

NATIONAL REPORTS 2004 – 2005

Country:	Slovak Republic
Date:	February, 2005
Responsible member of the BFUG (one name only): Official position:	Peter Mederly Director General for Higher Education
Email address:	mederly@education.gov.sk
Contributors to the report:	Peter Plavcan

1. Main achievements since Berlin***1.1. Give a brief description of important developments, including legislative reforms***

Strategy of implementation of the Bologna Declaration principles was established by the program document Concept of the Further Development of Higher Education in Slovakia for the 21st Century, which was approved by the Government of the Slovak Republic in August 2000, and also confirmed by the Program Declaration of the SR Government of 2002. Based on this Concept a new Act was developed - Act No. 131/2002 of Law Code on Higher Education and on Change and Supplement to Some Acts which was approved by the National Council of the Slovak Republic on 21st February 2002 and came into force on 1st April 2002. In this Act all the principles of the Bologna Declaration are contained and the Act enables their practical implementation. In November 2003 and December 2004 the amendments to this Act were adopted to regulate some areas significant from the point of view of European Union law, particularly, the adaptation of the content of education in higher education institutions according to the respective directives of the European Commission.

2. National organisation***2.1. Give a short description of the structure of public authorities responsible for higher education, the main agencies/bodies in higher education and their competencies (For example, do higher education institutions report to different ministries?)***

In the Slovak Republic the responsibility for higher education as regards the competences of the State administration bodies falls under the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic which pursuant to the Act on Higher Education creates conditions for development of higher education institutions and university education, takes responsibility for updating and development of legislation in the field of higher education. This activity is carried out through its organisation unit Section for Higher Education which is also responsible for implementation of the Bologna principles in higher education in the Slovak Republic. The SR Government establishes the Accreditation Commission as its advisory body. Its task is to monitor, assess and independently evaluate the quality of educational, developmental, artistic and other creative activity of higher education institutions and to promote its improvement. The other authorities involved in higher education policy development are the representative bodies of higher education institutions, namely, the Higher Education Council as a supreme body of higher education institution self-government, the Student Higher Education Council

as a supreme representative body of university students and the Slovak Rectors' Conference as a body composed of higher education institutions' rectors. The responsibility for fulfilment of higher education policy is also upon higher education institutions the major task of which is the provision of higher education and creative research and artistic activities.

Within the framework of higher education system there are also three specialised higher education institutions, namely, police and military and medical ones, being managed by the appropriate sector ministries.

2.2. Give a short description of the institutional structure

(For example, number of public/private universities/other HE institutions or numbers/percentage of students in public/private sector. To what extent are private and State higher education institutions covered by the same regulations?)

In December 2004, in the Slovak Republic there were 27 higher education institutions, of which 20 public higher education institutions, three state higher education institutions and four private higher education institutions. In academic year 2004/2005, in public HE institutions there are 160 thousand students, of which 110 thousand students study in full-time form and 50 thousand students in part-time form. Public HE institutions are the organizations with non-profit-making way of economic management, being funded from the State budget up to 90 % in average, the rest is covered from their own resources. State HE institutions include: one military academy falling under the competence of the defence sector, one police academy falling under the competence of the interior sector and one medical higher education institution falling under the health sector, which are the State organizations, being practically fully financed from the State budget. Four private HE institutions are financed from private resources, especially from tuition fees paid by students. The Act on Higher Education enables to provide to a private HE institution a grant for realisation of the accredited study programs, for research, developmental or artistic activity and for its development. Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic provides for private HE institution the grants for social support of students; a private HE institution has a legal right for grants provided to students for social scholarships.

