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## IMPLEMENTING THE 'EDUCATION AND TRAINING 2010'

### WORK PROGRAMME

# 2005 Progress Report

## SLOVAK REPUBLIC

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**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION OF THE SLOVAK  
REPUBLIC**

**Report on Education Policy in Slovakia**

*National report on fulfilment of goals of European  
Commission work programme “Education and Training  
2010”*

**BRATISLAVA APRIL 2005**

# **1. INTRODUCTION: THE DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL POLICIES AND THE LISBON AGENDA**

## **1.1 Lisbon strategy as an explicit factor in the overall development of education and training policies and systems.**

In 2000, the first impulse coming from the European Council in Lisbon, which had a direct impact on policies in the area of education in the Slovak Republic, was related to the lifelong learning. Through the consulting process concerning the Lifelong Learning Memorandum<sup>1</sup>, the first important linkage among the key players came to exist in effort to formulate the starting position of education and training systems transformation for needs of the knowledge-based economy. Both the SWOT analysis and recommendations from the report on the consulting process were later on reflected in drafts of new policies.<sup>2</sup> Following this process, the national conference<sup>3</sup> on vocational training focused in detail on the issues of initial vocational education and training transformation, at which the ministry of education simultaneously presented the principles of the initial vocational education and training transformation as the starting point for drafting a new act on education and training.

The Slovak Republic strove for preparation of a coherent development strategy through the National plan of regional development, however, the full reflection of the Lisbon strategy first showed in the National development plan. The following operation plan, based on intentions from complements to Sector operational programme Human Resources and Single programming document NUTS II Bratislava Objective 3 provided a variety of tools for the support of implementation of particular measures. The European social fund became an important impulse for transformation of vocational education and training systems from the bottom up.

Competitiveness Strategy of Slovakia until 2010 (hereinafter referred to only as the „National Lisbon Strategy“)<sup>4</sup> is the most important complex document, through which the government declares its effort to increase competitiveness of the Slovak economy as well as the potential of human resources for the needs of the knowledge-based economy. The document includes four priority issues: education and employment; science, research and innovation; information society; entrepreneurial environment. The preconditions for effective fulfilment of the strategy are the appropriate financing from both the public as well as private sources. Therefore the strategy declares the intention to increase the share of public financing to the priority areas during preparation of budgets for public administration and at the same time to decrease spending in other areas.

Completion of the primary and secondary education system reform with emphasis on the education content reform - transformation of the traditional school to a modern one - is considered one of the basic preconditions for securing a long-term competitiveness of Slovakia. The transformation of the system calculates with prolongation of the average length of education as well as with an important increase in the share of students, finishing secondary education with the school leaving examination. Further on, the need

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.education.gov.sk/DVZ/ODV/DOCODV/2000\\_narodna\\_sprava\\_CZV.pdf](http://www.education.gov.sk/DVZ/ODV/DOCODV/2000_narodna_sprava_CZV.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.education.gov.sk/MIN/KaP/koncepcia\\_celozivotneho\\_vzdelavania\\_SR.doc](http://www.education.gov.sk/MIN/KaP/koncepcia_celozivotneho_vzdelavania_SR.doc)

<sup>3</sup> National conference on vocational education, Bratislava October 11 - 12, 2001, see [http://www.education.gov.sk/RS/OVSS/MZCH/zavery\\_konferencia\\_OV.pdf](http://www.education.gov.sk/RS/OVSS/MZCH/zavery_konferencia_OV.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.finance.gov.sk/mfsr/mfsr.nsf/0/e2d320d88d34b4b0c1256faf0037527d/\\$FILE/Strateg\\_Konkurencieschopnosti.pdf](http://www.finance.gov.sk/mfsr/mfsr.nsf/0/e2d320d88d34b4b0c1256faf0037527d/$FILE/Strateg_Konkurencieschopnosti.pdf)

of introduction of quality of education assessment systems is explicitly emphasised in the strategy together with the need of improved equipment of schools at all levels of education, especially in the area of information and communication technologies, improvement in the area of foreign languages education, basic entrepreneurial knowledge and skills of all secondary school leavers as well as making the teacher's profession more attractive.

The Slovak Republic (hereinafter referred to also as "SR") is significantly beyond average in two of five benchmarks of the EU; the number of early school leavers is traditionally low and for a long time under 10% and over 90% of 22-year old with completed upper secondary education puts Slovakia high above the average of both the EU and the EU benchmark (85%). Special measures will be necessary to increase the number of graduates in mathematics, science where, similarly to technology, there is a threat of permanent decrease and change of interest for the benefit of social sciences, the study of which was strongly limited in the past. From the school year 2004/2005, the ministry of education introduced a compulsory school leaving exam from mathematics or a natural science subject in the effort to prevent the pupils of secondary schools from focusing on the social science subjects prematurely. Similarly, it will be necessary to look for tools for making the study of mathematics, science and technology more attractive for women as the high participation of women in these studies was indirectly forced in the past through limiting their access to social science studies.

