

BOLOGNA PROCESS TEMPLATE FOR NATIONAL REPORTS: 2005-2007

Final: 9 May 2006

Notes:

The deadline for submitting National Reports is **Friday 15 December 2006**.

BFUG members are encouraged to consult other stakeholders about the contents of their National Report.

Please complete your National Report in English using this template and return it to the Secretariat by email. Your report should not exceed **20 pages in length**, using Times New Roman font size 12. Where appropriate, please include precise web references to legislation or other documentation. For any topic where there has been no change since 2005, please refer to your National Report for the Bergen conference.

Please attach your country's action plan to improve the quality of the process associated with the recognition of foreign qualifications.

National Reports will be posted on the Bologna website in their original form.

Information from National Reports will form the basis of the Stocktaking Report to be presented to Ministers when they meet in London in May 2007.

This template has three sections:

- A. Background information on your Higher Education system
- B. Main stocktaking questions, including scorecard elements
- C. Current issues in Higher Education.

Elements that will inform the scorecard element of stocktaking are clearly indicated in the template.

Information for the stocktaking, including the scorecard element, will also be drawn from the Eurydice survey "Focus on the Structure of Higher Education in Europe". These elements are also indicated in the template. Please use your National Report to supplement, but not repeat, your country's input to the Eurydice survey.

A. Background information on your Higher Education system

Details

Country	Slovak Republic
Date	December 2006
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Main achievements since Bergen

1. Describe the important developments relating to the Bologna Process, including legislative reforms, since Bergen.

The strategy of implementation of the Bologna Declaration recommendations was established by the programme document Concept of the Further Development of Higher Education in Slovakia for the 21st Century that was approved by the Government of the Slovak Republic in August 2000 and also confirmed by the Programme Declaration of the Government of the Slovak Republic of 2002. Based on this Concept the Act No. 131/2002 of Law Digest on Higher Education and on the Change and Supplement to Some Acts was developed, which was approved by the National Council of the Slovak Republic on 21st February 2002 and which entered into force on 1st April 2002. This Act contains all the principles of the Bologna Declaration and enables their practical implementation. In November 2003 and December 2004, the amendments to this Act were adopted to regulate some areas relevant from the point of view of the European Union law, particularly, the adaptation of the content of education in higher education institutions in accordance with the respective directives of the European Commission. At present, an amendment to the Act is being prepared, in which the position of the Slovak higher education institution as a part of the European area of higher education and the joint European research space shall be declared. The amendment also proposes the principles regulating the award of joint diplomas after completing the joint study programmes.

National organisation

2. Describe any changes since Bergen in the structure of public authorities responsible for higher education, the main agencies/bodies in higher education and their roles.

Please include:

- whether higher education institutions (HEIs) report to /are overseen by different ministries
- how funds are allocated to HEIs
- areas for which HEIs are autonomous and self governing.

From the point of view of competences of the State administration authorities the responsibility for higher education in the Slovak Republic falls within the competence of the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic which according to the Act on Higher Education creates conditions for development of higher education institution and university education, and takes responsibility for updating and development of higher education legislation. This activity is carried out through its organization unit of the Section for Higher Education, which is also responsible for practical implementation of the Bologna principles in higher education in the Slovak Republic. Following the Bergen ministerial conference and the summer 2006 organization change at the Ministry of Education of the SR, the Section for Higher Education is headed by the Head of Office of the Ministry of Education- of the SR.

Among the most significant bodies of higher education policy in the Slovak Republic are Accreditation Commission, Higher Education Council, Student Higher Education Council and Slovak Rectors' Conference. The Government of the Slovak Republic

establishes the Accreditation Commission as its advisory body. Its task is to monitor, assess and independently evaluate the quality of educational, research, developmental, artistic and other creative activities of higher education institutions and to promote their enhancement. The other bodies involved in development of higher education policy are the authorities of higher education institutions representatives, namely, the Higher Education Council as a supreme body of self-governance of higher education institutions, the Student Higher Education Council as a supreme body of university students representatives and the Slovak Rectors' Conference as an authority composed of rectors of higher education institutions. The co-responsibility for implementation of higher education policy also rests with higher education institutions the main role of which is to deliver higher education and creative scientific research or creative artistic activity.

The system of higher education institutions of the Slovak Republic includes the public higher education institutions, the State higher education institutions and private higher education institutions. The public higher education institutions are the organizations with non-profit making way of economic management being funded from the national budget up to 90 % in average; the rest is covered by their own resources. The 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 school falling under the health sector, which are the State-owned organizations being virtually completely covered by the national budget. Ten private higher education institutions are funded from private resources, particularly, from tuition fees paid by students. The Act on Higher Education enables to provide to a private HEI a subsidy for implementation of accredited study programmes, for research, developmental or artistic activity and for its development. The Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic provides for private higher education institutions a subsidy for social welfare of students; a subsidy for social scholarships to students is offered to a private higher education institution on the basis of title.

From the view of the system of economic management the public higher education institutions represent the organizations sui generis with non-profit-making form of economic management. A substantial part of finances is received from the national budget in the form of block grants. These funds, unless used in the given calendar year, may be rationally used in the following calendar year. If decided so by a higher education institution, it may create its own system of remuneration of its employees. The incomes obtained by the public higher education institutions through their own activities, remain for their activities. Since 1st January 2003 the State property used by the HEIs till then, was also transferred to their ownership.

The academic freedoms and academic rights of higher education institutions in the Slovak Republic are guaranteed by the Act on Higher Education. They are the freedoms of scientific investigation, development, artistic and other creative ability and publicising their results, freedom of teaching consisting especially in openness to diverse scientific outlooks, scientific and research methods and artistic trends, the right to learn under the free choice of study within the framework of accredited study programmes retained, the right of members of academic community to elect the bodies of academic community and to be elected for them, and the right to use academic insignia and to carry out academic ceremonies. According to Act on Higher Education it is in full self-governing area of competence of higher education institution to decide on its internal

organization, to determine the number of admitted candidates for study, to develop and implement (after accreditation) the study programmes, to organize the study, to decide on matters concerning academic rights and duties of the students, to determine the concentration and organize the research, developmental or artistic creative and other creative activity, to establish, change and cancel labour legal relations, and to define the number and structure of positions in the higher education institution, to award the scientific-educational degrees of docent and professor, to cooperate with other higher education institutions, other legal entities and natural persons, including foreign ones, to elect members to academic self-government bodies, to carry out economic management and property handling in agreement with this Act, and to define the amount of students' contribution for covering a part of costs for their study and study-related fees.

