



Structures of Education and Training Systems in Europe

Slovakia

2009/10 Edition

European Commission



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SLOVAKIA

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with the support of

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INTRODUCTION: GENERAL POLICY CONTEXT

The Slovak Republic lies in the centre of Europe. It borders on the Czech Republic (251.8 km) to the West, on Austria (107.1 km) and Hungary (654.7 km) to the South, on Poland (541.1 km) to the North and on Ukraine (97.9 km) to the East.

The territory of the Slovak Republic is populated, in addition to the majority Slovak nation, by several national minorities. According to last census (as at 26.05.2001) the population of the Slovak Republic was 5 379 455 inhabitants. About one seventh of the population is made up of members of national minorities.

The Slovak Republic is a sovereign, democratic and legal State that is not bound to any ideology or religion. It was constituted on 1st January 1993 by the split of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic. The state power in the Slovak Republic comes from the citizens that execute it through their elected representatives. The state bodies may act on the basis of the Constitution, within its scope and limits by the way as set up by law. The only statutory and legal body of the Slovak Republic is the National Council of the Slovak Republic (Parliament), the head of the State is the President. Parliament is composed of 150 members, who are elected by citizens of the Slovak Republic in general, direct, equal elections by secret ballot. The members are elected for four years upon the system of proportional representation of the individual political parties according to election results. The top body of executive power is the Government. The public administration is provided by both the state administration and territorial self-governance.

On 14th December 2000 the Slovak Republic became a member of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), since 29th March 2004 it is a member of North Atlantic Alliance (NATO) and since 1st May 2004 a member of European Union. On 1st January 2009 SR was joining countries of the European Union which adopted Euro as a national currency.

The official language in the Slovak Republic is Slovak. A special law makes it possible for national minorities to use their native tongue in official communication under the conditions set in advance.

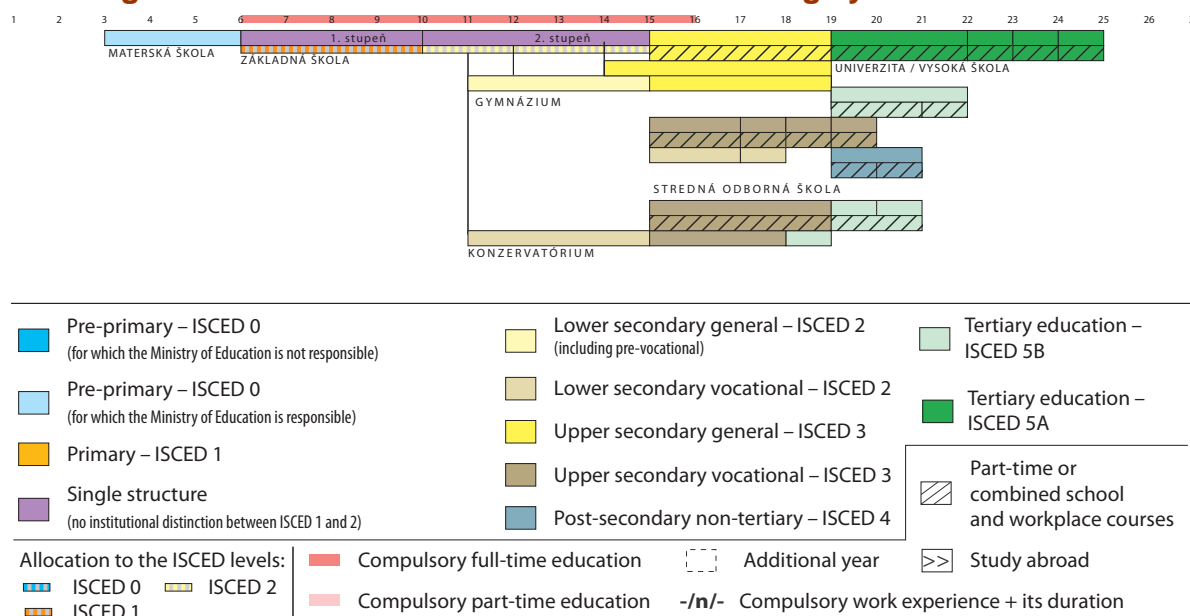
The only constitutional and legal body of the Slovak Republic is the National Council of the Slovak Republic (i.e. the Parliament). It is composed of 150 members, who are elected by citizens of the Slovak Republic in general, direct, equal elections by secret ballot. The members are elected for four years upon the system of proportional representation of the individual political parties according to election results. Active voting rights – the right to vote – are held by every citizen of the Slovak Republic over the age of 18 years.

Main citizens' rights are stipulated in the Constitution of the Slovak Republic. In the Art. 42 of the Constitution there is stated that everyone shall have the right to education and school attendance is compulsory. A law lay down the length of attendance (according to current Education law the compulsory attendance is set by the age of 16). Citizens shall have the right to free education at elementary and secondary schools and depending on the abilities of the individual and the potential of the society also at universities. The establishment of and teaching in schools other than public schools shall be possible only under the terms provided by a law; such schools may collect tuition fees. A law shall lay down eligibility for financial assistance for students from public funds.

In addition to this, citizens belonging to national minorities or ethnic groups in the Slovak Republic shall be guaranteed their universal development, particularly to establish and maintain educational and cultural institutions as well as the right to learn the official language and to be educated in their language (Section 4 of the Constitution on The Rights of National Minorities and Ethnic Groups in Art. 34).

1. INITIAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING: ORGANISATION, FUNDING AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

1.1 Organisation of the initial education and training system



The Slovak initial education and training system covers education from the age of 3 by the age of 25. During this period there are various pathways how to achieve particular level of education.

First element in education and training system is the pre-school level referring to ISCED 0. Pre-primary education is voluntary and it is eligible for children from 3 to 6 years.

Compulsory school attendance starts at the age of 6 years. If the child who has attained the age of 6 is not adequately physically or mentally developed, the guardian of the child shall apply for, or the preschool facility shall propose, the postponement of the school attendance.

Most pupils attend the single structure education system which forms an organisational unit of the primary school, covering primary level of education (ISCED1) in the length of 4 years and lower secondary education level (ISCED 2) in the length of 5 years. The obvious rule is 9 year single structure school attendance (i.e. until the age of 15) with a possibility to establish also grade 0 for children from socially disadvantaged background.

Apart from single structure education there are also other pathways: children can leave the single structure primary school at the age of 11 and follow the lower and upper secondary education at either 8-year gymnasias or conservatoires where they conclude education at the level of ISCED 2 and 3.

In accordance with the Education Law the compulsory school attendance takes ten years and lasts until the end of the school year in which the pupil attains the age of 16.

Upper secondary level of education can be completed in 2-year (ISCED 2C), 3-year (ISCED 3), 4-year study programmes (ISCED 3) at secondary specialised schools and in gymnasias.

Post-secondary non-tertiary education is focused on follow-up programmes offered to ISCED 3C graduates and three types of 'post-maturita' programmes for ISCED 3A graduates (refresher programmes, specialising programmes, qualifying programmes). Qualifying programmes at post-secondary non-tertiary level in duration of at least 2 years are completed by a 'post maturita' school leaving examination.

Tertiary education is designed for graduates from upper secondary system and it is structured according to the common European Higher Education Area following the Bologna Declaration in a compatible system of 2 cycle education composed from three types of programmes:

- Bachelor study programmes lasting 3-4 years,
- Master/Engineer and doctors degree study programmes lasting 2-3 years,
- PhD study programmes which last for full-time students 3 years.

The usual entry into tertiary education is in the age of 19.

1.2 Distribution of responsibilities

The public administration in the Slovak Republic is guaranteed by both the State administration and territorial administration.

The State administration is executed by ministries and central authorities which have lower levels of administration. The local bodies of state administration are represented by the regional and district authorities.

The territorial self-governance is executed by municipalities and higher territorial units. The municipality and higher territorial unit are independent territorial self-governing and administration units of the Slovak Republic, they are legal entities who under the conditions set by law independently manage their property and their finances; it is possible to set them duties by law only; they have their own bodies and the execution of some tasks of local state administration may be delegated to them by law.

The authorities of municipality are represented by municipal council and mayor, while the authorities of higher territorial unit are represented by the council of the higher territorial unit and the chair of the higher territorial unit. The municipal council and the council of higher territorial unit are made up of deputies. The deputies of the councils as well as mayors of municipalities and chairs of higher territorial units are elected by the inhabitants by secret ballot for a 4-year period.

As set by law, the higher territorial units are self-governing regions. Their territorial district is identical to territorial district of the regions.

The central body of state administration in education is the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic. The Minister is appointed by the President on the basis of Prime Minister's proposal while the State Secretaries are appointed by the Government of the Slovak Republic. The Minister approves materials related to performing his rights and duties as a member of the Government, approves bills, decrees and directives of the Ministry submitted to the Government, agreements on co-operation with the central bodies, the main tasks of the sector at governance and execution of state administration, the final budget of the Ministry, submitting to the President of the Republic proposals of nomination of professors of higher education institutions, appoints and recalls the Mayor School Inspector defines the organisational and functional structures of the apparatus of the Ministry, and fulfils a number of other tasks within his competence. In the absence of the Minister, on his commission, the State Secretaries ensure and fulfil tasks implicit in the competence of the Minister within the defined range.

The Ministry governs the execution of state administration in education and checks up this execution. It determines the network of schools and school facilities, principles of pedagogical management of schools, it establishes and abolishes fulfilment of the tasks of the sector research, for preparation of the basic pedagogical documents and in-service training of pedagogues, for securing the sector information system, sector institutions and school information centres. It works out bills, the concept of

development and norms for space, material and tool equipment of schools and school facilities, issues generally binding rules, and fulfils a number of other tasks.

The State School Inspection is also a body of the State administration in education. In its activity it is independent, regulated by legislation. The State school Inspection is managed by the Chief school inspector who is appointed and recalled by the Minister of Education for five-year period of office

In 2008, the National Council of the Slovak Republic has approved a new Education Act No. 245/2008 of the Law Code on education and training (Education Act) and on the change and supplement to some acts, which came into force on 1 September 2008.

This Act has created legislative space for implementation of content reform of regional education through determination of the way of realisation of education and training by means of two-level educational programmes in schools incorporated in the system of schools and school facilities related to the achieved level of education, determined 10-year compulsory schooling, defined the process and system of education and training in kindergartens, primary schools and secondary schools, enabling individual education and training, defining the assessment and marking in schools, process of admission and termination of education, monitoring and evaluation of education as well as education system, determined the process and conditions of education and training for children of foreigners, gifted children and pupils, education and training of children and pupils with special education needs.

The basic element of reform is the fact that education and training in schools will be carried out through educational programmes. The government determined for the schools the compulsory curriculum through the State educational programme. The school profiling is expressed by the school educational programme. In the school facilities, the education and training is carried out by means of educational programmes. The Curriculum Board has been established as a special initiative and advisory body of the minister of education, for key areas of education and training, and of the School Registry consisting of the registry of schools and school facilities and the registry of pupils.