2.3. Give a brief description of the structure which oversees the implementation of the Bologna Process in your country

(National Bologna group, thematic working groups, composition and activities, stakeholder involvement)

The responsibility for practical implementation of the Bologna principles in higher education policy is upon the organisation unit of Section for Higher Education at the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic, the Director General of which is a representative of the Slovak Republic in the Bologna Follow-up Group. Based on the activity of the European Commission the National Group of Bologna Promoters was established in the Slovak Republic, being composed of professors of higher education institutions nominated by the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic in cooperation with the Slovak Rectors' Conference and the Higher Education Council. Membership of the National Group of the Bologna Promoters also consists of national advisers for ECTS and Diploma Supplement and a representative of the Slovak Republic in the Bologna Follow Up Group. The National Group of Bologna Promoters is administered through the Socrates/Erasmus Agency. Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic substantially supports the National Group of the Bologna Promoters by financing its activities.

3. Quality assurance

The following questions have been included in the template at the request of the Working Group on Stocktaking.

3.1. National quality assurance systems should include a definition of the responsibilities of the bodies and institutions involved.

Please specify the responsibilities of the bodies and institutions involved.

System of quality assurance of higher education is based on internal quality assessment, and external evaluation and accreditation. Within the framework of the internal quality assessment the scientific boards of higher education institutions assess regularly, once a year at least, the level of higher education institution in educational activity and in the field of science, technology or art. External evaluation is a part of accreditation of higher education institutions and is carried out by the Accreditation Commission, which during verification of results of educational activity and higher education institutions' activities in science, technology and art, makes use of internal quality assessment of higher education institution, prepares peer review and, after evaluation of the achieved results of HEI universal activities, submits its opinions to the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic. The opinions of the Accreditation Commission are a basis for issue of decisions by the Minister of Education (e.g., acknowledgement of the right of the higher education institution to award the respective academic degree to graduates of study programs) and by the Government of the Slovak Republic (e.g., the State consent on operation as a private higher education institution).

3.2. National quality assurance systems should include a system of accreditation, certification or comparable procedures.

Describe the system of accreditation, certification or comparable procedures, if any.

Accreditation Commission gives opinions on ability of the higher education institution to carry out the study program with the right to award the academic degree to its graduates, on ability of the non-higher education institution to participate in realisation of the PhD study program, on ability of the higher education institution to carry out habilitation procedure and procedure for nomination of professors, on proposals of establishment, merger, fusion, division and dissolution of the higher education institution, change of its name and seat, on proposal of granting the State consent to a legal entity which wants to act as a private higher education institution, on proposal of incorporation of higher education institutions among research universities, universities and and vocational higher education institutions, on proposal of change in the system of fields of study, eventually, on other proposals submitted by the Minister. Accreditation Commission carries out in six-year intervals regular complex accreditation of all higher education institutions, which is a basis for incorporation of the higher education institutions among either university or non-university higher education institutions. In doing so, the university higher education institution which achieves excellent results in the field of science and technology as well as at implementation of the study programs of the third level, may be categorised into research universities. There has been a governmental decree issued to the Act on Higher Education, which shows in its annex the background materials to be submitted by higher education institutions to the Accreditation Commission at accreditation of individual activities of the higher education institution and at complex accreditation of the higher education institution. Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic publicised the criteria, including the way of their evaluation, for the purposes of accreditation of individual activities of higher education institutions and complex accreditation.

3.3. National quality assurance systems should include international participation, co-operation and networking.

Are international peers included in the governing board(s) of the quality assurance agency(ies)?

Accreditation Commission, the advisory body of the SR Government, is composed of 21 members from higher education institutions and practice, including those from abroad. Compulsory participation of foreign experts in the Accreditation Commission is set out by the Act on Higher Education. Accreditation Commission is a member of ENQA (European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education), a member of INQAAHE (International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education) and of its regional subnet CEENQAAHE (Central and Eastern Europe Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education).

Please add any general comments, reflections and/or explanations to the material on quality assurance in the stocktaking report.

4. The two-cycle degree system

The two-cycle degree system is covered by the stocktaking exercise. Please add any comments, reflections and/or explanations to the stocktaking report.

