recognised in the same way as in case of member countries by the higher education institution in the Slovak Republic, which performs the study programme in the same or relative fields of study. Equivalence of these diplomas is regulated by the Act No. 131/2002 of Digest on Higher Education and on the Change and Supplement to Some Acts as amended.

Where there is a lack of a higher education institution with the study programme in the same or relative field of study in Slovakia, the recognition is in competence of the Ministry of Education of the SR. At awards from the countries in which the agreement on mutual recognition of diplomas is concluded with the Slovak Republic, the recognition is not needed and the certificate on recognition of diploma is issued by the Ministry of Education SR.

Professional recognition

Anybody who receives a certain qualification in the appropriate State which authorises him/her to perform the specific profession in that State, may freely use his/her qualification for performing a profession in that State. Anybody who plans to perform a profession in another State than where he received education must have his qualification recognized in the given State where he wants to perform this profession. Professional recognition of diplomas in EU distinguishes recognition for performance of regulated professions and recognition for performance of non-regulated professions in the Slovak Republic. Recognition of diplomas or their set issued by the institutions or other appropriate authorities according to regulations of EU member countries for purposes of performing regulated professions are regulated by Act No. 477/2002 of Digest on Recognition of Professional Qualification and on Supplement

to the Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic No. 145/1995 of Digest on Administration Fees, as amended and Act No. 5/2005, whereby the Act No. 477/2002 of Digest on Recognition of Professional Qualification and Supplement to Act of NC SR No. 145/1995 of Digest on Administration Fees, as amended (hereinafter referred to as “Act on Recognition of Diplomas”) is changed and supplemented.

In the process of removing borders between national education systems, the Slovak Republic made a significant step in the field of recognition of documents certifying the graduation of higher education of the third cycle (PhD.). The diplomas of higher education of the third cycle obtained in the EU member country are recognized automatically by the Ministry of Education SR, namely, by issue of a certificate on automatic recognition of higher education of the third cycle. Thus a space is created for improvement of mobility of young graduates of doctoral study programme at the territory of the Slovak Republic, which is undoubtedly a benefit for scientific community, for pre students of higher education institution and all stakeholders.

The above review was submitted to Government of the Slovak Republic that approved it and publicized on its website (www.vlada.gov.sk).

2.2 Joint degrees

In judicial code of the Slovak Republic there are no obstacles to prevent the students from receiving the so-called “joint degree”. The implementation of the joint study programmes and exchange stays, that may result in the “joint degrees”, is in full competence of the higher education institution. The problem of diplomas issued in the SR is regulated by Section 68 Act No. 131/2002 of Digest on Higher Education and on the Change and Supplement to Some Acts which states what data should be indicated in the diploma. The above Section is also related to the joint diploma, as it is issued by educational institution acting in the SR. At the moment the Ministry of Education SR prepares an amendment to the Act on Higher Education which is, among other things, to concretize the conditions and requirements concerning the joint diplomas.

2.3 *Overview of institutional practice*

In accordance with the *Act No. 131/2002 of Digest on Higher Education and on the Change and Supplement to Some Acts, as amended*, the higher education institutions are autonomous legal entities, in the light of which no State body can interfere with their activity. The provision of implementation of the Lisbon Convention principles has been carried out by transposition of these principles into the judicial code of the Slovak Republic by which they became generally binding for all natural persons and legal entities. The establishments of higher education are bound to proceed according to the above Act, and thereby the extension and implementation of the Lisbon Convention principles in higher education space will be ensured in the SR.

2.4 *Transparency tools for recognition*

In accordance with the above Act on higher education the credit system and Diploma Supplement were introduced into the Slovak judicial code by Decree of Ministry of Education of SR No. 614/2002 of Digest on Credit System of Study. The above Decree came into force on 1 November 2002. By the above regulation the SR fully implemented the credit system and Diploma Supplement with the data which the Diploma Supplement should contain. The Diploma Supplement is issued by the higher education institution and is given to the graduate along with the diploma. Based on a special request the higher education institution may also issue the diplomas and certificate (Diploma Supplement including) in English language.