According to Act on Higher Education the higher education institutions in the Slovak Republic have extensive academic rights and academic freedoms the implementation of which is not affected by the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic or any other authorities of the State administration. The active use of academic rights and academic freedoms by higher education institutions is an expression of independence and ability of higher education institutions to take over the responsibility for implementation of their mission and tasks and thus to contribute to development of education, science, culture and health for welfare of the entire society.

3. Describe any changes since Bergen to the institutional structure.

Please include:

- the number of public/private HEIs
- are there different types of institutions delivering higher education (i.e. academic/professional, university/non-university etc.)
- the number/percentage of students admitted in academic session 2006-2007 to each type of institution
- the extent to which different types institutions are covered by the same regulations.

In December 2006, the Slovak Republic had 33 higher education institutions out of which 20 public higher education institutions, 3 State higher education institutions and 10 private higher education institutions. In the public higher education institutions there were 188 thousand students (SR nationals) studying at the three cycles of higher education study in academic year 2005/2006, of which 116 thousand in full-time form and 67 thousand in part-time form of study. In academic year 2005/2006, in the public higher education institutions there were 169 506 students studying at the first and second cycles of higher education study, of which 113 197 students in full-time form and 56 309 students in part-time form of study. In the third cycle of higher education study (PhD.) there were 10 321 students studying in the public higher education institutions, of which 3 230 full-time students and 7 091 part-time students in the given period.

In the private higher education institutions in the Slovak Republic, in academic year 2005/2006, there were 8 208 students studying at the first and second cycles, of which 1 357 students in full-time form and 6 851 students in part-time form. At the third cycle of higher education study (PhD.) in private higher education institutions there were 87 students studying, namely, in the part-time form only.

In academic year 2005/2006, there were 1 718 foreign students studying in the

Slovak higher education institutions.

The number of new entrants has been steadily increasing recently, in academic year 2003/2004 there were 42 381 new entrants, in academic year 2004/2005 there were 53 335 new entrants and in academic year 2005/2006 there were about 60 159 new entrants at all the three cycles of higher education study in public higher education institutions and in private higher education institutions in total. In academic year 2006/2007, it is expected to reach the limit of 200 thousand students, which means virtually to balance the supply and demand for higher education in the Slovak Republic and removal of the so-called numerus clausus with exception of the attractive fields of study, such as universal medicine, law and architecture.

In the Slovak Republic the number of admitted to higher education is not regulated; according to Act on Higher Education upon the statement of representatives of higher education institutions the Ministry of Education of the SR has the right to limit the interyear increase in number of full-time students in case it exceed 5%.

Partnership

4. Describe the structure which oversees the implementation of the Bologna Process in your country.

Please include:

- the membership and role of any national Bologna group (for example policy committee, promoters' group)
- the membership and role of students, staff trade unions, business and social partners in any national Bologna Group.

The responsibility for practical implementation of the Bologna principles in higher education policy was taken over by the organization unit of the Section for Higher Education at the Ministry of Education the Director General of which is one of the representatives of the Slovak Republic in the Bologna Follow Up Group (BFUG). Another representative in BFUG is the Head of Office of the Ministry of Education of SR, which testifies to the importance attached to the Bologna Process by the Slovak Republic. Based on the activity of the European Commission the National Group of Bologna Promoters was established from 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. The members of the National Group of Bologna Promoters are national advisers for ECTS and Diploma Supplement and a representative of the Slovak Republic in Bologna Follow Up Group. The National Group of Bologna Promoters is administered through the Office of Socrates/Erasmus. The Ministry of Education SR substantially supports financially the activities of the National Group of Bologna Promoters.

5. Describe the arrangements for involving students and staff trade union/representative bodies in the governance of HEIs.

Please include:

- precise references (preferably with web links) to any legislation (or equivalent) in place to ensure students and staff are represented on HEI governing bodies
- the role of students in the governance of HEIs

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the role of staff trade union/representative bodies in the governance of HEIs.
<p>According to Act on Higher Education the students of higher education institutions have the right to participate in research, developmental or artistic and other creative activities of the higher education institution, to express their opinion on quality of teaching and on teachers and to freely express their views and comments on higher education system. The students make up at least one third of the Academic Senate of a higher education institution or Academic Senate of the faculty, which gives them the possibility to directly participate in decision-making on principal tasks concerning fulfilment of the mission and tasks of the higher education institution or faculty. Under the Act on Higher Education the Student Higher Education Council is a supreme representative body of university students, which represents the interests of students outwardly. It gives its views on significant questions, proposals and measures concerning higher education. By means of the Student Higher Education Council the students take an active part in development of higher education policy, particularly through participation of their representatives in development of the significant programme documents of 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).</p>
<p>6. Describe the measures in place to ensure the co-operation of business and social partners within the Bologna Process.</p>
<p>The Act on Higher Education has enabled the establishment of administration boards of public higher education institutions the aim of which is to support interlink between public higher education institutions and the society. The administration boards of public higher education institution apply and enforce public interest in the activities of the public higher education institution, especially that related to the use of its property and funds provided to it by the State. In the administration boards of public higher education institutions the representatives of public life, enterprising sector and trade unions take a significant part.</p>

B. Main stocktaking questions, including scorecard elements

Degree system

(Scorecard and Eurydice)
<p>Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle</p> <p>7. Describe the progress made towards introducing the first and second cycle.</p> <p>Please include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the percentage of the total number of students below doctoral level enrolled in the two cycle degree system in 2006/07.
<p>In the Slovak Republic the higher education is based on three cycles. The completion of the first cycle in the Bachelor study programmes is followed by the second cycle which is implemented through Master's, Engineer's and Doctor's study programmes and the</p>

third cycle is implemented through doctoral study programmes. The legal regulation does not allow after completing the first cycle (that means, after completing any of the Bachelor study programmes) the implementation of the third cycle through doctoral study programmes. The study programme may be performed only in the field of study which is enlisted in the structure of the fields of study of higher education. The study programme may be also performed in combination of two study fields.