In the Slovak Republic, higher education is based on two cycles. After completing the first cycle, within which the higher education study of the first level is carried out in bachelor's study programs, the second cycle follows within which the higher education study of the second level is carried out in magister's, engineer's and doctor's study programs and the study of the third level carried out in the PhD study programs. Legal regulations do not allow the study of the third level in PhD study programs immediately after completing the first level (that means, after completing a bachelor study programs).

Study program may be carried out only in the field of study which has been included in the System of the fields of study of higher education defined and administered at national level. Study program may be also carried out in combination of two fields of study. The System of fields of study complies with the ISCED-97 document (with one exception).

The admission to the bachelor study or the study combining the first and second levels is conditional on completing secondary school-leaving examination, the admission to the study of the second level is conditional on completing the bachelor study.

Standard length for pursuing bachelor study program as a study program of the first level is three years at least and four years at most. The graduates of the bachelor study are awarded the academic degree of "bakalár". According to recommendations of the Bologna Declaration the bachelor study programs are aimed at acquisition of theoretical knowledge and practical knowledge based on the present state of science and art, and on their use at pursuit of the occupation, as well as at continuing in the follow-up magister study. In contrast to the past, the stress is laid on such a design of the curricula that would enable the graduates of the bachelor study to find placement in both the Slovak and foreign labour market and their qualification would be sufficient for pursuit of the given occupation.

Standard length for pursuing the study program of the second level (magister, engineer or doctor study program) is one year at least and three years at most in such a way as to ensure that the overall standard length of study based on bachelor study program and the following study program of the second level in the same or relative field of study is five years at least in total.

In specially justified cases, following the statement of Accreditation Commission owing to specificities of the study field, the Ministry may allow a combination of the first and second level of higher education study into one unit. Standard length for pursuing study programs combining the first and second level of higher education study is four years at least and six years at most and their graduates receive a higher education of the second level (e.g., medical and pharmaceutical fields of study, etc.).

The graduates of the second level study programs are awarded the academic degree of "magister", in the study programs aimed at development of creativity in the field of engineering work or processes, including economic fields, the academic degree of "inžinier".

5. Recognition of degrees and periods of study

Recognition of degrees and periods of study is covered by the stocktaking exercise. Please add any comments, reflections and/or explanations to the stocktaking report.

Recognition of diplomas issued by foreign higher education institutions is regulated by legislation of the Slovak Republic. According to Act on Higher Education the documents on education issued by foreign higher education institutions are recognised by higher education institutions for the purposes of continuing the further study in the Slovak Republic, namely to all foreign nationals. Higher education institutions also recognise the documents on education for purposes of pursuit of occupations to foreign nationals who are not citizens of the European Economic Area countries and Switzerland. Documents on education of citizens in European Economic Area countries and Switzerland for purposes of pursuit of occupations in the Slovak Republic are recognized according to a special act on recognition of professional qualifications (Act No. 477/2002 of Law Code on recognition of professional qualifications, as amended).

In the Slovak Republic some higher education institutions now issue the Diploma Supplement at the request of graduates as a means to make recognition of their diplomas easier abroad. According to the Act on Higher Education any graduate of a higher education institution at all the three levels shall receive from HEI the Diploma Supplement compulsorily along with the diploma. This rule is applied to students of higher education institutions who will start their higher education study in a study program in the academic year 2005/6. Data which the diploma supplement must contain, have been determined by a special rule of the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic.

6. Doctoral studies and research

6.1. Give a short description of the organisation of third cycle studies

(For example, direct access from the bachelor level, balance between organised courses, independent study and thesis)

Standard length for pursuing PhD study program is three years at least and four years at most.