The National Institute of Certified Measurements of Education has been established for monitoring improvement of education process. The other changes include integration of kindergartens, language school, basic school of art and conservatory as an independent unit of the school system. The secondary specialised school was established that provides education through the school education programmes which has been provided by now by secondary specialised schools, secondary vocational schools and apprentice training centres. A cooperating system of counselling has been created through the centres of educational-psychological counselling and centres of special-educational counselling. The free education and training of children in kindergartens was provided in the last year before starting the compulsory school attendance.

1.3 Financing

The expenses of public schools and educational establishments are covered through public funds, which are made from the state budget, municipality budget and budget of higher territorial units.

The public budget resources are designed for financing of education in state and non-state schools. The breakdown of funds from the Chapter of the Ministry is based on normatively allotted resources for individual streams, types and levels of the school. The normative contribution is determined by number of pupils and normative volume of funds allotted per pupil for current calendar year. A normative implies a sum of wage normative and operational normative. A wage normative expresses standardised annual costs for wages and salaries, insurance and appropriations of employers for employees (personal costs) ensuring the educational process and operation of the school pertaining per pupil. It is determined in dependency on the type of school, demands of the study field, form of study and language of instruction. With the primary school, the size of school should be considered

too. The operational normative expresses the standardised yearly expenditures for educational process and operation of the school without personal expenses pertaining per pupil.

For realisation of financing of special-interest education provided by schools and educational establishments the use is also made of educational vouchers. The educational voucher represents a special yearly contribution of the state for special-interest education of a pupil of primary or secondary school. The value of the voucher is determined by the ministry.

The sources of financing private and church schools and educational establishments are the funds from the state budget in the chapter of the ministry of education, the income from enterprising activity, contributions from the founders, gifts as well as other resources according to a special regulation.

New law on higher education institutions brings higher economy autonomy of higher education institutions. The economic tools resulting from their legal position enables more resources of financing.

Public higher education institutions and state higher education institutions are mainly financed from the state budget in the following way:

- public higher education institutions via Ministry of Education chapter or another ministries,
- military higher education institutions from the Ministry of Defence chapter,
- health-care higher education institutions from the Ministry of Health chapter.

Private higher education institution can be subsidies by the financial aids from the state budget, from the Ministry of education chapter.

The division between individual higher education institutions is determined by a performance indicator and cost coefficient per unit of performance.

The executive indicator represents a number of full-time students increased by a number of part-time students multiplied by coefficient 0.4 and number of doctoral students multiplied by coefficient 2.0.

1.4 Quality assurance

As set down by the Education Act the monitoring and evaluation of quality of education and training are carried out by:

- school or school facility,
- State School Inspection, or
- Ministry of Health for professional section of education for healthcare fields in secondary health schools.

In agreement with the Education Act the monitoring and evaluation of quality of education and training at the level of the national educational programmes is carried out by the National Institute of Certified Measurement in Education

According to Act No. 596/2001 of Law Code on the State administration in education and school self-government and on the change and supplement to some acts, as amended the schools of all kinds and types as well as educational establishments carrying out educational activity have a duty to annually evaluate in the form of a report, particularly:

- concept intention of development of schools or school facility designed for at least two years;
- educational activity, its results and conditions;

- outcomes concerning the school's or school facility's economic management.

The above reports are submitted by schools and school facilities for a statement to the school board as to a self-government school authority and to the founder for approval.

According to dictum of the act on the State administration in education and school self-government the justification of objections against the content of report on educational activity, its results and conditions is assessed by the State School Inspection.

The external evaluation of education, the conditions of education and training and management is carried out by the State School Inspection in agreement with the Act.

The State School Inspection was established as a state administration body in education, which executes evaluation of schools and school facilities at the national level. The Act explicitly declares it as an institution independent in its activities which is regulated by laws and other generally valid regulations. The organisation constituent parts of the State School Inspection are the school inspection centres (there are eight school inspection centres located in regional towns). The State School Inspection is managed by the Chief school inspector that is appointed and recalled by the Minister for five-year term of office.

The school inspection over professional part of training in secondary health schools is carried out by the Ministry of Health of the SR.

The Chief school inspector submits annually to the Minister of Education 'The Report on the state of the art and standards in education and training in schools and school facilities in the Slovak Republic for the respective school year based on inspection findings and other findings'.

The report is issued and is available on website of the State School Inspection www.ssiba.sk.

The schools of all kinds and types as well as school facilities divided according to the new Education Act performing educational and instructional activities have the duty to annually submit information in the form of reports, particularly on:

- children and pupils, including those with special education needs,
- results of evaluation and marking of pupils according to the level of education provided,
- study fields and trades and their concentrations,
- educational employees and fulfilment of qualification requirements of the teaching staff in school,
- in-service teacher training,
- activities and presentation of the school to the public,
- projects, in which the school is involved,
- results of inspection activity carried out by the State School Inspection in school,
- spatial and material-technical conditions of the school,
- financial and material provision of educational activities,
- the aim set up by the school in the concept intention of the school development for the respective school year and evaluation of its fulfilment,

- the areas in which the school achieves good results and the areas in which the school fails and the level of its education, including the proposal of measures, must be improved,
- results on successfulness of the school at admission of its graduates to further study,
- psycho-hygienic conditions,
- leisure-time activities,
- cooperation of school and parents, children, pupils and other institutions participating in education.

The reports are prepared by head teachers of schools and school facilities in cooperation with other head educational employees and teaching staff. Methodical associations and curricular review groups which represent advisory bodies of headteacher in primary schools, provide a significant help in it.

The school council as a body of school self-government has the right to express its opinion on the facts shown in evaluation report, while the founder is to approve the report. The headteacher is responsible for publication the report on educational activity, its results and conditions, upon approval by the founder, at a usual place at school and at school website. The substantiation of objections against the report content is judged by the State school inspection.

The aim of self-evaluation in the field of education and training is to get information on current state of the process of education and training and to compare it with the set out aims of the school, with the aim of continuous improvement.

The municipalities at the transferred performance of the state administration in the matters of education control the observance of generally binding regulations in education with exception of the control entrusted by law to the State school inspection. They also handle the complaints and petitions of citizens and legal guardians of children and youth at schools and school facilities they had founded, except for complaints and petitions the handling of which falls under the competence of the State school inspection. But in case of necessity it may ask for assistance the State school Inspection or Regional school office while examining the complaints and petitions. The self governing regions have similar competences as with municipalities in the field of evaluation.

With the purpose of gradual limitation of admission examinations at transfer from primary to secondary schools, and from secondary schools to higher education institutions, and thence the lowering selectivity of the system, the nationwide testing of pupils of Grade 9 of primary schools was introduced. It covers identification of the standards of pupils finishing Grade 9 of primary school and intending to continue their study in secondary schools. The knowledge of the applicants in the subject of Slovak Language and Maths is evaluated in the form of a test. Every pupil will get a document on achieved result. The schools are also informed of the results achieved by the pupils of the school. The tests are worked out externally centrally; the administration of tests at schools is checked by school inspection.

The Education Act brought about the change in that the Ministry of Education constituted the National Institute of Certified Measurements in Education designed for monitoring and evaluation of quality of education at the level of the national school programmes.

The evaluation of higher education at the national level is ensured through the Accreditation Commission. It is established by the Government of the Slovak Republic as its advisory body. The Government also approves its status. The Accreditation Commission activity is regulated by the Act No. 131/2002 of Law Code on the higher education institutions. The members of the Accreditation Commission are outstanding personalities from the academic community with high professional level and authority.

According to Act No. 131/2002 of Law Code on higher education, as amended, higher education institutions and their faculties submit reports on the state of the higher education institution and on activity of its self-governing body – the academic senate, to the academic community of the higher education institution once a year. Higher education institutions are also obliged to carry out evaluation according to other legal rules, e.g., in quarterly and annual financial reports on results in managing the allotted budget funds in accordance with Act No. 523/2004 of Law Code on budget rules of public institutions and on the change and supplement to some acts, as amended, and others.

2. PRE-PRIMARY EDUCATION

The adoption of the Act No. 245/2008 of Law Code on education and training and on the change and supplement to some acts brought along significant changes for kindergartens too. For kindergartens, the Education Act enforcement rule is represented by the Decree of the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic No.306/2008 of the Law Code on kindergarten.

According to the regulations in force the kindergartens may be established by municipalities, legal entities and private persons. Kindergartens for children with special education needs are founded by the State administration bodies (regional educational authorities), particularly following the net of schools and school facilities of the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic, as well as by legal entities and private persons. The kindergartens which are not legal entities, can achieve the status of legal entity on the basis of the kindergarten's request and decision by the founder.

Kindergarten supports the personality development of children in the socio-economic, intellectual, physical, moral and aesthetic areas, developing their abilities and skills, and creating prerequisites for the further education. It prepares for life in the society in harmony with individual and age specificities of the children.

2.1 Admission

The admission of children to pre-primary education in kindergartens and in kindergartens for children with special education needs is set down by the Education Act. Details on admission of children to kindergartens are laid down by the decree on kindergarten.

The kindergarten admits as a rule the children from three up to six years of age; exceptionally the child from two years may be admitted too. The children who have attained the age of six years and the beginning of school attendance of which have been postponed or the compulsory schooling of which have been additionally postponed, are also eligible for admission. The kindergartens admit primarily the children aged five years, the children with postponed start of compulsory school attendance and those with additionally postponed beginning of the compulsory schooling.

The children are admitted to kindergarten on the basis of a written application by the legal guardian submitted to the kindergarten head along with a health certificate on the child's health state from the practitioner for children and adolescents. In case of children with special education needs, the legal guardian shall supply, in addition to the application and the child's health certificate, the statement of the competent establishment of educational counselling and prevention.

One classroom may admit at most two children with special education needs, namely those with mental, perceptual or physical handicaps, children with communication disability, maladjusted children, children with autism, while the highest number of children in a classroom must be diminished by two children per each child with a health impairment.

A special kindergarten classroom usually admits children with the same kind of health impairment. The admission to such a class is a subject of agreement by the legal guardian and representative of the establishment based on diagnostic examinations aimed at identification of their special education needs to be performed by the school facility of educational counselling and prevention.

2.2 Organisation of time, groups and venue

A kindergarten is divided into classes. The highest number of children per class in kindergarten with full-day education and upbringing is:

- 20 per class for children aged 3 to 4 years

- 21 per class for children aged 4 to 5 years
- 22 per class for children aged 5 to 6 years
- 21 per class for children aged 3 to 6 years

Provided that there are children under 3 years of age to enrol, the highest number of children in a class is decreased by one. In a separate class with children under three years of age at least five children and at most ten children are enrolled. If the class with children under three years has more than ten children, their education is provided alternately by three teachers.

2.3 Curriculum

The State educational programme is the principal curricular document. It makes up the first level of two-tier model of educational programmes. It defines the main principles and aims of curricular policy of the State, essential democratic and humanist values, on which the kindergarten education and upbringing of children are based. It contains general aims and requirements related to the content of education and training, and key competencies as the chief tools of a balanced development of child personality. The State educational programme supports the global approach at development of cognitive and non-cognitive abilities of children at the given level of education. It represents a starting point and a binding document for development of the school educational programmes – curricular documents specific for the content of education and upbringing in individual kindergartens considering their local conditions.

Starting with 1 September 2009 all kindergartens run according to their own school educational programmes that should be prepared in agreement with the State educational programme ISCED 0 – Pre-primary education, and with the aims and principles of education and training laid down in the Education Act. The adherence to the Programme will be checked by the State school inspection.