The admission to the bachelor study or the study combining the first and second cycles is conditional primarily on the secondary school leaving examination; the admission to the study at the second cycle is conditional primarily on completing the bachelor study.

The standard length of study for the bachelor study programme as a study programme of the first cycle takes at least three years and at most four years. The graduates of the bachelor study are awarded the academic degree of “bakalár”, abbr. “Bc.”. According to recommendation of the Bologna Declaration the bachelor study programmes are oriented at acquisition of theoretical knowledge and practical knowledge based on the present state of science and art and on capacity to use them at performing their profession, as well as in continuing the Master’s study. In contrast to the past, the emphasize is put on condition to propose the study content in such a way as to provide for the students of Bachelor’s study full employment at the Slovak and international labour market and that their qualification is sufficient enough for performing the appropriate profession.

For the study programme of the second cycle (Master’s, Engineer’s or Doctor’s study programmes) the standard length of study is at least one year and at most three years so that the total standard length of study according to Bachelor’s study programme and the related study programme of the second cycle to follow in the same or relative study field is at least five years.

In specially justified cases, following the statement by the Accreditation Commission, the Ministry may permit the combination of the first and second cycle into one unit with a view to the specificity of the study field. The standard length of study for the study programmes combining the first and second cycles of higher education is at least four years and at most six years and their graduates receive higher education of the second cycle (e.g., medical and pharmaceutical fields of study). The graduates of the study programmes of the second cycle are awarded the academic degree of “magister“, abbr. “Mgr.”, in study programmes oriented at development of creativity in the field of engineering works or processes, including economic, the academic degree of “inžinier”, abbr. “Ing.”.

(Eurydice)

Stage of implementation of the third cycle

8. Describe the progress made towards implementing doctoral studies as the third Bologna cycle.

Please include:

- the percentage of 3rd cycle students following structured doctoral programmes

- the normal length of full-time doctoral studies
- the elements that are included in doctoral study programmes, e.g. do they include taught courses or independent research only
- the supervisory and assessment procedures for doctoral studies
- are doctoral studies included in your country's qualifications framework and are they linked to learning outcomes
- are interdisciplinary training and the development of transferable skills integrated in doctoral studies
- are credit points used in measuring workload in doctoral studies?

The standard length for the doctoral study is at least three years and at most four years. The graduates of doctoral study programme receive the higher education of the third cycle and are granted the academic degree of "philosophiae doctor", abbr "PhD.". The admission to the doctoral study programme is primarily conditional on completing the higher education of the second cycle, the admission to the doctoral study upon completing the Bachelor's study programme is not possible in the Slovak Republic and nor is it considered to be possible at the moment. The study according to the doctoral study programme takes place on the basis of individual study plan under the supervision of a tutor and it consists of the study part and research part. The study part consists of lectures, seminars, and individual study of a professional literature, and the research part consists of individual or team research project of the student. A part of this study in full-time form is also a teaching activity or other professional activity connected with educational activity and PhD student works usually at research projects of the professional training workplace. During the doctoral study the process of doctoral degree course is annually evaluated in yearly evaluation, a part of which is also control of achieved credits. Number of credits depends on concrete study programme and concrete higher education institution and its study rules.

During the doctoral study the PhD student must complete a dissertation examination, which is a final examination. The completion of the doctoral study consists in the defence of a dissertation.

A great strength of doctoral study is especially the substantial increase in number of newly admitted doctoral students that are granted scholarships by the Ministry of Education SR (e.g., in 2002 they were 637 places, in 2005 as many as 1217 new doctoral places). Likewise, the scholarship of doctoral students in full-time form, which is equal to salary of starting university teachers, has been considerably increased.

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

Access¹ to the next cycle

9. Describe the arrangements for access between the first and second cycles and second and third cycles.

Please include:

- the percentage of first cycle qualifications that give access to the second cycle
- if appropriate, the percentage of first cycle qualifications that give access to the third cycle
- the percentage of first cycle qualifications that give access to both the second and third cycles
- the percentage of second cycle qualifications that give access to the third cycle
- specify any first cycle qualifications that do not give access to the second cycle
- specify any second cycle qualifications that do not give access to the third cycle.
- specify any examples where bridging courses are necessary to transfer between cycles in the same subject area
- any measures planned to remove obstacles between cycles.

Higher education in the Slovak Republic is based on the three cycles. The admission to the Bachelor's study or study combining the first and second cycles is conditional on the secondary school-leaving examination. The admission to the study at the second cycle is conditional on completing the bachelor study. The admission to study at the third cycle is conditional on completion of the second cycle of higher education study.

After completing the first cycle of higher education, that means, the bachelor's cycle, a majority of students continue pursuing the study in the second cycle of higher education (almost 100%).

The regulation does not give access upon completing the first cycle (that is, after completing some of the bachelor study programmes) to the study of the third cycle in doctoral study programmes, nor is it considered to introduce such an amendment to the Act.

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

Implementation of national qualifications framework

10. Describe the stage of implementation of the national qualifications framework to align with the overarching Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA².

¹ Access as defined in the Lisbon Recognition Convention. Access: the right of qualified candidates to apply and be considered for admission to higher education.

² A Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA: <http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/>

Please include:

- the stage of development of your national qualifications framework (for example: has your national QF been included in legislation or agreed between all relevant stakeholders; has a working group been established; have national outcomes-based descriptors of the main types of qualifications been prepared; has a timetable for implementation been agreed?)
- the extent to which your national qualifications framework is in line with the Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA
- the role of stakeholders in the development of your national qualifications framework.

In the Slovak Republic the national qualifications framework (NQF), establishing a structure and conditions of classification of professions and professional activities, has not been developed so far. In December 2006, the procedure has been approved and a working group of the Ministry of Education SR has been set up for development of the national qualifications framework to be prepared in such a way as to be fully compatible with European Qualification Framework (EQF). The list of selected professions and professional activities is administered by the Ministry of Labour, Social Welfare and Family SR.

11. What measures are being taken to increase the employability of graduates with bachelor qualifications?

Please include where possible:

- the percentage of first cycle graduates who found employment after graduating in 2005/06
- the percentage of first cycle graduates who continued into the second or third cycles in 2005/06
- the extent to which this is expected to change in 2006/2007.