Graduates of the PhD study program receive higher education of the third level and are awarded the academic degree of "PhD." Access to PhD study program is conditional on completing the higher education study of the second level; the access to PhD study program after completing the bachelor study program is not allowed in the Slovak Republic, nor is it under consideration to introduce such a possibility in the future. The study based on PhD study program is ongoing according to individual study plan under supervision of a tutor and it consists of a study part and a scientific part. The study part consists first of all from lectures, seminars and individual study of professional literature, and the scientific part consists of individual or team research project of the student. This part of study in full-time form also includes performing pedagogical activity or other professional activity connected with educational activity. The completion of PhD study consists of completing dissertation examination and the defence of a dissertation.

6.2. What are the links between HE and research in your country?

(For example, what percentage of publicly-funded research is conducted within HE institutions?)

Higher education research is regulated by the Act on Higher Education and the Act No.132/2002 of Law Code on Science and Technology. The State administration body responsible for research and development is the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic.

In 2004, the higher education research was funded within the framework of expenditures for higher education institutions allotted from the State budget in the amount of about SK 950 million. In 2000-2004, the portion of costs for higher education research from the total costs for higher education institutions represented about 10 %. The finances for higher education research are allotted from the higher education institution expenses and are specially monitored. Their internal division and the way of breakdown based primarily on the performance of the HEI in R&D and quality of research projects have been stabilised. A part of these finances is designed for operation and development of infrastructure for research and development and the rest is divided through grants for projects of basic research, applied research, international scientific-technical cooperation and research for the needs of education. From 2002, higher education institutions may also receive their finances for research through the Agency for Support of Science and Technology and the State programs.

The Ministry of Education paid attention to the support of infrastructure for R&D in higher education institutions also within the framework of developmental programs, namely, by annual allocation of funds for development of IT and workplaces of excellence. From the point of view of higher education research the provision of centrally funded access to scientific databases has a special position (e.g., the access to WEB of Science).

7. Mobility of students and staff

7.1. Describe the main factors influencing mobility of students from as well as to your country *(For instance funds devoted to mobility schemes, portability of student loans and grants, visa problems)*

At present, approximately 7% of students study in foreign higher education institutions from the total number of Slovak students (10 – 12 thousand), particularly in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Austria, Germany and other countries. The study of citizens of the Slovak Republic

in foreign higher education institutions, except for students participating in mobility programs, is not statistically recorded. In 2004, there were 1563 foreign students studying in the Slovak Republic. There are no administrative obstacles to be faced in mobility of Slovak citizens studying in foreign higher education institutions or those from foreign countries interested in the study in the Slovak Republic within the framework of international agreements or outside the agreements. For foreign candidates of study in the Slovak Republic, citizens coming from countries requiring visa, the basic condition for being granted temporary residence at the territory of the Slovak Republic is the admission to study and fulfilment of other conditions. The candidates - citizens of European Economic Area countries and Switzerland are required just the registration on the stay at the territory of the Slovak Republic in the appropriate unit of alien policy based on submission of passport and a confirmation on admission to study. For purposes of provision of subsistence costs during the study there is an open social system available for the Slovak citizens; the system also covers provision of social scholarships to Slovak students.

7.2. Describe any special measures taken in your country to improve mobility of students from as well as to your country

To improve mobility of candidates of higher education study from the Slovak Republic in foreign higher education institutions, and vice versa, in March 2004 the information portale PLOTEUS has been developed (<http://europa.eu.int/ploteus>) to provide information on possibilities of higher education study in Europe. The Slovak Republic joined its development by processing data on Slovak higher education institutions; this task was carried out by the National Reference Centre for Vocational Guidance (NRCVG). To support the study of Slovak students abroad, in 2002, the Act on Student Loan Fund was amended in such a way as to provide the loan also to Slovak students studying abroad.