Already in the 80s the research results available revealed the critical and traditional problem of the Slovak education - the insufficient ability of students to apply knowledge, obtained at school, for solution of particular problems. The TIMSS and PISA results are confirming this fact and SR is facing the need to significantly reform the content of education primarily that of the mother tongue as well as to support education towards critical thinking and problems solution. Taking into account the long-term effect of such measures, the crossing of the respective EU benchmark is at present very unlikely even in case of successful implementation of relevant changes of curricula.

Even though SR is at present behind the 12,5% benchmark in lifelong learning of adults aged between 25 to 64, the implementation of the planned fiscal stimulation of lifelong learning together with effective utilisation of sources of the European Social Fund makes the achievement of this benchmark feasible.

The Copenhagen Declaration on Vocational Education and Training from 2002 stimulated the preparation of Europass<sup>5</sup> tools, currently already prepared. Development of guidance is officially acknowledged as a necessary precondition for territorial and professional mobility. Based on the study of the OECD countries experience, the recommendations were prepared for the decision makers following the ETF<sup>6</sup> conference in the English language on strategies in guidance („Career Guidance Policies in Accessing and Candidate Countries.“), which took place in Bratislava on December 5 to 6, 2003<sup>7</sup>. However, the initial preparation of the counsellors is not resolved yet from the

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<sup>5</sup> European Parliament and Council decision on the unified framework for transparency of qualifications and competencies (Europass) from December 14, 2004

<sup>6</sup> ETF – European Training Foundation

<sup>7</sup><http://www.etf.eu.int/WebSite.nsf?OpenDatabase&Content=http://www.etf.eu.int>

legislation point of view, even though its content is prepared through Leonardo da Vinci project, the co-ordinator of which is ŠIOV<sup>8</sup>.

Preparations of recognition and validation of both non-formal and informal education are partially slowed down due to resistance of representatives of formal education who foresee the risk of weakening of position of schools in this agenda but predominantly due to insufficient discussion on advantages it provides for citizens as well as for the employers. Despite some positive experience especially from the private sector, the development of necessary methodologies is only at the beginning. However, through the national project the ministry of education tries to create and introduce a system framework for horizontal permeability in the framework of the system of lifelong learning, which should result in drafts of respective legislation. Similarly, non-existence of the national system of quality assurance remains to be the critical soft spot of the vocational education and training system.

As time goes, co-operation with the social partners gradually improves and the social partners can also have their representation in 17 expert groups, established at ŠIOV for solution of issues, relating to curricula and qualification. The participation of the representatives of employers in the school leaving examinations and final exams is newly regulated by the decree on finishing of studies at secondary schools.

Act No. 131/2002 on higher education institutions (hereinafter referred to also as the "act on higher education institutions") from 2002 introduced principles in the higher education study, which were defined by Bologna Declaration: 3 cycles of higher education study whereby the student can achieve higher education already after attending 6 semesters, standing for 180 credits in the framework of credit transfer system ECTS. It is the obligation of each higher education institution in Slovakia since the academic year 2005 to provide each graduate with a diploma supplement. The institutional quality assurance through effective quality assurance system is the biggest challenge for the Slovak higher education system. At present, alternative concepts of an independent external evaluation are under preparation. They are being prepared by the Slovak Rectors Conference together with independent rating agencies.

There is also a Working group for the Lisbon Strategy working at an inter-ministerial level. Its organisation is facilitated and co-ordinated by the Government's Office of the Slovak Republic, which, together with the Ministry of Finance is the main guarantor of application of the Lisbon agenda goals in Slovakia. There is a Council of the Minister of Education for Vocational Education and Training, created at the level of the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic, which is tripartite and inter-ministerial whereby the Slovak regions are also represented.

The TIMSS study from 1996 showed excellent results in mathematics and fairly good results of primary schools pupils at natural sciences. However, at the same time the well known disproportion became obvious, the high level of knowing the subject went hand in hand with low ability to utilise the learned knowledge and obtained skills. The statistically significant difference between the achievements of Slovak and Czech pupils also became an alert, which, due to the short time since the split of the common state with originally identical curricula provided a strong impulse for investigation of the cause. However, SR satisfied itself with the outcome showing excellent results and was even absent in PISA 2000 assessments. The results of PISA 2003 came therefore as a

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<sup>8</sup> ŠIOV – State Institute of Vocational Education

surprise for Slovakia. One has to believe that the opportunities for correction of the situation will be carefully utilised among others also using the European Social Fund resources in the national projects, approved in 2004. The failure in PISA 2003 assessments was reflected for example in formulation of the UNDP millennium goals<sup>9</sup> and it will undoubtedly have an impact on the creating policy of the curricular reform of both primary and secondary schools.