The main aims of the State educational programme for pre-primary education are:

- to support the whole personality development of the child,
- to activate and motivate development of psychomotoric, cognition, emotionality and sociability,
- to develop creativity and imagination in everyday activities,
- to help the child to form its unique nature and life competencies.

The programme is integrated into four thematic circles: I am, People, Nature, Culture.

The thematic circles are interlinked and supplement each other. They are fulfilled in global and continuous educational process in integrated way. Each thematic circle includes three areas of development of the child personality:

- perceptual-motoric,
- cognitive,
- socio-emotional.

The kindergartens allow teaching religious education or religion in agreement with the Education Act, to be provided by registered churches and religious communities.

A package of requirements for adoption of knowledge, skills and capabilities to be achieved by the preschool age children with the aim to continue in primary education and to certify the pre-primary level of education achieved, has been worked out in the form of educational standards.

The arrangement of daily activities, regularly repeated in concrete kindergarten, is worked out in the form of a daily order. At preparing the daily order the attention is paid to the space needed for peaceful, safe and meaningful active stay of the child in kindergarten.

Constituent parts of the daily order are:

- playing games and playing activities,
- taking motion and relaxation exercises,
- staying outside,
- having a rest,
- activities providing for healthy lifestyle (personal hygiene, taking meals, dining).

2.4 Assessment

At fulfilling education in pre-primary level ISCED 0 has a demanding task – to purposefully learn, pedagogically diagnose the individual peculiarities of the child, to look for and identify its current developmental possibilities. The pedagogical diagnostics in kindergarten is realised by the kindergarten teacher, head of the kindergarten, school inspector for kindergartens. The teacher diagnoses the individual progress of the child and his own educational influence upon the child.

In the teacher's work the continuing pedagogical diagnostics dominates through monitoring and analysis of the play – the major, dominant activity of the preschool-age child.

The teacher analyses from pedagogical point of view all the products of the child art (paintings, drawings, products from modelling material, works from paper, natural products and others). Each product of the child art is assessed individually with the child – in the form of dialogue, publicly by presentation of the child product of every child (classroom decoration, exhibition for parents).

The teachers closely cooperate with parents at evaluation of the products – they regularly inform the parents of the child procedures in adopting the skills and abilities, of communication with other children, and of popular activities of the child, etc.

The teacher records in the process of pedagogical diagnostics everything that enables him to achieve a general opinion of the child, and all he needs to put down not to forget, e.g. notes on the child's behaviour which requires further attention; notes on the child expressions which contradict to teacher's expectations; notes on situations and activities in which the recorded moments of the child's behaviour occurred; verbal comments of the child on activity, as well as notes on his own pedagogical performance.

The child evaluations are a part of the further documentation of kindergarten in agreement with the decree on kindergarten.

2.5 Teachers

To become qualified teacher at kindergarten for children aged between 3 to 6, there are two options:

- a) Candidates are prepared at upper secondary pedagogical school. Admission is based on successful completion of lower secondary education and candidates have to pass entrance examination. The length of study lasts four years and leads to the award of the school leaving certificate.
- b) It is also possible to obtain the relevant qualification at university. In this case the upper secondary school leaving certificate is required for admission. The length of study is 4 year of

academic specialisation for pre-primary education leading to the Magister diploma with specialisation for teaching at this level.

Teachers are recruited on the basis of an open recruitment procedure. They have status of public employees.

3. SINGLE STRUCTURE EDUCATION

After the origin of the first joint state, the Czechoslovak Republic, the education systems in Bohemia and Slovakia were united. The education system was based on the Act No. 95/1948 of the Law Code on basic organization of the unified education; the unified state-run school system was introduced along with the 9-year compulsory school attendance at the territory of the entire Czechoslovakia.

The Education Reform of 1976 approved the 8-year primary school at the compulsory schooling of children and youth aged 6 to 16 years, as stipulated by the Act No. 29/1984 of the Law Code.

The current system of primary, lower and upper secondary education is regulated by the Education Act No. 245/2008 which provides a basis for diversification of curricula according to local, regional differences, needs and interests of individual pupils and specific offers of schools and teaching staff.

Primary schools unify primary education and lower secondary education to form an organizational single structure unit. They comprise as a rule 9 years with a possibility to establish also grade 0 for children from socially disadvantaged background. Primary education lasts 4 years (grades 1-4) and the lower secondary education 5 years (grades 5-9). With regard to the fact that compulsory education in the Slovak Republic lasts ten years, practically each pupil continues the schooling in an upper secondary school after completing the lower secondary education in single structure primary school.

It is also important to note that the New Education Act No. 245/2008 enables children to attend either single structure education at primary school (putting together 4-year primary education and 5-year lower secondary education), or to choose 8-year gymnasium or dance conservatoire and achieve lower secondary education and upper secondary education at these schools (for more details see section 1.1 and the introductory part to chapter 4).

Education and training in the Slovak Republic is carried out in official (Slovak) language, as well as in languages of national minorities.

Primary school prepares pupils for further studies and practice.

3.1 Admission

Following the Education Act No. 245/2008 of the Law Code on education and training compulsory school attendance usually starts at the beginning of the school year which follows upon attaining by the child the age of six and school maturity. If the child does not attain the maturity for attending the school upon reaching the age of six or if he/she comes from socially disadvantaged background, and, if requested by his/her guardian, the head-teacher will decide on postponement of the compulsory school attendance for this child until the following school year, or he/she gets the possibility to start grade 0.

Parents have the right to choose a particular type of school for their children. There is a wider variety of public, private and denominational schools which can suit to children needs, interests and parents orientation. The majority of schools provided primary and lower secondary education are public

3.2 Organisation of time, groups and venue

Primary school consists of two stages: the 1st stage (grades 1-4) and the 2nd stage (grades 5-9). In Grade 1, five lessons may follow in succession at most thrice a week, in Grade 2 five lessons and in Grade 3 and Grade 4 six lessons may follow in succession at most twice a week, while in Grades 5 to 9 at most six lessons may follow successively. The pupils of Grades 5 and 6 may have at most seven lessons a day per week, while the pupils of Grades 7 to 9 may have at most eight lessons a day per week.

Classes are co-educational. There is no strict differentiation of pupils according to their abilities. In each grade there are pupils of the same age, with the exception of repeaters or the gifted pupils, who may leave out a grade. Another exception are those with postponed compulsory schooling.

At school, the education and training are carried out in classrooms and in special classrooms equipped according to needs of individual subjects, especially, in laboratories, school workshops, school premises, training kitchen, gymnasium, and at school courtyards.

The number of groups and number of pupils per group are defined according to spatial, personnel and financial conditions of the school, according to nature of pupils' activity, according to demands of the subject with regard to health protection and Labour safety requirements.

For teaching the subject of Religion or Ethics the pupils of different classes of the same year create groups with the highest number of pupils up to 20. If the number of pupils per group drops under 10 pupils, the groups may also involve the pupils of varied years. Once a subject is chosen, the pupil attends it during the whole school year.

For classes of the subject of foreign language the pupils of various classes of the same year may be cubed to create groups with the highest number of pupils 17. For teaching the subjects of Informatics and Computer Education a class may be divided into groups with the highest number of 17 pupils.

The classes of Physical Education in Grades 1 to 4 are common for boys and girls. At the upper stage the classes are divided or cubed to form groups for girls and groups for boys of the same year. The highest number of pupils in group is 25. If the number of pupils in group drops under 12, the groups may combine pupils of diverse years. For classes of subjects of World of Work and Technique the pupils of diverse classes of the same year may be cubed to create groups with the highest number of 17 pupils.

The maximum number of pupils per class in primary school at the first stage (i.e. ISCED 1) is:

- 16 pupils per class of grade 0,
- 22 pupils per class of grade 1,
- 24 pupils per class which combine pupils of several grades of the first stage of primary school,
- 25 pupils per class of grades 2 to 4.

The maximum number of pupils per class at the second stage of primary school (i.e. ISCED 2) is 28 pupils, namely, in grades 5 to 9.

The timetable is defined by the head-teachers after discussing it at the School Council. In doing so he/she considers the character of pupils' daily and weekly physiological performance, the hygienic and working requirements of pupils and educational staff.

3.3 Curriculum

At primary school teaching is based on educational programs. The Act on Education and Training defines the State educational program – *štátny vzdelávací* program and school educational program – *školský vzdelávací* program. The harmony between the State and school educational program is controlled by the State School Inspection. The school programs are divided in curricula, syllabi and educational standards. The State educational programs contain, for example, the name of educational program, the concrete aims of education and training, the achievement of the level of education at completing the educational program, the graduate's profile, educational standards, framework teaching plans, etc. The school educational program contain the name of the educational program,

definition of their own aims, level of education to be achieved upon its completing, the very orientation of the school, length of the study, language of teaching and curriculum.

The educational standards are a constituent part of the State educational programs, they contain a set of requirements for adoption of knowledge, skills and abilities that the children and pupils should receive to be able to continue in education related to the next part of educational program or to be able to obtain the level of education. There are the following educational standards for children and pupils:

- performance standards which determine criteria of the level of mastering the knowledge, skills and abilities,
- content-based standards which determine the volume of required knowledge and skills.

3.4 Assessment, progression and certification

Evaluation and marking may be formative or summative and may be expressed by either marking scale, in words or in combination of both. The knowledge may be evaluated by oral assessment which is completed by oral commentary on certificates. Continuous evaluation is used to evaluate partial outcomes and performance of the pupil, and it has mainly a motivational character. The final evaluation in individual subjects usually takes place at the end of the first and second terms of the school year to give the most objective evaluation of the pupil's knowledge in a particular subject and behaviour.

Marking is one of the forms of evaluation; its outcomes are expressed in a five-mark scale. Verbal assessment is determined by four-point marking scale and supplemented by oral commentary of the teacher.

In the evaluation procedure the teacher shows adequate demands, pedagogical tact to the pupil, respect of the child's rights and a humane way of treating the child. Only the pupils who passed the exam transfer to a higher grade.

The pupil of primary school has to take exams in individual subjects, in oral and written form or practically at least twice in a term. The teacher is obliged to keep a record of pupils' marks.

At the end of the first term and at the end of each school year the pupils receive a certificate (official document) on the study they completed and their academic performance. The certificates are issued on forms approved by the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic. Marking on certificate is used to assess the pupil's academic performance in individual subjects as follows:

- 1 – excellent,
- laudable,
- good,
- satisfactory,
- fail.

The pupil's behaviour is assessed using the following ranks:

- 1 – very good,
- satisfactory,
- less satisfactory,
- dissatisfactory.

A pupil fails when he/she achieves bad results ('he/she failed') in any of compulsory subjects even after the re-examination. The grades are also repeated by those who could not be marked for serious impartial reasons, such as health reasons or longer stay abroad.

Pupils of grades 1-9 who are assessed as 'he/she failed' in two compulsory subjects at most at the end of the second term, can have examination re-sit on the basis of the head-teacher's decision. These are held in the last week of summer holidays at the date set up by the headteacher. If a pupil cannot be present at the examination re-sits for serious reasons, the headteacher allows him to take the exams by 15 September at the latest; until then the pupil conditionally pursues the courses of the next grade. Unsuccessful pupil has to repeat respective grade.