7.3. Describe the main factors influencing mobility of teachers and staff from as well as to your country (For instance tenure of appointment, grant schemes, social security, visa problems)

Mobility of teachers and other staff of higher education institutions is laid no administrative obstacles on the part of the State authorities of the Slovak Republic. For the residence of citizens coming from EEA countries and Switzerland applying for posts of teachers and other staff in higher education institutions the only rules set out by law are those concerning the compulsory registration at the appropriate office of alien police based on presentation of the passport and confirmation on accommodation secured. For nationals from countries with visa duty it is necessary to fulfil conditions for being granted the temporary residence in the territory of the Slovak Republic.

7.4. Describe any special measures taken in your country to improve mobility of academic teachers and staff from as well as to your country

In the Slovak Republic there are no special measures taken at the moment to improve mobility of academic teachers and staff from as well as to this country. According to the Act on Higher Education the mobility policy of higher education institutions is exclusively in their competence and is funded through their budgets.

8. Higher education institutions and students

8.1. Describe aspects of autonomy of higher education institutions

Is autonomy determined/defined by law? To what extent can higher education institutions decide on internal organisation, staffing, new study programmes and financing?

Academic freedom and academic rights in the Slovak Republic are guaranteed by Act on Higher Education. They are: freedom of scientific investigation, research, development, artistic and other creative activity and publishing their results, freedom of teaching consisting in openness towards diverse scientific outlooks, scientific and research methods and artistic trends, the right to learn with the free choice of study within the framework of accredited study programmes retained, right of members of academic community to elect bodies of academic community and be elected for them and the right to use academic insignia and carry out academic ceremonies.

According to the Act on Higher Education a higher education institution is competent to full extent to decide about its internal organisation, to determine number of admitted candidates for study, to create and carry out (after accreditation) the study programs, to organize the study, to make decisions in matters concerning academic rights and responsibilities of the students, to determine the orientation and organize the research, developmental or artistic and other creative activity, to conclude, change and abolish labour-legal relations and determine the number and structure of working posts in the higher education institution, to award the scientific-pedagogical degree of "docent" and "profesor", to cooperate with other higher education institutions, legal entities and private persons, including foreign ones, to elect members to the academic self-government bodies, to manage economy and property in agreement with this Act and to define the amount of tuition fee of the students for covering a part of the costs for study and study-related fees.

From the point of view of economic management, public HEIs are organisations sui generis with a non-profit form of management. A substantial part of finances is received from the State budget in the form of a block grant. These funds may be transferred, unless used in the given calendar year, to be used in the next calendar year. If the institution decides so, it may create its own system of remuneration of its employees. The income which the public HEIs achieve by their activities, is left for their activities. Starting with 1st January 2003, the HEIs have also taken over the State property they had used until then.

8.2. Describe actions taken to ensure active participation from all partners in the process

According to Act on Higher Education in the Slovak Republic, the higher education institutions have extensive academic rights and academic freedoms the implementation of which is not affected by the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic or other State administration bodies. Active use of academic rights and academic freedoms by HEIs is an expression of autonomy and ability of HEIs to take over the responsibility for fulfilling the mission and tasks and thus to contribute to development of education, science, culture and health for benefit of the entire society.

8.3. How do students participate in and influence the organisation and content of education at universities and other higher education institutions and at the national level?

(For example, participation in University Governing Bodies, Academic Councils etc)

In agreement with the Act on Higher Education, students of higher education institutions have the right to participate in research, developmental or artistic and other creative activity of the HEI, to express opinions on quality of teaching and on teachers and to freely express their opinions and comments on higher education system. Students make up at least one third of the academic senate of higher education institution or academic senate of the faculty, which

enables them to directly participate in decision-making on principal questions concerning fulfilment of the mission and tasks of the HEI or faculty. According to Act on Higher Education the Student Higher Education Council is the supreme body of higher education students which represents the student interests outwardly. It expresses opinions on significant questions, proposals and measures in the field of higher education. By means of the Student Higher Education Council the students take an active part in the higher education policy development, namely by participation of their representatives in development of significant program documents on higher education policy and legislative norms for higher education. At the same time, it regularly participates in the meetings of the Slovak Rectors' Conference, Higher Education Council and Accreditation Commission. The Student Higher Education Council is an active member of the National Unions of Students in Europe (ESIB).