In the Slovak Republic the problem of employment of higher education graduates of all the three cycles of higher education study has been nonexistent for a long period by now. The unemployment of higher education graduates after nine months since completing the higher education study has been around 5 % in recent years. With a view to development of economy in the Slovak Republic and the further anticipated economic growth, in the near future no problems are expected in employment of graduates from all the three cycles of higher education study, including the graduates of the Bachelor study.

Quality assurance

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

National implementation of the Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA³

12. To what extent is your national system of QA already in line with the

³ <http://www.enqa.net/files/BergenReport210205.pdf>

Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA?

Please include:

- the stage of implementation of the national quality assurance system in line with the Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA
- any action that has been taken to ensure that the national quality assurance system is in line with the Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA
- any deadlines set for taking action to ensure that the national quality assurance system is in line with the Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA
- any action planned to ensure that the national quality assurance system is in line with the standards and guidelines for QA in the EHEA.

The national implementation of the Standards and Guidelines for QA in European Higher Education Area (EHEA) was carried out in a few ways. Some of its principles are contained in procedures and criteria of the Accreditation Commission, the advisory body of the SR Government, which oversees, evaluates and independently assesses the quality of educational, research, artistic and other creative activity of higher education institutions and helps to improve it. The national implementation of these standards was also carried out through the joint project of the Slovak Rectors Conference, Ministry of Education of SR and European University Association in which an international evaluation of higher education institutions in the Slovak Republic is carried out. At present, an amendment to the Act on Higher Education is being prepared in which it is proposed to amend in this Act the international evaluation of the Slovak higher education institutions.

Stage of development of external quality assurance system

13. Describe the quality assurance system operating in your country.

Please include:

- the stage of implementation of your external quality assurance system
- the scope of your external quality assurance system: does it operate at a national level; does it cover all higher education⁴
- which of the following elements are included in your external quality assurance system:
 - internal assessment
 - external review
 - publication of results
- whether procedures have been established for the peer review of the national agency(ies) according to the Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA.

The system of quality assurance in providing higher education is based on internal quality assessment, external evaluation and accreditation. Within the framework of internal quality assessment the scientific boards of higher education institutions regularly evaluate the level of higher education institution in educational activity and in the field of science, technology and art. External assessment of higher education institutions is a part of accreditation of higher education institutions and is carried out by the Accreditation Commission which in the course of validation of outcomes of educational activity and activity in the field of science, technology and art makes use of the results of internal quality assessment of the higher education institution; it prepares peer review and, upon assessment of the achieved results of varied activities of higher education institutions, it submits its statements to the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic. The statements of the Accreditation Commission are the background materials for issuing the decisions of the Minister of Education (e.g., recognition of the right of higher education institution to award the respective academic degree to graduates of the study programmes) and the Government of the Slovak Republic (e.g., the State consent with operation of a private higher education institution).

The Accreditation Commission expresses its opinions on competence of the higher education institution to perform the study programme authorised to grant the academic degree to its graduates, on competence of non-university institution to participate in implementation of the doctoral study programme, on the competence of higher education institution to perform habilitation procedure and procedure for nomination of professors, on proposals of establishment, merger, fusion, split, dissolution, change of name or seat of the higher education institution, on proposal

⁴ higher education: all types of courses of study or sets of courses of study, training or training for research at the post secondary level which are recognised by the relevant authorities as belonging to a country's higher education system.

of granting the State consent to a legal entity which intends to act as a private higher education institution, on proposal of incorporation of higher education institutions among the research universities, universities and professional higher education institutions, on proposal of change in the system of the study fields and, eventually, to other proposals submitted by the Minister. The Accreditation Commission also regularly carries out in six-year intervals complex accreditation of all higher education institutions which is a background for classification of the university higher education institution and non-university higher education institutions. The amendment to the Act on higher education was issued with an Annex showing the background materials that the higher education institutions must submit 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 has just issued the criteria, including its material content and the way of evaluation, for purposes of accreditation of individual activities of higher education institutions and complex accreditation.

In December 2005, an agreement was signed between the Slovak Rectors' Conference and the Ministry of Education of the SR and European University Association on international institutional evaluation of the Slovak higher education institutions based on the procedures and criteria - Institutional Evaluation Guidelines. Within the framework of the project the higher education institutions will prepare a self-evaluation report; the international evaluation teams of EUA will carry out visits to higher education institutions, while the EUA will prepare the self-evaluation report for each participating higher education institution. In December 2007, the EUA will present a summary report on external evaluation of Slovak higher education institutions. The results of international evaluation of the Slovak higher education institutions will be presented to the public as an information.

Today (December 2006), a joint pilot project is ongoing on internal and mutual external assessment of Accreditation Commission of the Slovak Republic and Accreditation Commission of the Czech Republic within the framework of the system of quality assurance in higher education in the Slovak Republic and Czech Republic. The aim of the project is mutual cooperation at building up the system of internal and external assessment by accreditation commissions, creation of institutional and system presuppositions for mutual external evaluation of these systems and cooperation at development of national systems of quality assurance in higher education. This project is an immediate response to development of the Bologna Process and should create conditions for future mutual recognition of results, outcomes, processes and results of assessments and accreditations.

The evaluation of quality control of universities and higher education institutions in the form of CAF 2002 and 2006 is being considered.

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

Level of student participation

14. Describe the level of student participation in your national quality assurance system.

Please include:

- whether students are included in the following aspects of quality assurance:
 - the governance of national agencies for QA
 - as full members or observers in external review teams
 - as part of the decision making process for external reviews
 - in the consultation process during external reviews (eg arrangements for external reviewers to consult with students)
 - in internal evaluations.

Representatives of students in the Student Higher Education Council take part in the meetings of the Accreditation Commission to which they are regularly invited. They may also actively influence the higher education quality as members of academic senates of higher education institutions, in which they make up one third at least, while the academic senates directly decide by their activities and decision-making power on quality of delivered higher education. The students are directly incorporated into the project of international evaluation of quality of Slovak higher education institutions through EUA, where they participated not only in preparation of the project but also in its implementation.