## **1.2 Obstacles to implementation of goals of the Lisbon strategy in the area of education and vocational training in Slovakia**

The document Education and Training 2010 was widely promoted among common people as well as experts. Series of specialised seminars was organised in order to find answers to the raised questions. However, it is necessary to admit that during the effort to conclude the reform of higher education institutions as well as in the process of reform of the system of financing of regional education the issues of vocational education and training were not paid much attention to. The Copenhagen priorities, primarily the quality management and recognition and validation of both non-formal and informal education are insufficiently reflected in the national policy of vocational education and training. It will be necessary to revive the discussion as well as preparation of policies following the Copenhagen-Maastricht process in Autumn 2005 at the latest. Following the necessary effort to achieve macroeconomic stability we failed to increase the pressure on reduction of public spending in other sectors, funds from which could be transferred to financing of education. This fact is one of the factors, reducing discussion on the problems of vocational education and training to the discussion on the existing lack of financing of education whereby many important aspects are being neglected due to the dominance of this problem.

In the framework of the work programme „Education and Training 2010” the Slovak Republic carried out the project called "Continuing of the work programme Education and Training 2010 in the Slovak Republic", co-financed by the European Commission. Practically, the realisation of the project consisted of organisation of a series of seminars, focused on issues related to assessment of the situation and formulation of needs for progress in education in SR from the point of view of the conclusions, adopted by European Council in Lisbon. The aim of the seminars was to create a common platform for the stakeholders active in the area of education in fulfilling tasks of the Lisbon strategy in conditions of the Slovak Republic. Four seminars with following topics, covering the portfolio of working groups of the European Commission, established in the framework of the Lisbon strategy in the area of education, were organised for this purpose

The conclusions of seminars are included in the abstracts book in both the Slovak and English version and the abstracts book is available for the decision makers and the experts. These conclusions were also utilised for preparation of the tasks of the ministry of education during preparation of the Action plan for the area of Education and

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<sup>9</sup> Vagač (ed.) Miléniové rozvojové ciele: Cesta k znižovaniu chudoby a sociálneho vylúčenia: Slovenská republika. (Millennium development goals: Way to poverty and social exclusion decline: Slovak Republic.) See [http://mdgr.undp.sk/DOCUMENTS/MDG\\_SLovak\\_SK.pdf](http://mdgr.undp.sk/DOCUMENTS/MDG_SLovak_SK.pdf); [http://mdgr.undp.sk/DOCUMENTS/MDG\\_SLovak\\_GB.pdf](http://mdgr.undp.sk/DOCUMENTS/MDG_SLovak_GB.pdf)

Employment. At present, we are witnessing the initial part of realisation of the project called "Education and Training 2010 - Effectiveness of training of teachers in the Slovak Republic".

The Slovak Rectors' Conference, Association of Employers' Unions and Association, Republic Union of Employers and profession chambers organised a series of conferences with significant participation of both small and medium entrepreneurs. During academic discussion, the needs of the market were defined in combination with outputs of the system of lifelong learning. The need of further co-operation of stakeholders in harmonisation of education standards and qualification standards were clear and obvious in the conclusions of these meetings of academic and entrepreneurial sphere.

## **2. INVESTING MORE AND MORE EFFICIENTLY: FOCUSING REFORM ON THE KEY AREAS**

### **2.1. Identification of national priorities for reform and investment**

#### *2.1.1.*

Since 2005, the curricular reform of the regional education system has the top priority in the Slovak formal education system<sup>10</sup>. The system of this reform is defined in the draft of act on education and training, which shall be publicly discussed in the second half of 2005. Providing all schools with internet access until 2004 and gradual re-training of teachers provides the basic platform for larger scale application of Information and communication technologies into education as well as harmonisation of the curricula reform with benefits of new technologies. The experts of vocational education and training, lacking behind in reflecting the Copenhagen priorities is the specific problem of SR together with being behind in adjusting the system of vocational education and training to the challenges of the Copenhagen-Maastricht process.

Between 2000 and 2005 the priority reforms in the area of education were the reforms of management and financing of higher education and regional education. These reforms were concluded by passing of three important acts. Act on higher education institutions from 2002 created conditions for transformation of higher education institutions as well as for introduction of multiple sources financing. At the same time, the act on higher education describes a system of complex accrediting of activities of higher education institutions as a basic precondition of diversification of higher education institutions and their breakdown into research universities, universities and non-university higher education institutions. The multiple sources financing of higher education institutions is fostered by the draft of act on student loans, which at the same time creates space for financial contribution of the student and his/her financial participation in the higher education study.