At finishing each year of primary school the pupil receives a certificate which is demonstrating the year's work of the pupil, hence the appropriate school year (including the last year of single structure primary school) is not completed by special examinations.

3.5 Guidance and counselling

The school establishments for educational counselling and prevention carry out especially psychological, pedagogical, special-pedagogical, including logopaedic and therapeutic pedagogical activities and social activity aimed at optimising the educational, psychic, social and career development of children since their birth up to completing their career development. Special care is devoted to children with special education needs. The counselling services are also provided by the guardian and educational employee.

The basic units of the system of educational counselling and prevention are the establishments of educational, psychological and special-educational counselling and prevention, which include the centre of pedagogical-psychological counselling and prevention, and the centre of special-pedagogical counselling.

The other elements of the system of educational counselling and prevention involve educational counsellor, school psychologist, school special pedagogue, therapeutic pedagogue, social pedagogue, coordinator of prevention.

3.6 Teachers

The initial teacher education and training takes place in higher education institutions. All primary and secondary school teachers must have university education.

After completing the school-leaving examination at secondary school the students continue their study at faculties of higher education institutions oriented at teacher education and training or other university faculties oriented at education in various fields, with the possibility to complete supplementary pedagogical study. Thus they receive teaching qualification for primary and secondary schools and school facilities, including special education.

The higher education teaching qualification may be of three kinds:

- The study in faculties of higher education institutions preparing teachers. The candidates complete higher education of the 1st and 2nd level (i.e. Bachelor and Master). After the defence of a thesis and completion of the State final examination they receive the pedagogical qualification.
- The study in higher education institutions and supplementary pedagogical study. The candidate completes concurrently two study programs and besides the professional qualification he/she receives pedagogical qualification too.

- The study in higher education institutions. After its completion the candidate receives higher education professional qualification and he/she completes the supplementary pedagogical study only afterwards.

The teacher education and training (1st and 2nd level – i.e. Bachelor and Master) is completed by the completing the State examination and the defence of a thesis in the respective study program and field of study. The length of study is 5 years.

The achieved teacher qualification has unlimited validity.

In service teacher training

At present, the organization, content, extent and forms of the in-service training of educational staff are laid down by the Decree of the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic No. 42/1996 of the Law Code on in-service training of educational staff, as amended and by the Higher Education Act No. 131/2002 of the Law Code, as amended by subsequent provisions.

The in-service training of educational staff is controlled by the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic through organizations for in-service training of educational staff, that is, Methodical-educational centre, the National Institute for Education, the State Vocational Education Institute, higher education institutions and other educational institutions central bodies.

The above-mentioned organizations closely cooperate with local State administration in the area of education.

The admission requirements of the in-service training of teachers are laid down in dependence on what form of in-service training the teachers apply for. Individual forms of the in-service training of teachers are laid down by the Decree of the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic No. 42/1996 of the Law Code on in-service training of educational staff, and the qualification examinations by the Decree No. 374/2005 of the Law Code on professional and pedagogical competence of educational staff.

Teachers usually apply for individual forms of in-service training through head-teachers of schools. The head-teacher decides what forms of in-service training are preferential with regard to the educational and instructional practice of the school as well as individual interests and needs of teachers and conditions of the school. On the basis of the judgment of these facts the head-teacher of the school submits requests for admission of teachers to appropriate forms of in-service training.

4. SECONDARY EDUCATION

The secondary education (designed for pupils aged 15/16 – 18/19 years) is carried out in three types of secondary schools: gymnasium, secondary specialized school and conservatory. It is regulated by the Education Act No. 245/2008 and the Act on Vocational Education and Training No. 184/2009.

Secondary education is divided as follows:

- **lower secondary specialised education**, which the pupil receives by successful completing of the last year of 2-year educational programme of the field of study in secondary specialised school or by successful completing of the last year of educational programme of the field of study in vocational school which is concluded by a final examination; the document on the received level of education and on qualification obtained is the certificate of final examination; in the trades determined by the State educational programme the received qualification can be documented by the Certificate of Apprenticeship;
- **upper secondary general education** which the pupil receives by successful completing of the last year of at least 4-year and at most 8-year educational programme of the field of study in gymnasium, which is completed by a secondary school-leaving examination; the received level of education is documented by the certificate of the secondary school-leaving examination;
- **upper secondary specialised education** which the pupil receives by successful completing of the last year of at least 3-year and at most 4-year educational programme of the field of study in secondary specialised school which is concluded by a final examination; the document on the received level of education is a certificate on final examination with supplement and the document on received qualification is the Certificate of Apprenticeship;
- **upper secondary specialised education** which the pupil receives by successful completing of the last year of at least 4-year and at most 5-year educational programme of the field of study in secondary specialised school, which is concluded by a secondary school-leaving examination; the received level of education and the received qualification is documented by a certificate on secondary school-leaving examination; in the fields of study defined by the State educational programme the received education may be also documented by a Certificate on Apprenticeship.

4.1 Admission

The admission to secondary schools is conditional upon successful completion of primary school and admission examination.

The access to an eight-year gymnasium, eight-year sports gymnasium and a dance conservatoire is also given for those who successfully completed Grade 4 of single structure primary school. The head-teacher of a secondary school defines, upon agreement with pedagogical board, the form, content and extent of the entrance examination according to the curriculum of the primary school as well as other conditions of the admission procedure.

At the decision-making on admission the head-teacher of the secondary school takes account of the fact that the applicant is a successful participant of the Subject Olympiad or a Winner of the competition which is related to field of study he/she has applied for. In the event the subject of verification are the special skills or talent, the results contained in the all-Slovak testing of pupils of Grade 9 of primary school are taken into account.

Primary school pupils can submit at the same time two applications for the study at secondary schools. In case they are interested in the school which requires the verification of special skills and talent, they can submit another application.

The admission of applicant to secondary school is upon the head-teacher, based on results of the admission procedure. For preparation, course and processing the results of the admission examinations and for assessment of the applicant's preconditions for study the head-teacher establishes a selection committee as an advisory body. The list of applicants with the results of the admission procedure is publicized on a school poster within three days from completing the examinations.

The admission requirements at secondary specialized school are mostly identical with the aforementioned.

On admission to secondary specialized school of an artistic concentration, conservatories, one of the admission requirements is successful completion of the so called talent examination for verification of special abilities, skills and talent.

The profiling subjects for admission examinations are determined by the ministry of education on the basis of proposals by the head-teacher of secondary school. The head-teachers set up the form of admission examination, its content and extent, as well as other conditions for admission.

4.2 Organisation of time, groups and venue

Teaching at upper secondary schools is organised in classes according to age in Grades 1-4. The classes are coeducational. There is not a strict division of pupils according to their abilities. In each grade there are usually pupils of the same age. Individual subjects are taught by qualified teachers.

At secondary schools classes of full-time study of at least 17 and at most 30 pupils are organised. At gymnasium the classes can be divided into groups according to the pertinent curricula.

The organisation of teaching at secondary specialized school is to a prevalent extent identical to that in gymnasium.

Different form is used, e.g., at special vocational training in conservatoire, which is conducted both individually and in groups. A group consists of 2-24 pupils in dependence on specialisation of study.

4.3 Curriculum

Curriculum and educational standards belong to fundamental educational documents, which are followed by pedagogues in the provision of teaching process in secondary schools. The curriculum development for general subjects falls within the competence of the National Institute of Education (ŠPÚ), while the National Institute for Vocational Education (ŠIOV) is responsible for curriculum development for vocational subjects. In cooperation with different curricular review groups, teachers and methodologists, the above mentioned institutions submit proposals of curriculum and educational standards to the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic (ME SR) for approval. After approval they become binding for schools. With regard to the church secondary schools, the founder approves curriculum upon agreement by the Ministry of Education SR and Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic. The private secondary schools are issued curriculum by the founder upon approval by the ME SR.

The Act on Education and Training defines the State educational program – *štátny vzdelávací* program and school educational program – *školský vzdelávací* program which regulates the curricula and enables diversification according to regional, local and individual needs (see also section 3.3).

In curriculum of vocational subjects at secondary specialized school it is possible to adjust as much as 30 % of their content to new technologies, new knowledge that result from the development of science, technology and culture and from adjusting the subject matter to current needs of the branch, Labour market or specific conditions of the school.

All secondary schools can establish optional subjects in all grades. Among optional subjects we can list following: exercise from Slovak language, exercise from chemistry, as well as from biology, geography, descriptive geometry; basics of family education, basics of administration, Latin language, conversations in foreign languages, Aesthetics, etc.

The support of development of managerial and enterprising skills of young people will continue in all types of secondary schools in the educational programme, the constituent part of which is optional subject teaching. The compulsory option subject of Religion or Ethics in Grades 1 and 2 are provided for pupils by 15 years of age according to decision of their guardians.

4.4 Assessment, progression and certification

Assessment

In agreement with the Act the pupil assessment is carried out according to the level of achieved results through:

- oral assessment
- marking
- combination of marking and oral assessment.

The pupils' achievements in individual subjects are marked by the following credit scale:

- excellent (1),
- laudable (2),
- good (3),
- satisfactory (4),
- fail (5).

At conservatory the assessment of pupils' study results in the major field of study or major fields of study and in other practical vocational subjects is carried out through commission examinations and the subject of the exams consists of all artistic production. The exams are held before examination commissions appointed by head teacher. The commission examinations are carried out at the end of each half-a-year and at the end of school year in the scope determined by curricula. The re-sit examination is not allowed at conservatory in major subject, i.e. playing musical instrument, dance, etc. which represents the specialisation of field of study.

Upon the proposal of the subject boards and after discussions with pedagogical council and school council, the secondary school head teacher will announce in agreement with curricula which optional subjects are subject of marking and which are not (for more details on optional subjects see section 4.3). Ethics alternated with Religion is not a subject of marking. If the pupil is exempt from classes of a compulsory subject and does not take commission examination, the note 'exempt' is indicated at the certificate. The results of assessment and marking are regularly provided by the secondary school via classroom teacher to the parent, legal guardian or the person who has nourishing duty towards the pupil.

During the school year the assessment of pupil is done by way of a mark, percentual or verbal evaluation. At the evaluation, continuous or summative marking the adequate rate of demands and pedagogical tact towards pupil, his performance are evaluated in complex way. The pupil's efforts are considered and his/her human rights are respected to full degree. The assessment is considered as an act of impartial feedback, motivational and educational means as well as a means of positive support of sound self-image.

Pupil's behaviour is assessed as follows:

- very good (1),
- satisfactory (2),
- less satisfactory (3),
- dissatisfactory (4).

The overall evaluation of a secondary school pupil done in mid-year and at the end of the school year expresses the results of his/her marking in subjects and assessment of his/her behaviour. The overall evaluation in mid-year and at the end of the school year is expressed as follows:

- He/she passed with honours,
- He/she passed very well,
- He/she passed,
- He/she failed.

Progression of Pupils

All pupils of secondary school, except of those who failed, move on to a next grade. A pupil who fails in two compulsory subjects at most may with the head teacher's approval, take a re-sit. After its successful passing he/she moves on to the next grade. If the pupil fails re-sit, the head teacher can allow him/her to repeat the grade. In the course of study the pupil can transfer to another school. The transition of a pupil is decided by head teacher of the secondary school that the pupil chose to transfer to.