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

Level of international participation

15. Describe the level of international participation in your national quality assurance system.

Please include:

- whether there is international participation in the following aspects of quality assurance
 - the governance of national agencies for quality assurance
 - the external evaluation of national quality assurance agencies
 - teams for external review, either as members or observers
 - membership of ENQA
 - membership of any other international network.

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

The Act on Higher education sets the composition of the Accreditation Commission in such a way that one third of the members come from non-higher education institutions, that means, from research institutes or social practice. Under the above Act the members of Accreditation Commission are also foreign experts, at the moment from Czech Republic and Hungary.

Recognition of degrees and study periods

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

Stage of implementation of Diploma Supplement

16. Describe the stage of implementation of the Diploma Supplement in your country.

Please include:

- the percentage of students graduating in 2007 who will receive a Diploma Supplement
- which of the following apply to Diploma Supplements issued in your country:
 - issued in a widely spoken European language
 - free of charge
 - automatically
 - correspond to the EU/CoE/UNESCO Diploma Supplement

format.

At present, in the Slovak Republic some higher education institutions issue upon request of graduates the Diploma Supplement as a media to make the recognition of diploma abroad easier. According to Act on Higher Education every graduate of higher education institution of the study programme in all three cycles will receive their Diploma Supplement free of cost together with the diploma. This rule does not refer to students of higher education institutions, who started their higher education study in a study programme since academic year 2005/2006. The data to be contained in the Diploma Supplement has been set by the Ministry of Education of SR in a special rule. The Diploma Supplement corresponds to the EU/CoE/UNESCO Diploma Supplement format. At the student's request it is also available in English. In academic year 2006/2007, about 67 % of graduates from higher education institution shall receive the Diploma Supplement automatically. The other students who started studying in academic year 2004/2005 and earlier, shall receive the Diploma Supplement only upon their request.. Since the academic year 2008/2009 the issue of the Diploma Supplements for all graduates from higher education institutions in the Slovak Republic will be obligatory.

(Scorecard)

National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention

17. Describe the stage of implementation of the main principles and later supplementary documents⁵ of the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

Please include:

- whether your country has ratified the convention (including depositing ratification instrument at either CoE or UNESCO)
- whether all appropriate legislation complies with the legal framework of the Convention and the later Supplementary Documents
- which of the following principles are applied in practice
 - applicants' right to fair assessment
 - recognition if no substantial differences can be proven
 - demonstration of substantial differences, where recognition is not granted
 - provision of information about your country's HE programmes and institutions
- whether you have a fully operational ENIC
- any action being taken to ratify or fully implement the Convention and the later Supplementary Documents.

The Slovak Republic ratified the Lisbon Convention on 13. 7. 1999. It came into operation as at 1. 9. 1999. The Convention is concerned only with the so-called recognition for academic purposes, that is recognition for purposes of continuing studies in the SR. Slovak Republic considers the following conventions of the Council of Europe and UNESCO, which are related to the academic recognition:

1. European Convention on Recognition of Equivalence of Documents Giving Access to Higher Education Institutions (1953, ETS No. 15) and its protocol (1964, ETS No. 49);
2. European Convention on Equivalence of Partial Study in Higher Education Institution (1956, ETS No. 21);
3. European Convention on Academic Recognition of University Qualification (1959, ETS No. 32);
4. Convention on Recognition of Studies and Diplomas Concerning Higher Education in the Countries of European Region (1979)
5. European Convention on General Recognition of Higher Education Study (1990, ETS No. 138)
6. International Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in the Arab and European States bordering on the Mediterranean area (1979)

⁵ Recommendation on the Criteria and Procedures for Recognition (2001); Recommendation on the Recognition of Joint Degrees (2004); Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education (2001)

On the basis of this Convention all the applicants for recognition of their diplomas, in case of qualifications achieved at the State recognized secondary schools and higher education institution, are entitled to just assessment of the qualifications, namely in adequate time. No discrimination shall be made in this respect on any ground such as gender, race, colour, disability, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status or on the grounds of any other circumstances not related to the merits of qualifications for which the recognition is sought. While there are not demonstrated remarkable differences between general demands for admission abroad, where the qualification was received, in the Slovak Republic this qualification issued in another contracting State shall recognize for admission to higher education. If the qualification enables the access to only specific kinds of institutions or study programmes, the holders of such qualifications are offered the access to similar specific programmes at the recognized higher education institutions. If the certificates on secondary school-leaving examination from abroad enables an access to higher education only in combinations with other qualification examinations as an admission requirement, completion of the given exam is a condition or we offer an alternative in the form of completing vocational training. While no remarkable differences are identified between the periods of study completed abroad and the period of study programme completed in the SR, also the periods aimed at completing the study programme are recognized.

Ministry of Education of the SR provides adequate information and reviews on:

- various types of higher education institutions incorporated in the higher education system in the SR,
- the list of recognized higher education institutions (both the State and private) showing their right to provide for individual types of qualifications and demands for acquisition of access to every type of higher education institution and programme,
- description of programmes ongoing in these institutions,
- list of educational institutions located outside this territory and that we consider as a part of the Slovak education system.

All the information is updated and published.

In the Slovak Republic there is a completely functional national information centre-Centre for Recognition of Diplomas, the so-called ENIC/NARIC Centre. Its task is to make easier the access to reliable and readable information on the system of higher education and qualifications in the Slovak Republic and in contracting Parties, provision of advices or information on matters of recognition and estimation of qualifications in agreement with the valid regulations. It is to recognize documents from other contracting Parties for academic purposes and issues decisions or standpoints that are of recommending character (in the light of the Act No. 131/2002 on Higher Education, as amended and of the Decree No. 238/2005 on procedure at recognition of diplomas).

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

Stage of implementation of ECTS

18. Describe the credit and accumulation system operating in your country.

Please include:

- the stage of implementation of ECTS in academic year 2006/2007
- the percentage of first and second cycle programmes using ECTS in academic year 2006/2007
- how any other credit or accumulation system in use relates to ECTS: is it compatible with ECTS; what is the ratio between national and ECTS credits.

In higher education institutions of the Slovak Republic the organization of all the three cycles and both forms of higher education are based on credit system. Since the academic year 2005/2006, its use is obligatory in all higher education institutions in the Slovak Republic. Credit system in the Slovak Republic has been established on the ECTS and is regulated by the Act on Higher Education and the Decree of the Slovak Republic. In academic year 2006/2007, around 67 % students at all the three cycles and both forms of higher education study will be offered the degree courses through credit system.