After 2000 the public administration reform lead to decentralisation of regional education system and it brought the division of the so-called original and transferred competencies (the first case mainly concerns primary schools, the second mainly secondary schools). The decentralisation was completed by fiscal decentralisation since 2005. The two acts from 2003 reformed the state administration and self-government in the education system

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<sup>10</sup> kindergartens, primary schools and secondary schools

and introduced the financing system per capita. Together with the transfer of competencies to regions this significantly contributed to rationalisation of the network of schools. Introduction of the system of external school leaving exam for secondary schools, taking place for the first time in the school year 2004/2005, linked with monitoring of education output and introduction of monitoring to the highest classes of primary schools is another important step in the reform.

Investing in human resources also has a top priority. This fact is reflected in the draft of act on education and training, which regulates career development and further education of teachers. Introduction of normative financing was another tool, through which great changes were achieved in the area of financing of regional education system.

### 2.1.2.

All levels of formal education and the institutionalised representations of non-formal education consider the increased and more effective financing to be the key factor for implementation of reforms. In the process of transformation of the economy and deep structural reforms, which the Slovak Republic had to go through since 1998 in relation with the accession to the EU and the need to stabilise the public finances, the financially demanding investment to the education system slowed down. This situation last until 2004 when the macroeconomic figures improved as much that the government of SR considered the investment to human resources and knowledge-based economy in the way it declared this in the National Lisbon Strategy in February 2005 to be its priority and started to pay attention to it. The conditions for increase of finances for development of the education system from public sources were not created in the previous period, however, at the same time the possibilities to stimulate the private sector to support vocational education and training were not used either.

### 2.1.3.

The funds from the European Social Fund became a substantial factor, contributing to realisation of these reforms since the beginning of its implementation in January 2004 through the program documents called Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources and Single ProgrammngDocument NUTS II Bratislava Objective 3. This is exactly why the Slovak Republic makes use of the institute of the so-called national projects, assisting the implementation of reforms primarily in the area of curricular transformation, quality assessment of both inputs and outputs of secondary education, strengthening of teaching of foreign languages and lifelong learning. Schools, education institutions, self-government as well as other involved actors realise the goals of reforms through smaller, the so-called demand reflected projects.

## **2.2. Extent of correlation between Members states priority areas, and the common European objectives**

Clear overlapping with the goals, agreed on the European level, can be identified in all key areas of reform of the education system in Slovakia. Taking into account the accession process, it was necessary to respond to initiatives on the community level to draw the Slovak Republic closer to the trends of the European Union and to link some of the key aspects of the national education system with the European education area. The current priorities of the education policy, defined in the National Lisbon Strategy and further on developed in the Action plan for Education and Employment are also reflecting the non-defined priority areas in the way they are described by the document

"Working together for growth and jobs. A new start for Lisbon strategy" approved by the Spring European Council in 2005.

### 2.2.1

The 2004 progress report on Objective 1.5 "Making best use of resources"<sup>11</sup> identified three key areas for action to increase and improve investment in education and training systems: 1) Institutional reforms; 2) Development of incentives; 3) Private investment. Concerning the institutional reforms, the decentralisation of the state administration of the education system took place together with decentralisation of the system of founding primary and secondary schools. This process was followed by the reform of financing of primary and secondary education system, introducing the system of financing per capita.

The draft act on education and training creates conditions and environment for diversification of curricula through the two-level creation of education programs. The framework education programs, settled by the Ministry of Education, shall be completed into school education programs in the way, which will strengthen the autonomy of schools in this area. The new content and methods of education have the ambition to prepare the school leavers from both primary and secondary schools more effectively for further education and environment of the changing labour market. The access of pupils from socially disadvantaged environment to primary and secondary education is being made easier through such instruments as social scholarship, zero classes<sup>12</sup>, and teacher assistants<sup>13</sup>.

The act on higher education institutions provided autonomy to higher education institutions, which must manage their assigned resources more effectively in order to provide good quality higher education. Stronger co-operation of higher education institutions with the private sector is therefore anticipated in the area of contract research as well as more active providing of demand-driven further education. It is necessary to improve the institutional quality assurance in this area. Upon complex accrediting of activities of higher education institutions in Slovakia research universities would be identified, which have the potential of creating the excellence centres. This shall be taken into account during assignment of finances for higher education institutions from the state budget. The multiple sources financing system of higher education institutions is extended by the draft of act on student loans<sup>14</sup>, which at the same time creates space for financial contribution of the student and his/her participation in the higher education study. The process of establishment of private higher education institutions, which are no longer established by law, got simpler and the state approval is considered sufficient.

### 2.2.2

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<sup>11</sup> [http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/2010/et\\_2010\\_en.html](http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/2010/et_2010_en.html)

<sup>12</sup> The zero classes at primary schools are a form of alternative education of children from socially and educationally non-stimulating environment for children with insufficient or no command of the language of instruction and children less adaptable to school, in the framework of which the pupils should master the knowledge of the first class of a primary school and obtain skills for successful promotion to higher levels.