2.5 *Borderless/transnational education*

In 2005, the Slovak Republic removed the sanctions preventing the affiliations of foreign higher education institutions (hereinafter referred to as (“affiliations of institutions”) to provide education. The affiliations of institutions should be, however, further accredited to be recognized in the Slovak Republic.

In the prepared amendment to the Act on Higher Education the Ministry of Education intends to specify the problems of functioning of foreign education institutions through their affiliations in the Slovak Republic. The aim should consist in simplification of existence of the institutions’ affiliations in the SR and enable them to provide the study programme similar or equal to that offered by institution in the country of origin. The prepared amendment will further consider a certain form of accreditation of affiliations to institutions functioning in the SR and the fields of study they will offer.

3. *Information provision*

3.1 *Provision of information on recognition*

The information concerning recognition of diplomas and professional qualifications are available to all those interested in the following forms:

Editing activity

In 2005, the team of workers at the Centre for Recognition of Diplomas has prepared the regulation on recognition of diplomas and issued it with the support of European

Commission. Upon accession the SR to the European Union and the changes brought about by the entry, the publication bridged the gap existing in this area. Its aim was to present in a short and simple way the current system of recognition in the SR, changes and the grounds for them. Owing to the fact that the bilateral agreements are an integral part of the process of recognition the publication brings a survey of all bilateral agreements that the SR is bound to. Further, a significant merit of the publication consists in detailed description and patterns of administration procedures in the recognition. The above publication was introduced within the 2005 specialist seminar and consequently distributed to all competent bodies in the SR (higher education institutions and regional education authorities) and all those interested.

Internet:

With steadily growing trend of informatization of the society the website of the Centre is a significant source of information for public. It contains all information covered in the publication of the Centre. Owing to the fact that the amount of information that can be mediated through Internet is much larger than printed media allow, the website, naturally, contains more information than the publication. The information not contained in the publication is, e.g., full wording of Bologna Declaration, Lisbon Convention, guidelines of European Union, bilateral agreements and similar relevant documents in Slovak language.

Dissemination activity:

The Centre for Recognition of Diplomas annually organizes a specialist seminar oriented at recent knowledge in the field recognition. The seminar is highly topical considering the fact that the participants are familiar with legislative changes at the European level, planned changes at the State level with a possibility to get involved in the legislation development. The above professional seminar is traditionally organized under the leadership of ENIC/NARIC agency.

3.2 Information package for applicants

Information for applicants of higher education in the SR has been processed in detail and is of high quality. The first information on higher education is already obtained by secondary school students during their study, making use of educational guidance of the counsellor who inform them on suitable degree courses and possibilities available upon completing secondary school. The information source in initial contact with applicants is subsequently the very higher education institution which informs through its own websites about the study, study programmes and other details. Higher education institutions also provide for information through study divisions, days of “open doors” and other accompanying actions (seminars, promotions, etc.).

The applicants may also address the Ministry of Education of SR, or Institute of Information and Prognoses on Education. Both institutions also cooperate in issue of publication entitled *How to Get to Higher Education Institution?*, which is issued each academic year. The guide gives detailed and topical information for those interested in the study in higher education institutions in the SR, which they receive directly from the higher education institutions. The publication is distributed to higher education institutions and secondary schools, and also to bookshops.

In the SR there are also book fairs for support of information of applicants for higher education. The book fair of postsecondary education *Academia* in 2006 has been held under auspices of Vice-Premier, and the Minister of Education of the SR, Ján Mikolaj, which testifies of the support by the Ministry of Education and the Minister of Education.

As the information level of applicants is sufficiently detailed, the improvement will be all the more difficult. In spite of the fact there are still possibilities for still greater support of individual projects leading to information and provision of more detailed information.