19. Has your country produced a national plan to improve the quality of the process associated with the recognition of foreign qualifications⁶? If so, give a brief description of the plan and attach a copy.

At present, the Slovak Republic does not produce a national plan to improve the quality of the recognition of foreign qualifications. On the part of national and international professional bodies and institutions, as well as on the part of foreign and Slovak public no comments were made on present state and recommendations for a change in this area in the Slovak Republic.

Lifelong Learning

(Scorecard)

Recognition of prior learning

20. Describe the measures in place to recognise prior learning, including non-formal and informal learning.

Please include:

- the stage of development of any procedures or national guidelines to recognise prior learning
- a description of any procedures or national guidelines for assessing prior learning as a basis for access to HE
- a description of any procedures or national guidelines for allocating credits as a basis of exemption from some programme requirements.

In the Slovak Republic, in addition to the main education activities, there is the so-called nonformal education ongoing, as a rule not completed by issue of official documents. Nonformal education is offered at workplaces and within the framework of activities carried out by civic associations, such as trade unions and political parties. It is also provided by means of organizations, which were established for complementing formal systems of education (e.g., fine art, music, sports circles, private lessons, preparation for exams). In the Slovak Republic there is no regulation at the moment to regulate the recognition of the nonformal education. The issue is, however, treated by the Act No. 386/1997 of Digest on continuing education and its Amendment No. 567/2001. The Amendment defines the further education as a part of lifelong education, characterizing its kinds, setting up its institutions for further education, conditions for accreditation, and the position and activity of the Accreditation Commission at the Ministry of Education of SR for further education, regulating the issue of certificates on education and defining the resources of its financing. For purposes of the Act No. 386/1997 as amended, the further education consists of the education which enables everybody to supplement, extend and deepen his/her education, to complete retraining or satisfy his/her interests or which serves as a preparation for obtaining a cycle in the education system. The further education is carried out in institutions of the further education by short-term or long-term educational activities in various forms.

Nonformal education is also regulated by the Act No. 279/1993 of Digest on school facilities, as amended, which regulates some kinds of nonformal education, such as education in language schools. Nonformal education is also regulated by other acts (small-

⁶ ENIC/NARIC has produced guidelines for National Action Plans for Recognition.

business act, act on employment, Labour Code), but their wording is not sufficient for the needs of implementation and quality assurance of further education. In nonformal education the educational activities are carried out by various education establishments, such as institutions (secondary schools, higher education institutions, school facilities of nonformal education), as well as education establishments at enterprises, directly managed by the institutions in sectors, private education institutions, etc. A criterion of quality evaluation is the accreditation of educational activity (it is not compulsory though, except for the retraining for employment offices, social affairs and family, education of employees and elected representatives for public administration, for which the funds are allotted from national budget).

Recognition of education received by informal learning has not been regulated by legislation in the Slovak Republic.

21. Describe legislative and other measures taken by your country to create opportunities for flexible learning paths in higher education.

Please include:

- any flexibility in entry requirements
- any flexible delivery methods
- any modular structures of programmes.

The basic condition for admission to higher education according to Act on Higher Education is obtaining preceding, lower cycle, than the one that the applicant for higher education has applied for. According to the above act the higher education institution have full competence to determine the further conditions for admission to higher education study, including the possibility of their updating or they may withdraw them.

Flexibility of educational activities is supported by a special regulation, in which the conditions of study of Slovak students in other higher education institutions, including foreign ones, are regulated. This special regulation contains a sample of application for exchange study, agreements on the study and a transcript of study results in which the accepting and sending higher education institution confirm the conditions for completing the period of study of the students from sending institution at the accepting institution. In this way it is secured that the study results of the student who studies a period of study in another higher education institution at home or abroad, are recognized at the mother higher education institution as a part of his/her study.

The Act on Higher Education of 2002 set up the structure of the study fields of the Slovak Republic in the area of higher education study. In this system of study fields each field of study has been assigned relative study fields. After completing their study the students of higher education institution may pursue their study in study programme of a higher cycle not only in the original field of study but also in the relative field of study.

Joint degrees

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

Establishment and recognition of joint degrees

22. Describe the legislative position on joint degrees in your country.

Please include:

- the stage of implementation of any legislation to establish joint programmes
- whether joint⁷ degrees are allowed and encouraged in legislation
- whether joint degrees are allowed and encouraged in all three cycles
- an indication of the percentage of HEIs that have established joint programmes and are awarding nationally recognised degrees jointly with HEIs of other countries
- any action being taken to encourage or allow joint programmes.

Legislation of the Slovak Republic allows issuing the diplomas upon completing the joint study programmes carried out by two or more higher education institutions, also in cooperation between the Slovak higher education institutions and foreign higher education institutions. The first and the only model so far is the development and implementation of Germanophone two-year Engineer's joint study programme – International Financial Management in cooperation with University of Economics in Bratislava and Martin Luther University in Halle - Wittenberg in Federal Republic of Germany. The students study equally the study programme at both universities, namely, the 7th and 8th semester in the Slovak Republic and 9th and 10th semester in the Federal Republic of Germany. The graduates are awarded diplomas by both universities.

At present, the amendment to the Act on Higher Education is being prepared which will enable the higher education institutions, based on provision of joint study programmes, to grant academic degrees and joint diplomas in the extent of recognized rights at all three cycles of higher education study.

C. Current issues in Higher Education

Higher education and research

23. Describe the relationship between higher education and research in your country - what percentage of research is carried out in HEIs; are any steps being taken to improve the synergy between HE and other research sectors.

The total number of R&D employees for 2004 is 22 217. Out of the number 78.1 % from the R&D employees constitute research workers (17 354), the rest are technicians and equivalent personnel (3 108) and auxiliary staff (1 755).

From total number of R&D employees the R&D employees of enterprising sector make up 20.9 %, the employees of State sector make up 18.2 % and employees of non-profit making sector make up 0.4 %. The highest number of R&D employees from total number of R&D employees is in higher education sector (13 442) – 60.5 %. From total number of research workers the research workers of higher education institution sector make up as much as (12 414) 71.5 %.