<sup>13</sup> The teacher assistant participates in the teaching process in creation of conditions, necessary for overcoming of especially language, healthcare, and social barriers of a child in the process of education and training in the classes of primary schools, special primary schools or pre-school facilities.

<sup>14</sup> at present in the legislative process

The above mentioned reform of financing of primary and secondary schools provided the motives for the regional self-government to make the school network more effective with emphasis on better utilisation of resources. Introduction of the flat income tax created environment for foreign investors coming into the country (for example into the automotive industry). Their activities resulted in increased demand for VET certified apprentices whereby these investors participate in financing of institutions of vocational education and training. At present we are expecting the assessment of the impact of introduction of the flat tax, which is another reason for no direct stimulation through tax relief being applied. The institute of allocation of a part of tax of both natural and legal entities in the amount of 2%, which these entities can provide (apart from others through non-profit organisations) to an education institution to their own preference is the only one being used.

The European Social Fund is an important source for providing targeted vocational education and training for unemployed and employed people. The possibility of participation in Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci projects, which indirectly co-finance the reform efforts of schools as well as both non-formal and informal education of pedagogues is also a strong motivation instrument.

### **2.3. Monitoring and evaluation of educational policies**

The first evaluation of education strategies of the Slovak Republic from the point of view of the Lisbon process took part during the consulting process related to the Memorandum on Lifelong Learning and the analyses from this period were very helpful for the preparation of preliminary documents and for formulation of lifelong learning strategy as well as for ex-ante evaluations of programs, co-financed by the European Social Fund. Detailed analyses of education strategies were elaborated with the support of ETF each year from 2000 to 2003.<sup>15</sup> An international team of experts analysed the status of vocational education and training in relation to the employment services in 2002.<sup>16</sup> Further analyses were elaborated upon then initiative of UNDP.<sup>17</sup>

The impact of education strategies in the initial vocational education are evaluated in the annual "Report on Situation and Standard of Upbringing and Education in Schools and Educational Establishments in the Slovak Republic"<sup>18</sup>, each year elaborated by the State School Inspection and in the "Report on Situation in Higher Education Institutions for

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<sup>15</sup> Vantuch, J. et al.: Modernisation of Vocational Education and Training in Slovakia. Bratislava, SIOV/ETF 2001, 135 p., ISBN 80-969021-0-5

Vantuch, J. : Current Status of Vocational Education and Training in Slovakia. Bratislava, SIOV/ETF 2002, 136 p., ISBN 80-969021-2-1

Vantuch, J. et al.: Recent Development in Education and Training and Employment Policy in Slovakia. Bratislava, SIOV/ETF 2003, 53 p., ISBN 80-969021-3-X

<sup>16</sup> Fragoulis, H. et al.: Vocational education and training and employment services in the Slovak Republic. Luxembourg, European communities 2002, 82 p. ISBN 92-9157-290-X

<sup>17</sup> Vagač (ed.) Millennium development goals: Way to poverty and social exclusion decline: Slovak Republic. See [http://mdgr.undp.sk/DOCUMENTS/MDG\\_Slovak\\_SK.pdf](http://mdgr.undp.sk/DOCUMENTS/MDG_Slovak_SK.pdf); [http://mdgr.undp.sk/DOCUMENTS/MDG\\_Slovak\\_GB.pdf](http://mdgr.undp.sk/DOCUMENTS/MDG_Slovak_GB.pdf)

<sup>18</sup>For example: Report on Situation and Standard of Upbringing and Education in Schools and Educational Establishments in the Slovak Republic in the school year 2002/2003 [Správa o stave a úrovni výchovy a vzdelávania v školách a školských zariadeniach v Slovenskej republike v školskom roku 2002/2003]. Bratislava, UIPŠ 2003.

the Respective School Year", submitted by the Ministry of Education. Taking into account the fact that the program documents of the European Social Fund provide detailed explanation of the intention of education strategies of the Slovak Republic in its measures, the ongoing monitoring of realisation of projects of the European Social Fund plays an especially important role primarily for assessment of development in continuous vocational education and training and education for the labour market.

Independent analyses, through which the education strategies are being monitored, are elaborated by non-government organisations, such as the Institute for Public Affairs,<sup>19</sup> Slovak Governance Institute (Inštitút pre dobre spravovanú spoločnosť)<sup>20</sup> and others.

### **3. PUTTING IN PLACE TRULY COHERENT AND COMPREHENSIVE LIFELONG LEARNING STRATEGIES**

#### **3.1. Basic policy/measures**

##### *3.1.1*

Lifelong learning is defined to be one of the priorities of development of the society in the Program declaration of the Government of the Slovak Republic. The measures, supporting lifelong learning are an integral part of several concept documents and action plans, which were prepared and adopted in accordance with the European trends. However, a complex national strategy of lifelong learning is still absent. In 2004, the Government of the Slovak Republic adopted the Concept of lifelong learning, which, however neither provides sufficient support for coherence of policies nor does it solve the system of financing of lifelong learning.