Final examinations

The education provided by secondary schools is either general or vocational.

The education and training in secondary schools may be completed by:

- final examination,
- secondary school-leaving examination,
- final postsecondary examination,
- graduate's examination.

The final examination is aimed at attestation of pupils' knowledge and skills in the extent of subject matter determined by educational standards of the State educational programme and attestation how the pupils are prepared to use the achieved competencies at pursuit of occupations and professional activities for which they are being trained. The pupil may take the final examination if he/she has successfully completed the last year of educational programme of the respective field. The final examination is divided into a written part, practical part and oral part. The practical part of the final examination is completed after the written part of examination and before the oral part of examination;

the practical part of the final examination may be also completed on another date especially due to seasonal works. The final examination is held in regular examination period from 16th June to 30th June or in extraordinary examination session in September or in February of the following school year.

The aim of the **secondary school-leaving examination** is also the attestation of knowledge and skills of the students in the extent of the subject matter determined by catalogue of target requirements and attestation of if the students are prepared to used them in their further study, at performing occupations and professional activities they are trained for.

The secondary school-leaving examination is regulated by the Decree of the Ministry of Education of the SR No. 318 of 23rd July 2008 on completion of study in secondary schools:

A student may take the school-leaving examination only in subjects and in the way set out. The school-leaving examination may be held in individual subjects at the level A, B, or C. Level A is higher, B is in agreement with the requirements on the basic level and C is the lower level. The examination consists of two parts – external and internal. The student of the last grade of secondary school shall inform in written form his class teacher about the subjects and the level he chose for his examination by 30th September.

External part consists of a written test which is set and assessed by the National Institute of Certified Measurements of Education. It takes place on the same date throughout the Slovak Republic. The supervision and correction is upon the educational worker who are not the employees of the school in which the external part takes place.

Internal part may have an oral form, practical form, presentation of complex task or artistic performance, defence of one's own project or combination of these forms. This part takes place before a matura examination board. The chairmen of examination boards are appointed by the regional school authority.

If a pupil, his/her guardian or other person appointed by the latter is not satisfied with evaluation of the school-leaving examination, or its written part, he/she may ask the head-teacher for examining his/her written work and compare its evaluation with the key of correct responses and the rules of evaluating the work within five days from the date of learning the results. In case that the complaint on evaluation of the school-leaving examination is justified, re-sit exam is held before a subject commission in its original composition.

The pupil may take the **graduation examination** if he successfully completed the last year of study. It is a complex professional examination, whereby the level of the pupils' specific knowledge and skills oriented at performance of concrete working activities is attested. The examination may also attest the level of artistic and pedagogical-artistic activities.

The graduation examination contains:

- in conservatory, graduation performances in the major or majors, graduation test and its defence and comprehensive examination in teacher training or comprehensive examinations in teacher training,
- in dance conservatory, graduation performance in major and comprehensive examination in teacher training,
- in school of applied art, a practical examination in major including its defence, theoretical examination in professional subjects according to nature of the respective study field and a comprehensive examination in teacher training,

- in secondary health school, a complex theoretical-practical examination in the respective study field, graduation test and its defence,
- in other secondary vocational schools, end-of-studies test, its defence and complex examination in vocational subjects.

It is taken in regular examination session in June, graduation tests may be held from February to June. The graduation examination is held in extraordinary examination session in September or in February of the following school year; the date is determined by the head-teacher of the secondary school.

Certification – Gymnasias and Secondary specialised schools

An official document on completion of a grade of secondary school is a certificate. If the pupil of a secondary school completed the school with good results, he/she moves on to the next higher grade. In the last year of study at gymnasias the pupil takes the school-leaving examination. The document on completion of study is the school-leaving certificate. The school-leaving examination in gymnasias is composed of four subjects – Slovak language and literature, foreign language, and two optional subjects.

The school-leaving examination in secondary specialised school consists of four subjects – Slovak language and literature, foreign language, theoretical part of vocational item and practical part of vocational item.

If a citizen of the Slovak Republic receives secondary education abroad, the document on its completion is subject to nostrification, which is carried out by the appropriate authorities. The recognised document on education is equivalent to a document on education received in the Slovak Republic.

A graduate examination is a special type of completing secondary specialised school. It is a complex special examination, leading to attestation of the level of specific knowledge and skills of the pupils aimed at artistic and pedagogical-artistic activities. It is held first of all at conservatories, schools of applied art and secondary health school. Based on successful completion of graduate examination the student receives 'absolútórium'.

4.5 Guidance and counselling

The system of educational counselling is guaranteed by the class teacher as well as the counselling institutions – pedagogical-psychological centres:

- Within the area of their competence they provide for educational and psychological care, advisory, methodical and information services in the field of education, personal and professional development of the young people up to the completion of their preparation for career;
- At the problem solution they cooperate with Methodical Council for Psychological Educational Counselling and Prevention at the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic;
- They pay increased attention to primary prevention, i.e. to systematic formation and effecting sound psychical development, as well as secondary prevention by means of individual and group work;
- They are oriented at early identification and correction of risk manifestations of young people with problems;

- A special attention is paid to advisory-information and methodical activities in career guidance and career choice;
- In agreement with the Convention on Child Rights the schools and school facilities are obliged to continuously provide for the child protection against drug abuse, physical or psychical violence, ill-treatment or exploitation.

4.6 Teachers and trainers

The qualification of educational staff is laid down by the Decree No. 374/2005 whereby the Decree No. 41/1996 of the Law Code on professional and pedagogical competence of pedagogical employees is changed and supplemented. The professional competence consists of complex knowledge in the branch of study and the subject, and educational competence consists of knowledge in education, didactic, psychology. By completing the teacher training fields of study and tutorship the educational staff receive professional and educational competence. By completing non-teacher training fields of study the educational staff receive only professional competence. The educational competence is supplemented in the form of supplementary pedagogical study. The Decree in Annex clearly sets who is qualified for individual kinds and types of schools.

The higher education teaching qualification may be of three kinds:

- The study in faculties of higher education institutions preparing teachers. The candidates complete higher education of the 1st and 2nd level. After the defence of a thesis and completion of the State final examination they receive the pedagogical qualification.
- The study in higher education institutions and supplementary pedagogical study. The candidate completes concurrently two study programs and besides the professional qualification he/she receives pedagogical qualification too.
- The study in higher education institutions. After its completing the candidate receives higher education professional qualification and only afterwards does he complete the supplementary pedagogical study.

The skilled teachers may also complete the extended pedagogical study. The teachers complete this kind of training, whether those oriented at pupils with special education needs, or those focused on subjects of art or sports.

5. POST-SECONDARY NON-TERTIARY EDUCATION

Traditionally, there were two kinds of post-secondary non-tertiary programmes in Slovakia:

- follow-up programmes offered to ISCED 3C graduates;
- three types of 'post-maturita' programmes for ISCED 3A graduates (refresher programmes, specialising programmes, qualifying programmes).

Qualifying programmes at postsecondary and non-tertiary level in duration of at least 2 years are completed by a 'post maturita' school leaving examination. These studies are rated as an ISCED 4A level of education. These programmes are aimed at gaining additional or new qualification as they obtain a second 'maturita' school leaving certificate (in a branch other than the one studied earlier).

For the statistical purposes the only post *maturita* qualifying study are included at ISCED level 4.

5.1 Admission

Requirements for admission to postsecondary and non-tertiary type of education are for holders of school leaving certificates (*maturita*). The applicant has to pass entrance examination.

5.2 Organisation of time, groups and venue

Time of study is similar to upper secondary education except of cases in which students study in part-time forms.

The number of students in classes as well as dividing into groups is comparable with upper secondary level system.

Secondary specialized schools and gymnasia provide this type of education in their premises.

Timetable and workload of students depends on the field of study, organisation of study (full-time, part-time).

From June 2009 new Decree No. 231/2009 Code of Law of the Ministry of Education on organisation of the school year came into force.

5.3 Curriculum

Graduates who finished upper secondary programmes can decide to follow various post-secondary non-tertiary education programmes leading to vocational qualification. Curriculum is designed with the respect to take into account classic vocational education and training programmes of upper secondary education.

Post *maturita* qualifying study is designed for graduates of all secondary schools who successfully completed study by school leaving exam. The main objective is to enable students to gain a professional qualification. Graduate profile is based on the general education which was obtained at secondary school and on outputs of intensive professionally oriented training.

Refresher programmes (upgrading skills and innovative) are of at least 6 months in length and are completed by a final exam. These studies are rated as an ISCED 4A level of education. The programmes are aimed at updating of previously acquired knowledge and skills.

5.4 Assessment, progression and certification

Assessment and progression of students is the same as the upper secondary level.

The certification related to various ISCED 4 programmes is listed in the table below:

Education pathway/program	Certificate
At least 6 month developing and refresher study with a final 'post-maturita' exam	A certificate on final 'post-maturita' exam
2-year follow-up study branch with a 'maturita' school leaving exam	A 'maturita' school leaving exam certificate
At least 2-year qualifying study with a vocational component of 'maturita' school leaving exam (2nd 'maturita')	A 'maturita' school leaving exam certificate (for vocational component)

Source: Slovak VET Observatory Vocational Education and Training in Europe: Country report Slovakia 2009 – draft, p.42

5.5 Guidance and counselling

Guidance and counselling for the level of ISCED 4 is not provided separately. It is included for those who need any kind of advice, in the same counselling system as valid for the upper secondary level.

5.6 Teachers and trainers

Within the secondary VET system, VET teachers and VET trainers are recognised equally as pedagogical staff by educational legislation and their qualification requirements are strictly regulated (till October 2009 by the Decree of the Ministry of Education (MŠ, *Ministerstvo školstva*) and since November 2009 by a specific act on pedagogical staff).

There are traditionally three categories of VET school teachers officially recognised by education sector legislation: teachers of general subjects, teachers of vocational subjects and teachers of practical training. The latter category of teachers is involved in practical lessons at school, e.g. in laboratories and practical lessons connected to workplaces specified within the curricula and aimed at applying theoretical knowledge gained during theoretical subjects.

All secondary teachers must be graduates of universities. Their initial education and training consists either of a 5 year university course focused on pedagogical branch for technical subject leading to the *magister/inžinier* diploma or to 5 to 6 university course directly focused on technical branches such as medicine, agriculture, arts (including 2-year additional pedagogical study leading to the *magister/inžinier/medicine doctor* diploma).

6. TERTIARY EDUCATION

Following the Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic No. 131/2002 of the Law Code, as amended, higher education institutions are supreme educational, research and artistic institutions. Higher education institutions have the exclusive right to provide higher education and right to award the academic degrees and science-pedagogical titles. The higher education institution mission is to develop harmonious personality, knowledge, wisdom and creativity in a man and to contribute to the development of education, science, culture and health for the whole society prosperity.

The Act No 131/2002 of the Law Code on higher education, as amended, distinguishes three types of higher education institutions: public higher education institutions (20), state higher education institutions (3), private higher education institutions (10) and amendment to the Act also allows establishment of foreign higher education institutions. Military and police higher education institutions are the state budgetary organisations, health-care higher education institutions are state contribution organisation. The private higher education institutions are legal entities.