The higher education sector has the largest share of researchers from total number of

⁷ a joint degree is a single degree certificate awarded by two or more institutions, and where the single degree certificate is valid without being supplemented by any additional national degree certificate.

employees of higher education sector (92.4 %), to compare – the Slovak Academy of Sciences 69.6 %, State sector as a whole 66.9 %, non-profit making sector 60.9 %, but the share of researchers in total number of employees in enterprising sector is less than half – 47 %.

The share of employees of Slovak Academy of Sciences from total number of employees of the State sector makes up 79.5 % (the remaining part are the employees of the sectoral institutes); a share of SAS employees from total number of employees represents 14.5 %.

24. What percentage of doctoral candidates take up research careers; are any measures being taken to increase the number of doctoral candidates taking up research careers?

The largest number of researchers in the Slovak Republic is represented by those aged 25 to 34 years (29 %). In the category of research workers in this age the interyear growth is double as compared to middle-aged generation. These data document relatively favourable situation at employment of doctoral candidates in research and development.

In agreement with current legislation of the SR (Act on Higher Education) the award of the degree of PhD. is conditional on defence of scientific dissertation, which is a precondition of the further active research activity.

In all applied forms of special-purpose financing of science and technology in the SR there is a space created for support of participation of students and young doctoral candidates at the solution of research projects of all forms (the fundamental and applied research, projects of international cooperation). Grant financial schemes take into account the number of doctorands involved in the solution of the given project and their capacity of solving the project. The criteria of evaluation of achieved results (publications and others) take into account hitherto research activity of young scientific workers. The projects of science and technology with participation of doctorands are also stimulated at allocation of funds for infrastructure equipment.

The social dimension

25. Describe any measures being taken in your country to widen access to quality higher education.

The legislative initiative of the previous period, which was meant to introduce tuition fees with the system of loans to be claimed for its reimbursement based on income-contingent loans, was not successful and the study in public higher education institutions remained free in both full-time and part-time form of study. In spite of it, the system of direct social support to students has been changed. In the criteria for allocation of funds from national budget among individual higher education institutions the influence of research activity of higher education institution was considered. The realisation of research within the framework of higher education institution is considered as an indicator of quality of higher education institution with the aim to enhance its relevance.

From academic year 2005/2006, the system of motivation scholarships was introduced, as the scholarships covered by the national budget. Ten percent of students in full-time form of study, who fulfilled their study duties best of all, receive a financial motivation to study. The national budget funds are also provided for extra scholarships, to be granted by the higher education institution for an engagement in research projects or for representation of the higher education institution.

26. Describe any measures to help students complete their studies without obstacles related to their social or economic background.

From 1st April 2006, a new decree came into force on social scholarships for students of full-time form of study. The maximum amount of social scholarships was more than tripled compared to previous system. The present amount of social scholarships is sufficient for coverage of basic living costs of the students (accommodation, catering, transport, library fees, etc.).

In higher education institutions there are centres of career guidance established with study consultants for students, chosen from among the higher education institution staff. Their activity is not centrally coordinated or monitored. The training of career counsellors designed for higher education institutions has been recently organized within the framework of project Modular Distance Education of Career Counsellors for European Mobility (MODILE-EUROCARGO). The project of the National Institute for Vocational Education in Bratislava has been selected along with other projects by the European Commission from among all projects worked out during 2000 – 2006 in the European Union countries within the framework of Leonardo da Vinci programme as a model of good practice.

Mobility

27. Describe any measures being taken to remove obstacles to student

mobility and promote the full use of mobility programmes.

Please include:

- any measures to increase inward student mobility
- any measures to increase outward student mobility.

Academic mobility is organized through international mobility programmes as well as on the basis of direct cooperation between the Slovak higher education institutions and foreign higher education institutions.

In 2005, during the academic mobility organized by EC in the programme Erasmus were 1 164 students and 393 teachers abroad.

In the Slovak Republic, the academic mobility, except for that organized by EC is carried out through Slovak Academic Information Agency (SAIA, n. o.), which is a non-profit making organization. In 2006, the latter has provided the organization of the choice of scholarship holders for 31 countries and recommended 462 candidates for fellowships based on bilateral agreements on cooperation in the field of education; in addition, scholarships were also granted to another 82 candidates on the basis of offers from foreign governments. SAIA has established 5 regional workplaces designed for their activities and for improvement of informing the public it issues a monthly bulletin, which is also available on website www.saia.sk .

In 2006, the Government of the Slovak Republic created a new instrument for mobility support “National Scholarship Programme for Support of Mobility Students, Doctorands, University Teachers and Research Workers“. They charged SAIA, n. o. to manage the project. The first call for submission of applications for the scholarship was in May 2006. The Ministry of Education of the SR allocated for the scholarships in 2006 sixteen million crowns, for next years about 40 million crowns per year. For academic year 2006/ 2007, the scholarships granted to Slovak candidates represented about 25,7 million crowns, namely, to 77 students of Slovak higher education institutions for a period of Master’s study to 15 countries across the world and to 101 doctorands of Slovak higher education institutions and Slovak Academy of Sciences for a period of doctoral study to 22 countries in the world. Within the framework of the National Scholarship Programme in academic year 2006/2007 the scholarships were also granted to foreign students, doctorands, university teachers and research workers in total amount of 10,5 million crowns. The financial support was granted to 116 persons from 23 countries of the world.

Within the framework of regional cooperation the Slovak Republic is involved in the programme CEEPUS – Central European Exchange Programme for Universities Studies, which is designed for university students, doctorands and teachers for individual mobility programmes or mobilities through higher education institutions. In 2006, the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic allotted 4,4 million crowns to the programme CEEPUS. In academic year 2005/2006, there were 11 Slovak higher education institutions involved in the programme. Within the framework of the programme 328 persons (83 students, 117 doctorands and 128 university teachers received grants for their stays abroad in total amount of 593 scholarship months in ten CEEPUS countries. In Slovak higher education institutions 222 persons from partner foreign institutions completed study stays in total amount of 320 scholarship months.