##### *3.1.2*

The process of preparation of the strategy of lifelong learning shall be based upon intention submitted to the European Commission in strategic documents in recent years and the goals of the strategy will be harmonised with the adopted or prepared documents. The draft of such strategy shall be based upon the document, approved by the government called National Lisbon Strategy, which defines the main priorities of implementation of a modern education policy (it solves all levels and forms of the education system) and it will also follow the Action plan for Education and Employment.<sup>21</sup>

This strategy will also be based upon the following documents, already adopted by the Government of the Slovak Republic: Concept of Further Development of Higher Education System in Slovakia for the 21st Century,<sup>22</sup> Concept of Lifelong Learning<sup>23</sup>, Action plan for the area of Education and Employment.

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<sup>19</sup> For example: Kollár, M., Mesežnikov, G., ed. (2002): Slovensko 2002. Súhrnná správa o stave spoločnosti II. Bratislava (Slovakia 2002. A Global Report on the State of Society), IVO 2002.

<sup>20</sup> For example: Beblavý, M., Kubánová, M.: Národná správa o vzdelávacej politike (National Report on the Education Policy). Bratislava, INEKO 2001.

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.iminerva.sk/dokumenty/ap/avzdelavanie.doc>

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.tpl.ukf.sk/rvs/koncepcia/koncvs.htm>

### 3.1.3

Involvement of key actors and development of partnerships at national, regional and local level in the area of lifelong learning in Slovakia has the following structure:

- Council of the Minister for lifelong learning, Council of the Minister for vocational education and Council of the Minister for INFOVEK were created at the Ministry of Education as co-ordination and counselling bodies of the minister of education, the members of the council are the representatives of ministries, social partners and occupational institutions;
- the Ministry of Education fosters the development of partnership with the sector of higher education institutions in that it creates conditions for functioning of the following bodies of representation of higher education institutions: Slovak Rectors' Conference, Council of Higher Education Institutions and Student Council of Higher Education Institutions;
- the Slovak Council of Parents' Associations and the Association of directors are involved in the important documents consulting mechanism;
- through regional school authorities and social partners the Ministry of Education initiates creation of regional and local councils for lifelong learning, the purpose of which is to plan and co-ordinate lifelong learning in accordance with the regional needs;
- regional offices for lifelong learning are being established; they are assisting in the process of creation of regional and local networks of informal partnerships whereby they will also support initiatives of the regional councils for lifelong learning;
- the idea of learning regions, which are supporting the networks of stakeholders at a local level is being actively fostered.

The draft act on education and training creates preconditions for transition from memorising to development of key competences at primary and secondary schools. It is necessary in the first place to focus on development of the ability "learning to learn" instead of traditional transmission type education, based on encyclopaedic knowledge. Reform of the school leaving and final exam took place after being tested since 2001. Apart from equal opportunities it introduced compulsory school leaving examination from a foreign language. It makes the transition from secondary to tertiary education easier. The National Lisbon Strategy supports education in the area of basic entrepreneurial knowledge and skills for each secondary school leaver. At the level of higher education institutions the attention is paid to the strengthening of key competences of all higher education institution graduates (e.g. communication, analytical or teamwork skills) as well as their development supported by previous study (languages, digital literacy or entrepreneurship). These activities are also executed through the

reform of the system of study specialisation and introduction of new study programs at the higher education institutions.

At present there is counselling available in formal education (one-level). It is provided at all levels of schools and it is being gradually improved, apart from others through further education of the so-called training and career advisors at schools. The Action plan for Education and Employment shall also support the tailored services and projects of providing lifelong guidance through the learning regions. At the same time, preconditions shall be established for building of an information system of lifelong learning, containing detailed up-to-date information on the network of institutions, programs, local and regional conditions, and access to counselling. The strategy of lifelong guidance should be an integral part of the strategy of lifelong learning.

The system of lifelong learning in Slovakia enables 60% of secondary education school leavers (secondary vocational schools 35%, 25% secondary vocational training centres) to finish their education with a school leaving examination, which provides them with an opportunity to continue their study at a higher education institution whereby at the same time they have their training certificate available. Another 10% of certified apprentices continue with their education after receiving their training certificate with a two-year study finished with a school leaving examination.

In relation to introduction of the ECTS the higher education institution students were provided with an opportunity to create such study plans, which mostly fit his/her abilities, needs and preferences. The volume of subjects the students opted for this way is up to 40%.

Further education of teachers is currently also undergoing changes in order to reflect the needs of the knowledge-based society. Simultaneously, conditions are being created for introduction of career growth of a teacher, which is closely linked with further education of teachers. The Action plan for Education and Employment introduces the institute of teachers' club, creating the platform for identification of needs of further education of teachers at a local level as well as its realisation and support of co-operation with higher education institutions.

