

## NATIONAL REPORT – SLOVAK REPUBLIC

### Introduction – Basic information on the Slovak Higher Education System

In the Slovak Republic, there are 24 higher education institutions (as at August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2003). Out of them, nineteen are public, four are state-owned and one is a private institution. The public and state higher education institutions in the Slovak Republic are of university type. The public higher education institutions, established in 2002 by transformation from the state higher education institutions, are organisations sui generis with non-profit type of economic management. Their expenditures are now covered in average by up to 90 % from the state budget, the rest is covered from their own resources. The only higher education institutions which have remained state-owned are two military and one police higher education institutions representing the state non-profit organisations with 100 % financing from the state budget, and one health higher education institution which is also the state-owned organisation with a majority coverage of costs from the state budget. The only private institution of higher education available offers only the bachelor study programme, being fully covered from private resources coming mostly from the student tuition fees. Foundation of additional private higher education institutions is envisaged.

The public higher education institutions provide study programmes within the entire system of the fields of study and in all of the three levels of higher education.

Higher education in the Slovak Republic is provided through the study programmes; in compliance with the Higher Education Act, the higher education institutions may admit the students to accredited study programmes only. The Ministry of Education in cooperation with the higher education institutions defined at the end of 2002 the list of the fields of study for higher education; the accredited study programme may be carried out exclusively in the field of study which has been included in the list of the fields of study.

In 2002, a new Higher Education Act was adopted (The Act of the National Council of the SR No. 131/2002 of Law Code on Higher Education and on Change and Supplement to Some Acts), which implements all components of the Bologna Declaration in the Slovak higher education system.

The basic quantitative data on university students in the Slovak Republic are given in the following tables:

<b>Year</b>	1993	2001	<b>Year</b>	1993	2001	<b>Year</b>	1993	2001
<b>18-years cohort (a)</b>	93 654	88 935	<b>Full-time students</b>	61 834	95 619	<b>Male students</b>	36 937	67 921
<b>Graduates<sup>x)</sup> (b)</b>	44 552	56 038		86.0 %	68.0 %		51.4 %	48.3 %
<b>New entrants<sup>xi)</sup> (c)</b>	20 778	37 033	<b>Part-time students</b>	10 082	44 942	<b>Female students</b>	34 979	72 640
<b>(c/a) %</b>	22.2	41.6		14.0 %	32.0 %		48.6 %	51.7 %
<b>(c/b) %</b>	46.6	66.1	<b>Total</b>	71 916	140 561	<b>Total</b>	71 916	140 561

x) Graduates from secondary schools

xi) New entrants enrolled to full-time and part-time study

<b>Educational level</b>	1993	2001
<b>Bachelor</b>	6 622	26 069
	9.2 %	18.5 %
<b>Master, Engineer, Doctoral<sup>xii)</sup></b>	62 866	106 528
	87.4 %	75.8 %
<b>PhD.</b>	2 428	7 964
	3.4 %	5.7 %
<b>Total</b>	71 916	140 561

xii) 6-year study programmes, mainly Medicine and Veterinary Medicine

## **Implementation of the Principles of the Bologna Follow-Up Process in Slovakia**

The strategy of implementation of the Bologna Declaration was set up by the program document The Strategy of the Further Development of Higher Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century approved by the Government in 2000. Based on this strategy a new Higher Education Act was prepared and approved by the National Council of the Slovak Republic in February 2002. The Higher Education Act came into effect on April 1, 2002. The Act creates a legal framework for implementation of principles of the Bologna Declaration.

### **1. Adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees, also through the implementation of the Diploma Supplement**

In the spirit of the Bologna Declaration, the Higher Education Act sets that higher education shall be carried out through the study programmes at three levels. The first level is represented by the Bachelor study programmes, the second level by the Master, Engineer and Doctoral study programmes, and the third level by the PhD study programmes.

The study programme may be carried out only in the field of study which is a part of the defined list of the higher education fields of study. A study programme may be also carried out in combination of two fields of study.

The standard length for the Bachelor study programme as a study programme of the first level is at least three years and at most four years. The graduates of the Bachelor study are awarded the academic degree of “bakalár”.