Public, state and private higher education institutions can provide Bachelor, Master and Ph.D. degree study programs depending exclusively on the conditions of accreditation. The higher education institutions may admit the students only to the study in accredited study programs based on credit system. Foreign higher education institutions provide the study programmes according to regulations of countries of their origin.

Higher education institutions are divided according to the character and extent of their activities into university higher education institutions and non-university higher education institutions. Alongside, there are also non-higher educational institutions. These institutions are the legal entities performing research and development which may participate in implementing PhD study in cooperation with a higher education institution, upon being granted the accreditation by the Ministry of Education on a contract base.

In accordance with the Act No. 131/2002 of the Law Code on Higher Education and on the Change and Supplement to Some Acts, as amended, the higher education can be accomplished by the study courses according to the accredited study programme in this study programme or via combination of the study programmes.

According to the above-mentioned Act there are 3 levels of programmes:

- Bachelor study programs
- Master, Engineer and doctors degree study programs
- PhD study programs

General Objectives – Bachelor's Study

Bachelor's study as a study program of the first level is aimed at acquisition of theoretical knowledge and practical knowledge based on the recent state in the science or art and at management of its use in practice or in continuation in further higher education study. Bachelors study program graduates achieve the higher education of the first level. Duration of study is 3-4 years.

General Objectives – *Magister's* Study, Engineer's Study and Doctor's Study

Master (*Magister's*) or engineer programme of study is focused on achievement of theoretical and practical knowledge based on current state of science or art and it is aimed at capability development and creativity in future occupations. *Magisters* study and Engineer's study takes at least one year and at most three years. The Doctor's study in medical and veterinary branches last six years.

General Objectives – PhD Study

The PhD. study is the third level of higher education aimed at preparation of new scientific workers not only for higher education institutions, but also the entire economy. It is aimed at acquisition of knowledge based on the present state of scientific and artistic knowledge and, particularly, on the student's contribution to it, which is a result of scientific research and independent creative activity in the field of science or technology or independent theoretical and creative activity in the field of art.

The PhD study became a standard type of higher education. In the PhD study, the graduates of Bachelor, Engineer and Doctor's studies may continue after meeting the admission requirements. In the full-time form the study takes three to four years, in the part-time form it takes five years.

The students of PhD study in full-time form of study are provided scholarship which is regulated by Amendment to Act No. 363/2007 of the Law Code whereby the present decree of Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic No. 204/2002 of Law Code on granting scholarships to PhD students of full-time PhD study, as amended by Decree of Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic No. 505/2004 of the Law Code was annulled. For purposes of health insurance, retirement insurance and for purposes of covering security contributions in case of unemployment the PhD student in full-time form of study has a position of a student. The amendment to the act specifies the provision of PhD scholarships in such a way that the PhD student in full-time form of study is entitled to it during the standard length of pursuing his study programme only.

Higher Professional Education

The conservatoire is a type of secondary school which offers tertiary education at the level of ISCED 5B. As a rule, it takes six years to complete, in the field of dance eight years (including the upper secondary school). The conservatoires also prepare the students for the world of work and for higher education study. In postsecondary study at the conservatoire and at schools of applied art, the students improve their knowledge for qualified performance of artistic profession; at the secondary health school the students specialise on professional activities.

The transformation of experimental fields to the study fields of higher professional study lead to introduction of a new kind of postsecondary study, the so-called higher professional study. In this kind of study the secondary specialised schools provide the graduates with the higher professional education but they do not provide the higher education that, in the light of higher education law, may be provided by higher education institution only. At the same time, it will be possible to transform the verified experimental study fields of higher professional education to the bachelor study programmes of professional higher education institutions. Following national statistics the higher professional study programmes at secondary specialised schools are classified in ISCED 5B as described in Decree No. 282/2009 on secondary schools.

6.1 Admission

Admission Requirements – Higher Professional Education

Higher professional education in the above mentioned types of schools a continuation of study after completing the secondary school-leaving examination and entrance examination.

Admission Requirements – Bachelor's Study, *Magister's* Study, Engineer's Study, Doctor's Study

Every citizen has the right to study at a higher education institution in the selected branch of study programme provided he fulfils the basic admission conditions for study and further conditions specified by higher education institutions. The basic condition for the admission to Bachelor study is graduation from complete secondary education or complete secondary vocational education (the education

completed by the secondary school-leaving examination). Basic condition for admission to the study in study programme of the second stage is a subject of completing the study programme of the first stage. The basic condition for admission to PhD study is graduation from the second level study program (*Magister's*, Engineer's or Doctor's degrees).

Higher education institution can admit applicants of accredited study programmes which are in the list of study programmes. According to Higher Education Act only the higher education institutions have the prerogative to provide and organize higher education and hence they are the only institutions empowered to admit students to higher education study.

The admission examinations are organised directly by a faculty, which determine by themselves the admission requirement in such a way as to admit to the study only the candidates with necessary abilities and prerequisites. The faculty or higher education institution shall announce the framework content and way of evaluation of results of admission examination. The other conditions must not go beyond the content of knowledge offered by the secondary education with school-leaving certificate in the light of the education law. The admission examination is held mostly in written form. Some schools also include oral examinations or interviews, too, for selected programmes. Their aim is to evaluate the overall prerequisites for the study programme chosen, language skills, etc. The talent or practical examination is taken by candidates of the teacher training for the first grade of primary school, or candidates of teacher training for academic subjects in combination with physical education, music education and art education, at the study programmes of sports, journalism, architecture and at all programmes of artistic orientation. The dean of faculty decides on the applicant admission in case of appeal, the rector of higher education institutions makes the final decision on the student admission.

The applicant, who successfully passes the admission exams, becomes the student of higher education institution. The conditions for admission of foreigners to the study at higher education institution are the same like for the citizens of the Slovak Republic.

The admission of graduates of Bachelor's study to Master's study forms a special form. The admission is stipulated by study rules of higher education institutions. The admission to the appropriate branch of study may be granted by the dean of the faculty. It is conditional upon the results of the state examination by which the Bachelor's study was finished, or merits in completing the substitute entrance exam.

Admission Requirements – PhD Study

The admission to PhD. study is conditional on successful completion of higher education of the second level.

Before the admission procedure the higher education institution or faculty defines the themes of dissertation theses, to be applied for by the applicant. The supervisor is appointed for each theme. The applicant for PhD study will choose one of the announced themes. The external educational institution may publicise the themes either independently or in cooperation with the higher education institution or faculty.

The admission interview is carried out in the training institute before the admission commission which is represented by members of higher education institution and members determined by the head of the external educational institution if it is their topics. The members of the admission commission from the higher education institution are determined by the dean and/or rector. The admission examination may be taken after agreement with the higher education institution or the faculty with an external educational institution on the territory of the external educational institution. The decision on the result of the admission procedure must be made within 30 days from verification of fulfilling the conditions for admission to the study. The PhD study has both full-time and part-time forms of study.

6.2 Students' contributions and financial support

In the Constitution of the Slovak Republic the financing in the field of higher education is declared according to the possibilities and abilities of an individual. The state guarantees to their citizens possibilities of the study at universities with the State's support after completing secondary or secondary specialised education.

The main resource of financing of the public higher education is appropriation from the state budget and another out budget resources. The base for definition of tuition fees (according to Section 92, Clause 4 of the Act No. 131/2002 of Law Code on higher education) and the payments connected with the study in the public higher education institution is 10 % of the average amount paid per student of daily study from the total current expenses provided by the Ministry of Education. The students of full-time do not pay yet the tuition fees. The last amendment to Higher education Act has preserved the philosophy of one free full-time study course in public higher education institution but the student pays for his study in case of exceeding the standard length of study. The provisions have been made more precise if the student pursues several study programmes of the same level, the latter are taken into account in overall period of study. The amendment introduced payment for part-time form of study in public and State higher education institutions, particularly, for the study programmes which cannot be provided free of cost within the framework of the sum limits set by the Government according to the Directive of the SR Government No. 475/2007 of Law Code. The limit of subsidised part-time students and fields of study will be determined according to needs of labour market by the SR Government by the issue of the government decree for the next academic year (Directive of SR Government No. 475/2007 on determination of limits of sums for provision of study programmes in part-time form for academic year 2008/09 entered into force on 20th October 2007). Public higher education institutions are obliged to publicise the scale of tuition fees and study-related fees for the next academic year, but no later than two months prior to submission of applications for study.

The public higher education institution may require from the applicants of study the fees for material provision of admission procedure. The fee is derived from real expenses of the costs connected with this administration. The amount is from 13.3 EUR to 49.8 EUR. If the student pursues studies longer than the standard length of study without a serious reason he/she must pay to the higher education institution a yearly tuition fee for each additional year of study as set out by the institution. For foreigners the tuition fees for study programme of any level shall be determined by the higher education institution. Payment of tuition fees for students studying under international agreements is regulated according to provisions of these agreements. The amount of the fee is set by the internal schools regulation. The Rector can lower the amount of the tuition fees and payments, to delay or postpone the deadline of payment with regard to study results, social or health situation or other serious reasons, which are defined in higher education institution statute. The tuition fees and payments connected with the study are the income of the higher education institution.

The full-time students of PhD study programmes are required no fees. The tuition fees and payments connected with the study in a private higher education institution are defined by each institution individually in their internal regulation.

Students are provided financial support in the direct and indirect form.

The direct forms of social support are scholarships. Higher education institutions provide for the students scholarships from resources allocated for this purpose from the national budget and/or from their own resources via scholarship funds. In 2005 the Decree of the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic No. 453/2005 of the Law Code on the scope and other details on granting motivation scholarship came into force, which was annulled by amendment to the Act. The granting of motivation scholarships falls now within the area of competence of higher education institutions. Its aim is to appraise distinguished students and to motivate the other students to improve their academic

achievements. The right to receive the merit-based scholarship is granted to 10 % of the best students pursuing full-time form of bachelor's and *magister's* degree study in every public higher education institution. This type of scholarship was awarded for the first time to 10 860 university students in academic year 2005/06.

In 2006 a new decree came into force on granting social scholarship to university students in the Slovak Republic (No.102/2006 of Law Code). Students are eligible to receive social scholarship upon meeting the conditions, provided they pursue the first full-time course. This decree sets out decisive income for assessment of the right to social scholarship, the area of commonly assessed persons, the salary limit giving right to social scholarship and other details. The instrument to help university students in disadvantaged social situation has been enforced by Decree No. 396/2008 on recognition of social scholarship to university students which came into efficacy from 1.1.2009, which supplements the above Decree No. 102/2006 responding to the current situation starting with 1.1.2009.

The handicapped students, that means, those with severe mental and physical impairments are presented scholarships for the disadvantaged to be able to study in higher education institutions according to their choice and be integrated among their healthy peers. The students must submit an application accompanied by medical report on their health state which is subsequently assessed by a commission.

The indirect non-market tools of university policy, such as tax relieves, allowances for children and contributions to children's allowances, travel reductions and other discounts for non-provided for children – have been applied in the Slovak Republic for a long time and their quantitative and qualitative characteristic depend on prosperity and economic power of the society. The social services are represented by subsidized catering and housing services and a contribution for sports and other activities.