The Slovak Republic intensively strives for utilisation of information and communication technologies (hereinafter referred to only as "ICT") at schools in such a way, which would strengthen utilisation of ICT in the education process and at the same time to provide for ICT serving also the public, which is in accord with the principle of an open school. At present, at the primary and secondary schools there is one computer for 20 pupils; SR shall try to constantly decrease this number. Through the INFOVEK program the schools were not only equipped with computers and internet access, they were also provided software education packages, which are utilised in the education process. Part of these processes is also large-scope training of teachers of primary and secondary schools in order to provide them with the ability to make use of ICT in the education process. The so-called "ICT classrooms" are being created, utilising the ICT environment in the education process interactively. The process of creation of a higher education information network was concluded. It is now providing high speed connection together with entry to the world information and library databases - SANET II. Utilisation of e-learning in the framework of projects at the higher education institutions is also supported.

The programs for integration of children from marginalised groups into standard school environment are being supported through utilisation of such instruments as the zero class and the teacher assistants. The Government of the Slovak Republic adopted the Concept of integrated education of Roma children and youth, including the development of secondary and higher education<sup>24</sup> (school with the Romani language of instruction and Romani studies). A system of social scholarships for pupils of primary and secondary schools as well as higher education graduates was introduced. Preconditions are being created for individual integration of physically disabled as well as socially disadvantaged into the main stream of education and the system of special pedagogic and psychology counselling for children and youth is also developing. The children of migrants are being provided the Slovak language courses.

The Slovak Republic is supporting all activities, which in both the formal as well as non-formal education motivate the children, pupils, students and adults to develop the habit of learning and which are focusing on increasing interest of public in lifelong learning. There are centres of lifelong learning, operating at higher education institutions, providing tailored module education programs for older employees (foreign languages, ICT, social and psychological training, etc.). At the same time there are universities of the third age existing, confronted with great interest of elderly citizens.

The work on preparation of a concept of new teaching of foreign languages and general education subjects at primary and secondary schools began. For the new concept of the school leaving exam the target requirements were elaborated for all school leaving examination subjects. The content and education standards are being created for both general and vocational education. The system of study specialisation at secondary schools underwent an innovation process together with the study programs at higher education institutions and new study programs were introduced at higher education institutions. The distance education is also being supported.

The projects of learning regions should foster creation of networks of all stakeholders. These networks should contribute to permanent matching of needs of both the individuals as well as all local and regional players in the area of lifelong guidance and lifelong learning.

#### 3.1.4

Valuable impulses emerged for the education policy in Slovakia from the work of the working groups A to H, established with the aim to support achieving Barcelona goals. Foreign experience was made use of in the newly prepared draft act on education and training for career pathways of teachers and trainers. The international experience together with standardised tests used for school leaving exams, complying with the European reference framework of languages, elaborated by the Council of Europe, were used for preparation of the external school leaving examination. Being aware of lagging behind in the development of ICT, which our country was notified about on one hand by the final report eEurope+ and other independent initiatives on the other, led to acceleration of activities in this area. Equipment of schools with ICT labs and internet access was finished during 2004 and the speed of retraining of teachers of primary and secondary schools in the area of ICT also accelerated. However, the initial preparation of teachers remains to be the soft spot in this respect whereby the ICT potential and preparation of utilisation of e-learning is underestimated. The strategic document of the

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<sup>24</sup> [http://www.education.gov.sk/RS/OVaVRK/DOC/KVaVRK/koncepcia\\_vzdelavania\\_romskych\\_deti.pdf](http://www.education.gov.sk/RS/OVaVRK/DOC/KVaVRK/koncepcia_vzdelavania_romskych_deti.pdf)

Government focused on development of the information society, which is fully compatible with the Lisbon strategy,<sup>25</sup> could undoubtedly become an important impetus for development of e-governance and hence, awareness of importance of ICT for the society and the related need of changes in the education process.

SR achieved fairly good results in the preparation of pupils in mathematics and natural sciences in the past (for example TIMSS 1996) and the shares of the study of these specialisation and technical specialisation at higher education institutions were also fairly high. However, it shows that it will be necessary to intervene in this area. On one hand, due to the indicators getting worse but also in relation with the needs of knowledge-based economy as these were reflected in the Lisbon goals. In the National Lisbon Strategy and later on in the Action plan for Education and Employment the emphasis is therefore put on support of work with talented and gifted pupils and education towards science is also being supported. The concept of new school leaving examination introduced the obligation to take an exam from mathematics or from a natural science subject.