For the study programme of the second level (Master, Engineer or Doctoral study programme) the standard length of study is not less than one year nor more than three years, however, with the total standard length of the study according the Bachelor study programme and the follow-up study programme of the second level in the same or relative field of study, it is not less than five years. In specially justified cases the Ministry may after an opinion given by the Accreditation Commission, particularly with regard to specifics of the field of study, allow joining the first and second level of higher education study in one integrated whole. The standard length of study in the study programmes with the first and second level of higher education joined, is at least four years and at most six years, and their graduates receive higher education qualification of the second level (for example, in medical and pharmaceutical fields of study). The graduates of the study programmes of the second level are awarded the academic degree of “magister”, while in the study programmes aimed at development of creativity in the field of engineering projects or processes, including economic ones, the academic degree of “inžinier”.

The basic condition for admission to the Bachelor study or to the study with the first and second level joined, is the matura examination<sup>x</sup>, the basic condition for admission to the follow-up study at the second level is the completion of the Bachelor study.

The standard length of study for the PhD study programme is at least three years and at most four years. Graduates of the PhD study programme receive higher education qualification of the third level and are awarded the academic degree of "PhD.". The basic condition for admission to the PhD study programme is completion of higher education study of the second level; the admission to the PhD study programme after completing the Bachelor study programme is not conceivable in the Slovak Republic, nor is it expected to consider such a possibility at the moment.

In the Slovak Republic, some higher education institutions issue upon the students' request the diploma supplement. In accordance with the new Higher Education Act, every graduate will receive the diploma supplement together with the diploma in all three levels. This rule applies to graduates of higher education institutions pursuing the study programmes reaccredited according to the new Higher Education Act. With respect to advancement at the re-accreditation of all study programmes in higher education institutions, the issue of diploma supplements is anticipated with all students who will start their higher education study from September 1, 2005. The data to be included in the diploma supplement have been set down by a rule by the Ministry of Education.

## **2. Adoption of a system essentially based on two main cycles**

Higher education in the Slovak Republic is based on two cycles. After completing the first cycle in which the higher education of the first level in the Bachelor study programmes is carried out, the second cycle follows in which higher education of the second level is carried out in the master, engineer and doctoral study programmes and the study of the third level in the PhD study programmes. The regulation does not allow after completing the first level (that is, upon completing any of the Bachelor study programmes) to follow directly the study of the third level in the PhD study programmes.

According to recommendations of the Bologna Declaration, the Bachelor study programmes are oriented at acquisition of theoretical knowledge and practical knowledge based on the current state of science and art and at mastering their use at performing a profession or in the follow-up Master study. In contrast to the past, the stress is laid on such a content of the study developed that will provide for the graduates of the Bachelor study the opportunity to find full employment in both the Slovak and international labour markets and that their qualification will prove as fully sufficient for performing the respective profession.

## **3. Establishment of a system of credits**

As early as before 2000, several higher education institutions in the Slovak Republic used the credit system in a certain form and extent. The new Higher Education Act and the related decree adjusted for the higher education institutions the compulsory application of the credit system based on ECTS. Considering the advancement at re-accreditation of all study programmes in higher education institutions it is expected to fully apply the credit system for implementation of all study programmes from September 1, 2005. The study started prior to

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<sup>x</sup> General secondary education or technical secondary education with school-leaving certificate

entry of the new Higher Education Act into force, may be carried out according to previous rules, that is, also without using the credit system.

The credit system allows the student within the framework of the study programme he/she has enrolled in and in agreement with the study order, a self-profiling, that means, compilation of his/her study plan by an appropriate selection of optional and elective subjects the way it suits best of all to his/her idea of the study, as well as the speed of study in agreement with his/her individual dispositions or momentous social or financial situation, and mobility, i.e., the possibility to complete within the framework of his/her study programme a period of study in another domestic faculty or university, or in a foreign higher education institution in the respective study programme. The study programme is divided into subjects. For clear arrangement of the content of study and evaluation of the study results a regulation was issued to set for higher education institutions the duty to elaborate an information sheet of the subject in which the basic information about the subject is indicated.

The application of three binding documents has been adjusted by the rule of law issued to formally condition the completion of a period of study in another higher education institution. The documents include: an application for exchange study, an agreement on study and a record of study results, in which the receiving and sending higher education institutions confirm the conditions for completing by student a period of study from one higher education institution to another.

To improve the state of being informed about education in higher education institutions in the Slovak Republic the duty of higher education institutions to work out and publicize information on possibilities of study in higher education institutions in the set down structure, namely, in the Slovak and English language, has been adjusted by a legal regulation.