9. The social dimension of the Bologna Process

9.1. Describe measures which promote equality of access to higher education

In June 2004, the Act on Higher Education enforced the provisions which regulate the duty to respect at admission to study and at creation of conditions for study in HEIs equal rights without discrimination on the grounds of sex, denomination or faith, marital status and family status, colour, language, political or other convictions, trade union activity, national or social background, disability, age, property, descent or other status.

By the treaty on accession of the Slovak Republic to European Union as on May 2004 the Act on Higher Education has been applied to the EU citizens just like to the citizens of the Slovak Republic.

In order to complete the higher education reform in the Slovak Republic, it is necessary to complete the efficient system of multisource financing of higher education by participation of citizens in reimbursement of a part of costs for their study in the form of tuition fees in connection with the new system of social scholarships and loans in such a way as to enable the citizens to study regardless of their social background. There is a proposal of the Act discussed in which the proposed changes should not influence citizens with low income. According to this proposal the number and amount of social scholarships will increase while considering the amount of tuition fees, and the access of students to loans for covering tuition fees will be likewise improved. These measures will support the equality in access to higher education for all social groups of the population.

10. Developments in lifelong learning

10.1. What measures have been taken by your country to encourage higher education institutions in developing lifelong learning paths?

The Act on Higher Education sets out that HEIs also fulfil their mission by providing the further education and contributing to development of education at all levels from primary up to higher education, particularly, by in-service teacher training for teachers of primary schools, secondary schools, school facilities and higher education institutions. The provision of higher education in the Slovak Republic is regulated by a special law. Within the framework of the further education HEIs carry out educational activities of specialised and innovation character for all those from practice, lasting for several days up to several terms. After completing such educational activities, the HEIs grant to their graduates certificates on

their completion.

10.2. Describe any procedures at the national level for recognition of prior learning/flexible learning paths

In the Slovak Republic the recognition of nonformal or informal education as a level of education is not considered at the moment, there are no legislative conditions created for such recognition.

11. Contribution to the European dimension in higher education

11.1 Describe any legal obstacles identified by your country and any progress made in removing legal obstacles to the establishment and recognition of joint degrees and/or joint study programmes

European dimension in education in the Slovak Republic is developed through student mobility carried out by means of international mobility programs as well as the programs of bilateral or multilateral cooperation carried out between the Slovak and foreign HEIs. The joint educational activities are supported by a special regulation in which the conditions of study of Slovak students in other HEIs, including foreign ones, are regulated. This special regulation contains models of application for exchange study, contracts on study and abstracts of study results, in which the accepting and sending institutions confirm the conditions for completion of the period of study of the student from the sending institution in the accepting institution. This regulation also shows details on ECTS which enables a clear transcript and recognition of the achieved results by the sending institution upon his/her return from the accepting institution. For the time being the Act on HE does not deal with the joint degree or joint study programs.

11.1.1. Describe the extent of integrated study programmes leading to joint degrees or double degrees

The first and so far the only example of joint study program is the creation of Germanophone two-year engineer joint study program on international financial management in cooperation between University of Economics in Bratislava and Martin Luther University in Halle - Wittenberg in the Federal Republic of Germany. Students pursue the study program at both universities, namely 7th and 8th semesters in the Slovak Republic and 9th and 10th semesters in the Federal Republic of Germany. The graduates receive diplomas from both universities.