4. Structures

4.1 National information centre

The Slovak ENIC/NARIC – Centre for Recognition of Diplomas was established by the Ministry of Education SR by ministerial decree No 12/2004-I of 13 May 2004 with 7 civil service posts. Owing to extended agenda of the Centre for Recognition of Diplomas the above number of civil servants was not sufficient for timely and quality performance of the State service. For this reason the organisation structure of the Ministry of Education of the SR has been changed and two more positions of civil servants were added to the Centre by a ministerial Decree No. 37 /2005-I of 27 December 2005.

The principal activities of the Centre are structured into several working areas with a diverse level of demands and time space necessary for their solution. Consequently, the processes carried out at the Centre for Recognition of Diplomas are as follows:

- assessment of the study abroad from the view of continuous preparation for future career,
- assessment of the period of study abroad,
- recognition of completed education received abroad (decision),
- recognition of qualification of citizens of the Slovak Republic, EU member countries received abroad for purposes of performing regulated professions in the Slovak Republic (decision),
- issue of a certificate on automatic recognition of higher education of the third cycle obtained abroad,
- issue of certificate on educational competence obtained at the territory of the Slovak Republic,
- issue of apostile (authentication of certificate) for higher education credentials obtained at the territory of the Slovak Republic .

The distribution of agenda among the employees of the Centre for Recognition of Diplomas is done according to language knowledge of individual employees, that is, according to the country of origin of the diplomas. Concerning the demands, the agenda of the employees is approximately of the same level.

As obvious from the table below, a remarkable increase of competencies of the Centre for Recognition of Diplomas and steadily growing number of applications have been observed from 2001.

Number of applications of the Centre for Recognition of Diplomas

Year	Number of applications		<i>Number of applications for recognition of diplomas for performing regulated profession</i>
	1 st half-a-year	2 nd half-a-year	
2001	1240	3255	0
2002	1330	3910	0
2003	1530	3950	0

<i>2004</i>	<i>2001</i>	<i>5210</i>	28
2005	<i>1560</i>	<i>5340</i>	132
By 10.12.2006	1520	5500	207

Material-technical equipment of the Centre for Recognition of Diplomas is sufficient, it fulfils the minimum conditions for performing the work related to the international agenda.

4.2 Cooperation recognition/quality assurance bodies

The cooperation of competent bodies may be divided into the levels of varied area of competence, namely into national and international, while both may be characterized as active.

National activities:

The cooperation of national authorities and other competent bodies is provided for by the Slovak ENIC/NARIC – The Centre for Recognition of Diplomas. The above activity is based on description of activities of organisation rules of the Ministry of Education of the SR and national content of work. It is undertaken in the form of various seminars and conferences with participation of competent bodies. The Slovak ENIC/NARIC has its central seat in Bratislava and is accessible to partner organizations, to both professional community and public at large.

International activities:

Slovak ENIC/NARIC is involved in international network of agencies ENIC/NARIC and is actively engaged in the ENIC/NARIC activities as it ensues from the content of its service and long-year practical experience. The core activities at international area are as follows:

- to provide information related to education system of the Slovak Republic,
- to provide certificate on authenticity of some documents on education (the Centre disposes of all necessary instruments for verification of authenticity of the documents on education, considering the fact it verifies genuine character of documents for purposes of foreign countries and confirms them by apostille),
- provides for texts of regulations of the Slovak Republic related to recognition of diplomas,
- represents the Slovak Republic in relation to the appropriate bodies of European Commission.

The main tool at fulfilling the above duties is the Centre website, which is accessible in Slovak and English language. The website of the Centre is a part of the website of the Ministry of Education of SR (<http://www.minedu.sk/SUDV/sudv.htm>) and is accessible to all those interested in information concerning recognition of diplomas. The above website contains the most significant documents related to recognition, such as Bologna Declaration, Lisbon Convention, bilateral agreements and EU guidelines, concerning recognition of professional qualifications. There is also a procedure on administration handling with the legislation that regulate the area in question, and application forms. All the above documents are designed to for all those interested to make available all the information they require in connection with recognition of their diplomas, certificates, degrees and studies.