#### **4. Promotion of mobility by overcoming obstacles**

Today, out of the total number of Slovak students about 4% of students study in foreign higher education institutions, namely, in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Austria, Germany and other countries. In 2002, 1620 foreign students studied in turn in the Slovak Republic. Fulfilling the condition that each student spend at least one semester in a foreign higher education institution, requires relatively high financial resources and it would mean an increase of proportional number of students studying in foreign higher education institutions from the present 4% to 12%.

The academic mobility is organised first of all through international programmes as well as on the basis of direct cooperation between the Slovak and foreign higher education institutions.

At present, from 24 higher education institutions 18 institutions are involved in the Socrates/Erasmus programme. One new established higher education institution will start participate now (2003/2004).

Since the academic year 1998/1999 the following numbers of students and teachers took the advantage of the programme.

	1998/1999	1999/2000	2000/2001	2001/2002
Outgoing students	59	380	505	578
Outgoing teachers	7	120	116	116

Incoming students	4	40	49	85
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The rapid growth of student and teacher mobility, between the years 1998/1999 – 1999/2000 and 1999/2000 – 2000/2001 respectively, was supported by co-funding from Phare programme. Since the academic year 2001/2002 there is no Phare co-funding.

	EU funding	National funding
2000	866 982 EUR	56 734 EUR
2001	890 295 EUR	23 809 EUR
2002	922 219 EUR	50 071 EUR

Another EU programme in which Slovakia participates since 1998 is Leonardo da Vinci. In the period of 1998-2002 more than 2000 Slovak participants took advantage of the Leonardo da Vinci practical placements and exchanges, out of them 17 – 20% were higher education students and teachers.

The financing of the programme at the European and national levels is as follows:		
Year	EU funding	National co-funding
2000	2 068 000 EUR	60 500 EUR
2001	2 126 000 EUR	76 000 EUR
2002	2 268 000 EUR	56 000 EUR

The higher education institutions were also the most active promoters or partners involved in the projects submitted under other measures (pilot and language projects). For example, 38 pilot and language projects with Slovak promoter were selected in the period of 1998-2002, out of them 14 were promoted by Slovak universities.

Within the framework of the regional cooperation the Slovak Republic is involved in the CEEPUS programme – Central European Exchange Programme for Universities Studies, which is designed for university students and teachers for individual mobility or through higher education institutions. From the beginning of the project, 235 Slovak students and teachers participated in the mobility abroad, while in the Slovak institutions there were 238 students and teachers from abroad. A joint committee of ministers of CEEPUS member countries had a meeting in 2002 in the Slovak Republic to confirm the interest in continuation of the programme in 2005-2009. In the academic year 2002/2003, 44 networks were active, out of which seven were coordinated by Slovakia. In 2002, the Slovak Republic invested 100 000 EUR in the programme.

Within the framework of regional cooperation the Slovak Republic has a joint project with Austria. The Action Austria-Slovakia is a programme of bilateral cooperation between the SR and Austria from 1991, the protocol has been signed by the year 2007. In 2002, the Management Gremial of the project evaluated 56 projects in total, out of which 32 projects were approved for scholarships granted for study research stays and summer language courses.

Within the framework of regional cooperation of V4 countries (Slovakia, Hungary, Poland and Czechia) a special programme was created for financial support of students coming from V4 countries for the study in these countries and for support of students from other countries studying in V4 countries. The Agency of the programme is situated in the Slovak Republic.

## **5. The quality assurance system and European co-operation in the field of quality assurance**

The system of quality assurance for higher education is based on internal quality assessment, external evaluation and accreditation. Within the framework of internal quality assessment the scientific boards of higher education institutions evaluate regularly, but once in a year at least, the standard of higher education institution in educational activity and in the field of science, technology or art. The external evaluation of higher education institutions is a part of accreditation of higher education institutions and is carried out by the Accreditation Commission which during the course of verification of results in educational activity and higher education activity in the field of science, technology and art makes use of results of internal quality assessment of the higher education institution, prepares peer review and after evaluation of achievements of overall activities of higher education institutions it submits proposals to the Ministry. The statements by the Accreditation Commission are the basis for issue of decisions by the Ministry of Education (e.g., recognition of the right of higher education institution to award the respective degree to graduates of the study programmes) and the Government of the Slovak Republic (e.g., the State consent to act as a private institution).