The system of social aid also includes provision of loans favourable terms, such as the Study Loan Fund on favourable terms, the Act No. 200/1997 of the Law Code on Student Loan Fund, as amended by Act 231/2000 of the Law Code. The intention of the Act is to mitigate the impact of increased financial demands for student at the study in higher education institution. Nevertheless, the number of applicants decreases each year (in academic year 2007/08 there were only about 3 000 applicants). The reduction may be explained by introduction of social scholarships, new system of motivation scholarships that can bring to student the required cash. In accordance with the above Act only the student of the first year of university study in the full-time form, who is a citizen of the Slovak Republic and has a permanent residence at the territory of the Slovak Republic as well as a foreign student who studies in a higher education institution in the Slovak Republic in the position of a foreign Slovak, is entitled to apply for the loan. The amendment to Act No. 231/2000 of the Law Code on the Student Loan Fund gives possibility to award a loan also for students – citizens of the Slovak Republic who study in a higher education institution abroad. The Fund resources are meant for covering the part of costs for the applicant's study, particularly, for accommodation, board, travel costs, study literature and study stays. The student may ask for a loan the faculty in which he studies. According to amendment to Law on Student Loan Fund the amount of loan was doubled (from 20 000 SK per year to 40 000 SK).

The indirect aid offered outside the education is a support in the form of 'benefits to children' by 25 years of age, if the student is being prepared in the daily form of study for future occupation. The amount of monthly allowance is uniform – 540 SK per student.

The training institution provides to full-time Ph.D. student a scholarship for the period of his study. In 2004 the scholarship was not a subject of tax. Since 1 January 2005, however, the scholarships are again taxed. For the purposes of health insurance, retirement insurance and for the purposes of covering the social security contribution in case of unemployment the Ph.D. student in full-time form of

study had position of employee by 31 December 2007. The amendment to Act specified the award of PhD scholarships in such a way that the PhD student in full-time form of study is entitled to it only during his/her standard length of pursuing the study programme and since 1 January 2008 the scholarship is not taxable.

6.3 Organisation of the academic year

The academic year begins in September 1 and finishes in August 31 of the following year. The study in one academic year can be divided into 2 terms or 3 terms. Each higher education institution defines the division of study in its statute.

In higher education study plans are drafted on the basis of study programmes. Study programmes are obligatory for both students and teachers, and may be modified and supplemented only in accordance with the procedure determined by the study and examination order.

The study plans give the list of compulsory subjects, compulsorily elected subjects and optional subjects for individual terms in relation to the study programs and the credit system of study.

The draft for a study programme of study field is submitted by the supervisor of the study field. The dean of the faculty recommends it for approval to the scientific council of the faculty. Act No. 131/2002 on Higher Education, as amended by subsequent provisions (fully wording in the Act No 175/2008).

6.4 Assessment, progression and certification

Details on evaluation of student performances during his study are set up in study rules of universities and faculties. Procedures of evaluation of students vary.

The organisation of all levels and forms of higher education study is based on the credit system. The credit system of study enables by credits to evaluate the student's load connected with the completion of the units of study program in agreement with the rules contained in the study program. The standard load is expressed by the number of credits as follows: 60 for academic year, 30 credits for semester and 20 credits for trimester.

The evaluation of the student results within the framework of the subject study is carried out, in particular, by:

- a) continuous check up of the study results during the teaching part of the given period of study (examination questions, written tests, tasks for individual work, papers, course works, etc.),
- b) examination for the given period of study.

The subject completion is evaluated by a mark. A mark expresses the quality of acquisition of knowledge or skills in agreement with the aim of the subject. The result of evaluation is recorded in study book (index).

Evaluation by a mark is carried out according to the system of grading composed of six grades:

- excellent = 1
- B – very good = 1,
- C – good = 2
- D – satisfactory = 2,5
- E – sufficient = 3
- FX – fail = 4

The student shall obtain credits for the subject if his/her result were assessed by any of the classification grades from A to E. For evaluation of overall study records of the student in a defined period the use is made of course weighted average. It is counted in such a way that the products of number of credits and numerical assessment in the period assessed shall be summed up and the result shall be divided by total number of credits registered by the student for the given period.

With efficacy from 1 November 2002 the Decree of the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic No. 614/2002 of Law Code was issued on the credit system of study the content of which is compatible with ECTS.

The advancement depends on the student commitments set up by study plans according to set study program. At some faculties and universities it is possible to repeat a year of study, eventually, a part of unfulfilled duties may be postponed for the next year. Where exists credit system condition for student progress is acquiring of 60 credits for academic year, 30 credits for semester and 20 credits for trimester. Higher education institution set out total number of credits which is necessary for completion of study in the respective levels.

The credit system is successfully used in the area of mobility which allows transfer and accumulation of the credits under the conditions set out in agreement between the sending and beneficiary higher education institution.

More efforts are also directed at evaluation of preparedness of university graduates for practice, eventually, at assessment of individual faculties. For example, testing Young Talents is oriented at assessment of faculties of economics. In academic year 2006/07 over 400 students from ten economic faculties and one private higher education institution got involved in it upon completing their terms of study. A review of current events in economy, logistics, language skills and computer literacy were subject of testing.

Evaluation of PhD students

The study and research part of PhD study is annually specified at annual evaluation of the PhD student.

The forms of evaluation of PhD student are the following:

- annual evaluation
- dissertation examination
- defence of a dissertation.

The annual evaluation of PhD student rests in estimation of the state and level of the PhD study, inspection of fulfilling the set up tasks of the study and scientific parts of the PhD study. The annual evaluation of the PhD student is carried out by the instructor in cooperation with the PhD student in a written form. He/she submits it to the head of the training institute along with the proposal of continuation, expulsion or prolongation.

The progression to a higher grade depends on fulfilling the study duties set by curricula according to the given study program.

The dissertation examination and the defence of dissertation belong to the State examination. The examination commission has 4 members at least. If the PhD student has applied for the dissertation theme proposed by the external educational institution, both the dissertation examination and the defence of the dissertation thesis take place before the commission in which there is a parity representation of the members of the higher education institution and the members determined by the external educational institution.

Certification – Bachelor's Study

The Bachelor's study program as the first level program is completed by the state examination before an examination board. A part of the state examination is the defence of a Bachelor thesis, if set up by the statute of the faculty or the statute of the higher education institution which is not divided into faculties.

The graduates of Bachelor's study are issued diplomas indicating the study branches, academic degree and a certificate on the state examination. The higher education institutions award the academic degree of Bachelor (Bc.) to the graduates of Bachelor's study.

Certification – *Magister's Study, Engineer's Study and Doctor's Study*

The *Magister's study, Engineer's study and Doctor's study* are completed by state examination before an examination commission. The state examination includes the defence of a thesis if set up by the statute of the higher education institution or the faculty. The state examination consists of 3-4 subjects. In case of failure at the state examination the student has the right to re-sit. Each part of the state examination is assessed separately. The overall evaluation of study (in dependency upon results of the overall study and results of the state examination) is evaluated in two grades 'he/she passed with honours' and 'he/she passed'.

The higher education institutions award the following academic degrees to their graduates:

- in *Magister's study*, the degree of 'magister' (Mgr.); in artistic study programmes, the degree of 'magister umenia' (Mgr. art.);
- in *Engineer's study*, the degree of 'inžinier' (Ing.); the degree of 'inžinier architekt' (Ing. arch.) in the study programmes of architecture and town planning;
- in *Doctor's study* of the study programmes of humane medicine the degree of 'doktor všeobecného lekárstva' (MUDr.), 'doktor zubného lekárstva' (MDDr.) in the study programmes of dentistry; and the degree of 'doktor veterinárskej medicíny' (MVDr.) in the study programmes of veterinary medicine.

The graduates of *Magister's study* (Mgr.) who completed the *examina rigorosa* a part of which is the defence of a thesis, are awarded the diploma, showing the branch of study completed and the academic degree:

- in the study programmes of natural sciences 'doktor prírodných vied' (RNDr.)
- in the study programmes of pharmacy 'doktor farmácie' (PharmDr.)
- in the study programmes of the humanities and art disciplines 'doktor filozofie' (PhDr.)
- in the study programmes of law and security with juridical concentration 'doktor práv' (JUDr.)
- in teacher training with study programmes of education and sports 'doktor pedagogiky' (PaedDr.)
- in theological study programmes except for Catholic theology 'doktor teológie' (ThDr.).

Certification – Ph.D Study

The Ph.D. study is finished by the defence of a dissertation thesis after completing dissertation examination.

The graduates of the Ph.D. study are issued diplomas showing the name of the higher education institution, faculty, study field and study programme; in case the PhD study took place in the external

educational institution, also the name of the latter. The graduates of Ph.D. study are awarded the academic degree of 'doktor' ('philosophiae doctor') abbr. Ph.D. and in artistic PhD study programmes the academic degree of 'doktor umenia' ('artis doctor') abbr. ArtD. After the initial comprehensive part of PhD study the PhD graduates in the field of Catholic Theology are awarded the academic degree of 'licenciát teológie' (abbr. ThLic.). The graduates of PhD study in these areas are also awarded the academic degree of 'doctor teológie' (abbr. ThDr.).

6.5 Guidance and counselling

Each student has the right to apply for study at another faculty or higher education institutions or abroad. In higher education institutions it is possible to transfer from one branch of study to another that are set up in study rules of faculties and universities.

The PhD student has also the right to apply for the study in another faculty or higher education institution, eventually, abroad. In the higher education institution there is a possibility to transfer from one study program to another, under the conditions set out in the study and examination rules of the faculties and higher education institutions.

Guidance and counselling in tertiary education is provided in career centres which have been established directly at higher education institutions (most of them in last 2-3 years because of possibilities given by European Social Fund). In addition to this students can find some guidance regarding study abroad and different mobility types in Slovak Academic Information Agency (SAIA) and Slovak Academic Association for International Cooperation (SAAIC). Students organise some guidance activities by themselves being associated in AISEC, or in other national and international initiatives.

6.6 Academic staff

In compliance with the Higher Education Act the teachers are public employees and their admission is based on this act and Labour Code. Only those applicants may be employed who meet the personal, educational and qualification requirements.

At a higher education institution professors, associate professors, visiting professors, emeriti professors, visiting associate professors, assistant lecturers, assistants, instructors, and scientific and artistic workers act as teachers. The posts of teachers and research workers of higher education institutions are filled through selection procedures. The way of selection procedures is governed by the order of a higher education institution or a faculty on competitive procedure.

Teaching posts in higher education institutions and faculties are filled through selection procedure. The way of selection procedure is governed by the order of a higher education institution or a faculty on selection procedure. A contract of employment of a professor or an associate professor can be concluded only for an indefinite time. The employment of visiting professors, visiting associate professors, lecturers, assistant lecturers, and chancellors are concluded for a definite time, which is, however, five years at most. The employment of assistants can be extended by additional two years at most. The employment of assistant lecturers can be extended by additional five years at most. The employment of lecturers, artistic workers and scientific workers can be extended according to decision made by the Dean.

Responsibility for defining criteria for the evaluation of staff lays down at the institutional level.