11.1.2. How have these programmes been organised? (joint admissions, mobility of students, joint exams, etc.)

The admission to this study program is conditional on completing the bachelor study program at a faculty at the University of Economics in Bratislava lasting 6 semesters or completion of the first level of study at the Faculty of Economic Sciences at Martin Luther University in Halle – Wittenberg, which is composed of 4 semesters of basic study and selected subjects from the bloc Allgemeine Betriebswirtschaftslehre and from the bloc Allgemeine Volkswirtschaftslehre. The admission to this joint study program is conditional on completing admission examination. Since it is a Germanophone study the Slovak candidates are also required a certificate on completing language training in German language. Practice period in the length of 12 weeks during holidays is compulsory for both German and Slovak students. Slovak students complete the practice period in the German speaking countries and the German students in the companies and institutions in the Slovak Republic which are

linked to German speaking countries. The Commission for State examinations held at the end of study is composed of four members (professors and assistant lecturers) from both universities so that at least one member of the commission is from the partner university. In 2004, 17 students completed their study by passing the State examination, in the first year of study there were 23 students and in the second year there were 20 students.

11.2. Describe any transnational co-operation that contributes to the European dimension in higher education

Academic mobilities are organised through international mobility programs as well as on the basis of direct cooperation of the Slovak higher education institutions with foreign higher education institutions. Academic mobilities, except for academic mobilities organized by the European Commission, are carried out in the Slovak Republic through the Slovak Academic Information Agency (SAIA), which is a non-profit organization. In 2004, the latter organized the selection of scholarship holders for 32 countries and recommended 598 candidates for scholarship stays and 29 substitutes for scholarship stays based on bilateral agreements on cooperation and offers for study stays and courses abroad. For provision of its activities SAIA has five regional workplaces and for improvement of informing the public it issues a monthly bulletin, which is also available on Internet website www.saia.sk.

At the moment, 19 higher education institutions participate in the program Socrates/Erasmus, being granted Erasmus University Charter by the European Commission. In academic year 2003/4 about 700 university students were sent abroad under the Socrates/Erasmus program and under the mobility projects of Leonardo da Vinci program about 100 university students studied abroad.

Within the framework of regional cooperation the Slovak Republic is involved in the program CEEPUS – Central European Exchange Programme for Universities Studies, which is designed for university students and teachers for individual mobilities or mobilities through higher education institutions. In 2004, the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic invested in the program CEEPUS the amount of SK 3,7 million, which includes the funds for 318 scholarship months for 229 admitted scholarship holders from abroad. In 2004, there were 267 Slovak candidates registered for the stays in foreign higher education institutions for academic year 2004/5.

Within the framework of regional cooperation the Slovak Republic has a joint project with Austria. Action Austria – Slovakia is the program of bilateral cooperation between the SR and Austria from 1991, the protocol has been signed until 2007. Within the framework of the project the scholarships are granted for study research stays and summer language courses. In 2004 the Ministry of Education of the SR invested in the project the sum of SK 4 million and the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture of Austrian Republic the sum of EUR 194 thousand. For academic year 2004/5 the scholarships were approved for study and research stays for 44 persons, of which 18 PhD students and 23 students and for summer language courses of German language 10 persons.

Within the framework of regional cooperation of V4 countries (Slovakia, Hungary, Poland and Czech Republic) a special program was created for financial support of students coming from V4 countries to be able to study in these countries and for support of foreign students from other countries to be able to study in V4 countries. The office of the program is situated

in the Slovak Republic.

11.3. Describe how curriculum development reflects the European dimension

(For instance foreign language courses, European themes, orientation towards the European labour market)

After 2002, under the new higher education act the curriculum reform of higher education started in the Slovak Republic. In cooperation with academic community a new system of study fields of higher education was developed considering to the greatest extent the International Standard Classification of Education ISCED, as well as national characteristics. The individual study fields were added descriptions of their content in three levels of higher education depending on whether they were incorporated into the system of study fields of higher education. Based on these descriptions and evaluation criteria the accreditation of all study programmes of higher education institutions was done according to the new Act on Higher Education. The higher education institutions have just submitted for accreditation a great number of study programs with international elements, e.g. international financial management, European studies, foreign trade enterprising, international trade, enterprising in EU, European developmental programs and others. The graduates will be prepared not only for domestic but also foreign labour market. At the same time, the number of study programs for teaching foreign languages increased, both in teacher-training studies and interpreting and translating. Teaching two foreign languages has been a standard in all higher education institutions for long time.