The Accreditation Commission is an advisory body of the Government of the Slovak Republic. It has 21 members from higher education institutions and practice, including those from abroad.

The Accreditation Commission carries out accreditation of individual activities of higher education institutions. It gives its opinion on capacity of the higher education institution to implement the study programme with the right to award to its graduates the academic degree, capacity of the higher education institution to conduct the habilitation procedure and procedure for nomination of professors, proposals of establishment, merger, affiliation, split, dissolution, change of name or change of seat of a higher education institution, proposal for granting the State consent for a legal entity wishing to act as a private higher education institution, proposal for classification of higher education institutions as research universities, universities and professional higher education institutions, proposal for change in the system of fields of study and, eventually, other proposals with regard to the system of higher education presented by the Minister.

The Accreditation Commission also carries out regular complex accreditation of all higher education institutions in six-year intervals.

There was a legal regulation issued to the new Higher Education Act in the annex of which the background materials are listed which the higher education institutions should submit to the Accreditation Commission at accreditation of individual activities of the higher education institution and at complex accreditation of the higher education institution. The Ministry has also publicized the criteria and the way of evaluation for the purposes of accreditation of individual activities of higher education institutions and of complex accreditation.

The Accreditation Commission is a member of ENQA (European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education), a member of INQAAHE (International Network for Quality

Assurance Agencies in Higher Education) and its regional sub-network CEENQAAHE (Central and Eastern Europe Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education).

## **6. Promotion of the European dimension in higher education**

In the Slovak Republic the European dimension education is supported by means of mobility carried out through international mobility programmes as well as the programmes of cooperation carried out between individual Slovak higher education institutions and foreign higher education institutions. This mobility is also promoted by legislation, which sets the conditions of the study of Slovak students in other higher education institutions, including foreign ones, by means of application for exchange study, agreements on study and records of results on study in which the receiving and sending higher education institution confirm the conditions for completion of a period of study by the student from one institution to another.

The application of the Bologna recommendations brings about also intensification of cooperation between the Slovak and foreign higher education institutions at the creation of joint study programmes. The first example is the effort to create the joint study programme at the University of Economics in Bratislava with the partner from the Federal Republic of Germany, under which it is considered that the students will complete equivalent study at both universities. The current Slovak regulations do not allow to issue a double diploma; the discussion on this topic is ongoing in the Slovak Republic and, in May 2003, the international Slovak-Austrian Conference on double diplomas took place.

The implementation of the foreign study programmes in the Slovak Republic is also carried out through operation of one private institution which offers the Bachelor study programme of a higher education institution from the USA.

## **7. Lifelong learning**

The main task of higher education institutions in the Slovak Republic is the provision of higher education and creative scientific research, but the Act explicitly sets that the mission of higher education institution rests also in providing the further education and in contributing to development of education at all levels, starting with primary education up to the higher education. The provision of the further education is regulated in the Slovak Republic by a special law.

Higher education institutions in their own competence within the framework of the further education provide a great number of educational activities of specialized and innovation nature for practitioners in various forms.

## **8. Higher education and students**

In compliance with the law the students have the right to participate in research, development and artistic activities and other creative activities of the higher education institution, to express their opinion on quality of teaching and on teachers and to freely express their opinions and comments on higher education system.

At least one third of the Academic Senate of higher education institution and Academic Senate of the faculty is made up of students, which can participate in regulation of activities of the higher education institution and its faculties. According to law, the Student Higher

Education Council (SHEC) is the supreme representative body of university students. The SHEC represents the students' interests outwardly. It gives opinions on substantial questions, proposals and measures in the field of higher education study.

The representatives of students in the SHEC take an active part in development of the higher education policy, namely, by participation in development of significant programme documents of higher education policy and legislative norms for higher education (The Strategy of Further Development of Higher Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Higher Education Act, school budget, regulations on social welfare of university students, etc.). At the same time, they regularly participate in the sessions of the Slovak Rector's Conference, Higher Education Council, and Accreditation Commission.

The SHEC is an active member of ESIB – the National Unions of Students in Europe.

### **9. Promoting the attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area**

In the opinion of the Slovak Party, all recommendations of the Bologna Declaration and their implementation in practice have an active effect on increase of attractiveness of individual national educational systems of European countries as well as European education area as a whole. For the further increase of its attractiveness, however, it will require greater openness for non-European students, also in the form of various kinds of support at the study.