7. CONTINUING EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The continuing education in the Slovak Republic is the area of education which is considered as a part of lifelong education that enables every citizen to supplement, extend and deepen his/her education already received, to retrain or to educate in the field of his/her interests. It includes the further professional education while the aim is not to achieve a higher level of education (that means, it is mainly the specialisation, deepening one's knowledge, retraining); it also includes the special-interest and civic education. Similarly as the study in higher education institution the continuing education is accessible to all citizens.

The continuing adult education is also carried out in formal subsystem of education, which also provides the second chance to receive education to those who could not receive it for various reasons during education in school.

In non-formal subsystem of education the educational activities for adults are carried out by various educational institutions, schools, educational institutes of firms, directly managed institutions in sectors, private educational institutions, and others. The educational programmes may be oriented at selected target groups (the unemployed for longer period, mothers on maternity leaves, threatened groups, etc.).

The continuing education and training of adults is also provided as the further education (vocational and other) for already qualified young people/adults as well as a general education for non-qualified youth and adults, who for example prematurely left the school (recently it has been 6 % in average from population bracket).

7.1 Policy and legislative framework

Previous Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic No. 567/2001 of the Law Code on further education and on the changes of the Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic No. 386/1997 of the Law Code on employment as amended by the Act No. 70/1997 of the Law Code, was substituted by the new Act No. 568/2009 on lifelong learning. The Act regulates lifelong learning (in which further education is connected to the levels and grades of education achieved in school education), conditions of further education programmes accreditation, rules and procedures for certification and recognition of educational outcomes, national qualification framework, system of monitoring and prognosis of educational needs in further education, system for granting the licence to perform exams to validate professional competence. In addition to this the Act regulates the control of accreditation procedures and overall conformity to the rules determined by the Act.

Everybody who is interested in further education has the right to education at any age of his/her life according to his/her abilities and interests.

The Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic No. 5/2004 of the Law Code on employment services, as amended, regulates education and training for labour market of job applicants.

The employers' duty to take care of improvement of qualification of his employees is regulated by the Labour Code, the Act No. 312/2001 of the Law Code on the state service and on the change and amendments of particular Acts and the Act No. 553/2003 of the Law Code on remuneration of some employees in public interest and on the change and supplement to some acts.

The further legislation related to adult education:

Act No. 312/2001 of the Law Code on civil service and on the change and supplement to some acts regulates improvement of qualifications of civil servants as well as provision of work concession (§ 77).

General conditions for adult education are regulated by Labour Code. The provision of study holidays is regulated in Labour Code. The student may use days off, upon agreement with his/her employer, for participating in educational activity and for examinations.

In area of adult education also other specific legal norms are in force to regulate preparation and education of individuals for performing specific occupations and mastering special skills (e.g. for the field of fire-protection, operation at ground communications, etc.).

7.2 Distribution of responsibilities

The further professional education (retraining, on-the-job training) is a subject of decision-making of the appropriate central bodies (Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic, Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic, Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family). The prepared legislation regulations and concept materials are subject of negotiations and discussions in tripartite, eventually, with particular social partners (trade unionists, employers), as well as with representatives of towns and villages, professional associations and non-governmental organisation.

The Ministry provides for the funds from public resources for realisation of passive and active employment policy. The Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family regulates the activity of its regional labour agencies which provide consulting services for unemployed applicants of jobs and the citizens threatened by unemployment; it also provides for (in cooperation with educational institutions) the adult education – for the unemployed. It also prepares a proposal of the national system of occupations, that will be a starting point for determination of educational and evaluation standards in the national system of qualifications.

7.3 Financing

The access to further education is not free in most cases. The participants of the education pay fees for their education to the organisers (in case of private institutions it is a rule). The in-company education may be an exception (it is paid by the employer himself), education of employees in public and civil service (public sources), but especially education for labour market for those who are unemployed for several years, which are cover by public sources. Schools and school facilities increase their resources by collecting fees for organising the further education to be used for development of their school. The students need not compulsorily contribute to the support of the student organisations or health centres. In legislation no employer's duty is enforced to provide for work concessions to students, it depends on his own decision, enabling him to keep in employment for a certain time the employee by granting him the reliefs or by paying back the funds provided to the employee during his participation in the education and for the education itself

In the continuing education there are no specific forms of financial support for students or financial stimuli so far. Financing of adult education is provided from various sources. The state budgetary organisations plan the funds directly in the budget. The State participates in financing in the form of specially allocated subsidies especially for the state and regional developmental programmes, educational activities in the field of fight against drugs, for the handicapped and persons from disadvantaged environment as well as for education of those employed in state service and public service. The other resources are those from employers' organisations, budget of the Centre for Employment, Social Affairs and Family, funds of communities, non-profit-making organizations and legal entities.

7.4 Programmes and providers

The continuing education is provided by the school and extra-school educational institutions. The school institutions include specialised secondary schools, higher education institutions, school facilities. Extra-curricular (private educational institutions, in-company institutions, various non-

governmental institutions, civic associations, non-profit-making organizations etc.) offer various courses and study programmes as to their content to complement and improve the knowledge of participants in the branch they are interested in. According to records of the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic/Infostat there are about 2 500 entities of that kind which are engaged in the education. This activity is not carried out to full extent by all of them. Some sectors have their own educational institutions which provide for education of employees falling under the competence of the sector and according to special rules.

The continuing education in secondary schools and higher education institutions is oriented first of all at the subject/content which is a subject/content of education in formal education, only the scope is changed (they are mostly shorter courses). In-company education is strictly oriented at the own need of the employer (specialization, innovation education, retraining). Private institutions, educational institutions of civic associations, etc. provide varied educational offer oriented according to interest of the participants of education who pay for the education.

Company institutes have (depending on its size) their own lecturers and organization staff. Private educational institutions (especially smaller) have only educational managers. They also hire premises, e.g. schools.

7.5 Quality assurance

The accreditation in the further education is carried out according to Act 386/1997 of the Law Code and its amendment 567/2001 of the Law Code as a state verification of ability of educational institution to provide the continuing education. Compulsory accreditation is realised at educational activities for employees and selected representatives of public administration for which the funds from national budget are allotted (e.g. for retraining), at educational activities by which the participants prepare for obtaining a level of education and at educational activities the graduates of which will receive certificates with state-wide validity. The issue of certificate on accreditation is decided by the Ministry of Education based on a proposal of the Accreditation Commission of the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic for further education. It is a professional commission that verifies ability of the educational institution to carry out educational activity, provides for evaluation and control of the level of provided accredited educational activities and other courses of further education and, based on the identified facts, it recommends holding on or return of the statement on accreditation, performs professional counselling activity and prepares proposals for conceptual activity of the ministry in this area. The institution – the applicant for issue of the confirmation on accreditation must show as a subject of activity the educational activity, he/she must work out and submit educational documentation on educational activity for which he/she asks the accreditation, and is obliged to secure corresponding lectorship and material-technical conditions for realisation of educational activity.

The Accreditation Commission provides accreditation of retraining programs/courses from 1991 and since 1998 also other educational activities in further education. The Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic issued 875 certificates on accreditation for educational activities in 2003, 931 in 2004, 1 146 in 2005, 813 in 2006, 1 143 in 2007, and up to 1 308 certificates in 2008.

The Accreditation Commission for Continuing Education was created by the Ministry of Education as its advisory body according to Act No. 386/1997 of the Law Code on Continuing Education. Its members are nominated by the Minister on the basis of proposals of some ministries, employees and non-governmental organisations. Based on the fulfilled conditions of accreditation and positive evaluation of the level of projects on educational activities in relation to the chosen graduate's profile the Commission will issue to the educational institution a certificate on accreditation for realisation of educational activity. It enables the institution to issue certificates with nation-wide efficacy to the graduates. The certificate on accreditation gives the rights to the institution to ask for finances from public resources for education for labour market. The Commission convenes four times a year.

7.6 Guidance and counselling

Based on the results of the National report to EC Memorandum on lifelong education as well as a result of preparation and realisation of proposals of both national concept, but particularly on the basis of the adopted Strategy of Ability to Compete in Slovakia by 2010 (Government Resolution No 140 of 16 February 2005) and the follow-up Action Plan Education and Employment (Government Resolution No 557 of 13 July 2005) the key priorities were set up to achieve the aims of Lisbon Strategy under the conditions of the Slovak Republic.

Concrete priorities for the field of continuing education were determined by the approved Strategy of Lifelong Education and Lifelong Guidance (2007):

- Monitoring and prognosticating of educational needs of citizens and employers
- Provision of the system of quality management of lifelong education and lifelong guidance
- Recognition of results of non-formal education and informal learning
- Efficient investment in lifelong education and lifelong guidance
- Development of key competences for lifelong education
- Provision of complex information services for lifelong education and development of learning regions
- Efficient planning and use of finances from the ESF for creation and development of the systems of lifelong education and lifelong guidance.

The search of answers to the questions is oriented, particularly, at:

- the field of financing (namely, the search of resources and their use),
- evaluation of quality of the further education, accreditation of educational programmes,
- creation of information and counselling centres for all citizens on possibilities and ways of lifelong learning,
- constitution of the framework for evaluation of results of non-formal and informal education and learning in connection to formal education,
- preparation of a proposal of regulation on lifelong education and lifelong guidance.

Existing guidance services on educational and vocational possibilities for adults are concentrated at job centres. The guidance can be provided either through a direct contact between unemployed and employment agent or within the information-guidance centres on job and training. The latter provide services for very wide range of clients – including students, those interested in changes in career development up to unemployed persons. These centres are based on self-service activities. Clients can use electronic information, printed materials on education, free job opportunities, marketing and promotion materials on the world of education and training as well as the labour market situation at national and international level.

The list of accredited educational establishments and accredited educational and training programmes is available at the website of the Ministry of Education (<http://www.minedu.sk/index.php?lang=sk&rootId=642>). Further information can be found at educational portals on the Internet.

7.7 Teachers and trainers

In the continuing education there are first of all professional teachers from secondary schools and higher education institutions or practitioners with long year experience in education. This is applied first of all in the further vocational education, language education, ICT. Thereby their qualification is given too. The trainers have mostly university education (up to 85 % of them) or secondary education (about 10 % of them). In general no legislative demands are prescribed for activity it is in the interest of the organiser of education to offer a high quality lectorship. In adult education in secondary schools (the second path – part-time study) there are the school teachers liable, for operation in the school primary activities too, to fulfil preconditions set up by a regulation (pedagogical and professional skills verified by the State). On voluntary basis and without a need of a special training are employed the instructors in courses aimed at, e.g. training in decaying professions, fields of human activities (but it is rarely the further vocational education).

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES AND WEBSITES

Bibliographical references

National Education System in Slovakia – National Dossier 2009.

Slovak VET Observatory Vocational Education and Training in Europe: Country report Slovakia 2009.

Useful websites

Ministerstvo práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny Slovenskej republiky (Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family) <http://www.employment.gov.sk>,

Ministerstvo školstva Slovenskej republiky (Ministry of Education) <http://www.minedu.sk>

Štátny inštitút odborného vzdelávania (National Institute of Vocational Education and Training) <http://www.siov.sk/slovenske-narodne-observatorium/9523s>

Štátny pedagogický ústav (National Institute of Education) <http://www.statpedu.sk>
<http://www.education.sk>