The curriculum reform of the study ensues from implementation of the Bologna strategy in the field of orientation of higher education at labour market. For this reason the higher education study has been divided into three levels also in the study fields where it was not used in the past in such a way as to make the bachelor study a sufficient education in finding placement at labour market.

12. Promoting the attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area

12.1. Describe actions taken by your country to promote the attractiveness of the EHEA

In order to increase attractiveness of European higher education space in the Slovak Republic a new amendment was adopted and several activities of international significance were carried out. On the basis of the new amendment the Slovak Republic recognises without reciprocity the education of the third level (PhD.) of the nationals of the EEA countries and Switzerland received in higher education institutions recognised by the State automatically. The new amendment of December 2004 is aimed at increasing the trust in European higher education area at evaluation of results of higher education and, at the same time, enabling the increase and acceleration of mobility of young research workers in European area. Among the other significant activities is the organisation of international and national conferences and seminars. They were carried out in mutual cooperation of HEIs, Slovak Rectors' Conference and Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic, for example, for support of the idea of enlargement of European Union (international conference at the University of Constantinus Philosopher in Nitra – 2004) or international Austrian-Slovak seminar on double diplomas (Slovak Rectors' Conference – 2004), etc. These events were financially supported from the State resources through the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic; just like a part of activities of the project Bologna promoters carried out by the European Commission.

13. Concluding comments

13.1. Give a description of your national Bologna strategies

The implementation of principles of the Bologna Declaration is one of the key elements of the extensive and deep reform of higher education in the Slovak Republic which was started after 1998. This reform was launched due to several internal and external reasons.

The internal reason for launching the reform was the need to tackle the problems of higher education surviving from the past which may be characterised as permanent underfinancing of higher education resulting in a big internal debt, non-solved property relations of higher education institutions, the methods of financing not considering appropriately the quality and quantity of performances of provided higher education, low access to higher education, decreasing quality of provided education in higher education institutions and other reasons.

Among the external reasons of starting the reform is, on one hand, the necessity to carry out some amendments, first of all legal regulations ensuing from the accession process of the Slovak Republic to the EU concerned. On the other hand, among the external reasons of starting the reform there is the acknowledgement of the Slovak Republic concerning the all-Europe Bologna process with the purpose to involve the Slovak higher education in the emerging European higher education area. It is a sum of organization measures and amendments, through which the Slovak higher education legislation and practice have introduced the recommendations of the Bologna Declaration concerning the division of higher education into three levels, ECTS implementation, issue of the Diploma Supplement, etc.

The implementation of principles of the Bologna Declaration shall bring to the Slovak higher education its international dimension which will mean in the future an increase of mobility of Slovak students and teachers in foreign higher education institutions, recognition of results of study or a period of the study completed in a foreign institution, namely, in the form of double diplomas or joint diplomas using the Diploma Supplement and ECTS. The Bologna process shall also enable involvement of the Slovak Republic into European cooperation at quality assurance of provided higher education.

13.2. Give an indication of the main challenges ahead for your country

The main challenge ahead for the Slovak Republic today is the completion of introduction of the main reform measures into everyday practice of the Slovak higher education institutions including the enforcement of the act on student loans strengthening the system of social support of students and introducing the students's contributions for covering their study. In this way the process of transition to efficient multisource financing of higher education will be finalised and the conditions will be created for the solution of long-lasting problem of insufficient financing in higher education. The substantially strengthened system of social support of students shall simultaneously remove the economic barriers of access to higher education. Such a new framework of functioning shall enable the higher education institutions to transfer the major part of its efforts to improvement of quality of provided education.