Within the framework of regional cooperation the Slovak Republic has a joint program with Austria Action - Austria – Slovakia, cooperation in science and education is a program of bilateral cooperation between the SR and Austria since 1992; protocol has been signed up to 2007. Within the framework of the program the managerial gremium approves the funds for project cooperation, as well as scholarships for study and research stays and summer language courses. In 2006, the Ministry of Education has invested the sum of 3 million crowns in the project and the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture of Austrian Republic the sum of EUR 214 thousand. For academic year 2006/2007, the scholarships for study and research stays were approved for 40 persons of which there were 11 university teachers, 14 doctorands, and 15 students, and for 7 students for summer language courses of German language. In 2006, there were 19 projects supported financially for support of cooperation between nine Slovak higher education institutions and ten Austrian higher education institutions.

SAIA, n. o. is involved in promotion of European higher education (including Slovak higher education) within the framework of the project ASIA LINK, which is financially supported by the European Commission. Project is coordinated by Consorcium of European Agencies DAAD (Federal Republic of Germany), Nuffic (Netherlands), British Council (Great Britain) headed by EduFrance (France). On the part of the Slovak Republic it is SAIA, n. o., which in November 2006 represented the Slovak higher education institutions and National Scholarship Program in Bangkok and New Dillí.

Moreover, SAIA, n. o is involved in the project Building capacities of Central-Europe national agencies to promote higher education outside the EU. The coordinator of the project is Hungarian Scholarship Board with the seat in Budapest, the other partners of the project are Edu France (Paris), DAAD (Bonn) and National Socrates Programme Agency in Prague.

SAIA, n. o. also takes part in another project coordinated by ACA (Academic Cooperation Association with the seat in Brussels Foreign-Language-Taught Programmes in European Higher Education. In this project the database of all study programmes should be developed in foreign languages which are offered by higher education institutions in EU and EFTA countries.

28. Are portable loans and grants available in your country? If not, describe any measures being taken to increase the portability of grants and loans.

In 1996, in the Slovak Republic the Student Loan Fund was developed which provides loans to students of higher education institutions studying at all three cycles of higher education study in full-time form in the Slovak and foreign higher education institutions. The loans from the Student Loan Fund are available, besides Slovak students, also to students from countries of European Economic Area and Switzerland. For ten years of its activity the Fund granted the loans in the sum of around one billion crowns, at present it has approximately 26 thousand clients – undergraduates and graduates of higher education institutions.

The Student Loan Fund is a non-State fund in the management of which students of higher education institutions have a significant place. The loans are provided from the sum of ten thousand crowns up to 40 thousand crowns for academic year for an advantageous interest rate 3 % with 10 year period of repayment with a possibility of substantial prolongation of the length of payment in special cases. The Student Loan Fund has the possibility to waive from a part of loan, in special cases. Since

academic year 2004/2005 all students received a loan who requested for it, similarly in academic year 2006/2007.

Loans for students of higher education institutions are also provided by commercial banks. The conditions of commercial banks are much less advantageous, though, than the conditions of the Student Loan Fund.

29. Describe any measures being taken to remove obstacles to staff mobility and promote the full use of mobility programmes.

Please include:

- any measures to increase inward staff mobility
- any measures to increase outward staff mobility.

In the Slovak Republic no special measures are undertaken today to increase mobility of teaching staff and other outward staff. Mobility policy of employees of higher education institutions is in full competence of the higher education institutions and is funded through their budgets. Despite the above fact in 2006 the Government of the Slovak Republic developed “The National Scholarship Programme for Mobility Support of Students, Doctorands, University Teachers and Research Workers“, which is also designed for research workers of higher education institutions, namely, not only Slovak but also foreign ones.

The attractiveness of the EHEA and cooperation with other parts of the world

30. Describe any measures being taken in your country to promote the attractiveness of the EHEA.

In 2006, the Government of the Slovak Republic developed the programmes “National Scholarship Programme for Mobility Support of Students, Doctorands, University Teachers and Research Workers“. For academic year 2006/2007 the scholarships were granted not only to Slovak students of the second and third cycle of higher education study but also to foreign students, doctorands, university teachers and research workers from 23 countries of the world.

For promoting attractiveness of European higher education space in the Slovak Republic a new regulation was adopted and several activities of international significance were carried out. Based on the new legislation the Slovak Republic recognizes automatically (without reciprocity) the education of the third cycle (PhD.) of citizens from countries of European Economic Area and Switzerland, received at higher education institutions recognized by the State. The aim of the new regulation of 2005 is to increase the trust in European University Area at evaluation of results of higher education and at the same time to enable the increase and acceleration of mobility of young scientific workers in European area.

Among the other significant activities is organisation of international and national conferences and seminars. They took place in mutual cooperation of higher education institutions, Slovak Rectors' Conference, Ministry of Education of the SR and, particularly, Socrates/Erasmus Agency. In May 2005, an international conference entitled Implementation of the Bologna Process in Higher Education Institutions was held at the University of Constantinus Philosopher in Nitra, a professional seminar Doctoral Study in the Light of the Bologna Process held at University of Žilina in Žilina in February 2006, from which the proceedings were issued, and others. The national group of Bologna promoters is administered through the Agency of Socrates/Erasmus, which issued a publication in 2006 “Guide to Bologna Process: Slovak Higher Education Institutions and Bologna Process” for promoting the dissemination of knowledge on Bologna Process in academic community and public at large.

Future challenges

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

At present, the main challenge ahead for the Slovak Republic is the build-up of knowledge-based society, which is one of the main priorities of the SR Government. While fulfilling this priority an irreplaceable role is played by lifelong education the development of which will contribute to the improvement of knowledge potential of the society. After the great quantitative development of higher education in recent years one of the main challenges ahead is the demand to continue in improving quality of higher education, namely, not only by enhancement of its quality through economic measures but also by continuing the started trend of introducing international dimension in quality assurance and evaluation of provided higher education. The envisaged payment for part-time form of higher education study will contribute to transparency of its financing and will create new financial resources for higher education institutions. Among the main challenges for higher education institutions is also extension of cooperation with research

and development organizations and enterprising sector in the field of basic and applied research, construction of centres of excellence and technological incubators at the solution of joint research projects with outcomes for social practice with the appropriate social and economic effects.

Completed National Reports should be sent to the Bologna Secretariat by email no later than **Friday 15 December 2006**.

Please remember to attach a copy of your national action plan to improve the quality of the process associated with the recognition of foreign qualifications.

Bologna Secretariat
May 2006