One of the main reform activities of the Ministry of Education took place in the area of financing of primary and secondary schools where the main stimulus for reform was to make the spending of finances from public sources more effective through financing per capita. However, the best practice examples of utilisation of fiscal stimuli for the support of lifelong learning has not been utilised yet. The action supporting opening of the education environment and education towards active citizenship are perceived especially sensitively and the goal of the new act on training and education is to support changes in the education system also in this sense. Support of the sense of voluntary work, which is one of the pillars of development of active citizenship, is neither included in standard education in families nor that of the schools. It is growing more from the religious, scout and charity associations environment, established in our country first after 1989. It shows that the lack of orientation in a particular issue in the sense of identification of appropriate instruments of changes, together with non-existence of appropriate indicators, will require investments in research.

#### **4. REFORMING HIGHER EDUCATION**

The reform intentions in higher education after 2000 were included in the Concept of further development of higher education in Slovakia for the 21st century, adopted by the Slovak Government in August 2000. In its structure, the concept identified in detail and named both the strengths and weaknesses of higher education system in Slovakia, which were shortly complemented by visions for higher education for the 21st century.

The concept selected twelve key areas of higher education institutions in Slovakia, which did or shall in the forthcoming period undergo principal changes and which became the content of the legislative solution in the act on higher education institutions.

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<sup>25</sup> Strategy on information society in conditions of SR and Action plan for the area of information society

## **4.1. Main policies / measures**

### *4.1.1*

The following main ideas of the Bologna Declaration were implemented in the system of higher education in Slovakia

- simple, transparent and mutually comparable system of degrees;
- two cycles (pre-gradual and gradual) with three degrees of higher education (bachelor, master and PhD.);
- education achieved by graduation from the first grade (lasting at least 3 years) is considered fully valuable higher education;
- the credit system of study, based on the ECTS principles and automatic issue of the diploma supplement (in the Slovak language and a world language) for university graduates from 2005 on;
- European dimension of education content, mobility of students, teachers and other employees.

### *4.1.2*

It is necessary to provide study programs in a foreign language in the Slovak Republic (probably it will be in English) in order to improve competitiveness and attractiveness of the European higher education world-wide. Increased mobility of higher education pedagogues as well as students in the framework of the EU shall make the language diversity in the European higher education space easier whereby this will extend the opportunities for students from outside Europe to study in a world language.

### *4.1.3*

In order to support higher education and innovation, the act introduced two categories of higher education institutions: university higher education institutions, providing study programs for all three degrees and vocational higher education institutions, providing primarily study programs for the first grade. The university higher education institutions can, in the framework of the process of complex accreditation of activities of higher education institutions, aspire to be ranked in the category of research university, which are the institutions cumulating both human and financial capital hence create space for establishment centres of excellency.

There was a strategic plan elaborated of the ministry of education for the area of information technologies, which was also prepared by each higher education institution. Conditions are being created for improvement of personnel equipment of the area of information technologies at the higher education institutions. The main goal is a substantial speeding up and improvement of quality of SANET, the academic computer network, access of students to computers with the internet connection available, creation of a mutually linked system of libraries of the higher education institutions and creation of conditions for utilisation of information technologies as a tool of organisation of education but also as a methodology approach towards education (virtual universities, distance learning, e-learning).

#### 4.1.4

In order to support the structural changes at universities with the aim to improve the education and innovation processes as well as internal management capacities, the act abolished the nature of legal entity of particular parts of the higher education institution – faculties – which made the management of the entire higher education institution more effective. Introduction of the credit system to higher education study provided the student him/herself with the opportunity to create his/her own study profile, which fits his/her interest and needs the best. The problem of structure of the Slovak higher education institutions lies with its institutional diversification (20 public higher education institutions, 4 private ones and 3 state ones), which does neither allow for the small higher education institutions fully using the potential of the credit system of study nor are these institutions able to accumulate „the critical mass“ of scientific potential and financial resources for fully valuable research and development. At present the mechanisms, motivating the merge of higher education institutions, are already developed.

There were several legislative changes made in the status of the higher education teacher, which moved the reward system of employees to the competence of the higher education institution. The legislation defined all working positions and function position of higher education teachers whereby these positions, especially the „associate professor“ and „professor,“ which are being assigned by the competitive hiring procedure.

Principal reform was realised in the area of financing of higher education where the state higher education institutions financed strictly by state budget was changed to public higher education institutions with a non-profit organisation nature (apart from military, police and healthcare higher education institutions). Substantial part of finances for the activities of such higher education institution is provided by the state in a form of contribution, another part of finances for the activities is obtained from sources outside of the state budget – a multi-source system of financing of public higher education institutions was introduced and is being supported. Financing of social security of students was detached from financing of main activities of higher education institutions.

#### 4.1.5

In the area of education, a functional system of quality assurance is being created, based on combination of an accreditation serving as confirmation of competence of the higher education institution to provide the study programs, a complex accreditation of activities of the institution and an evaluation as an assessment of quality of the education institution. These methods of quality assurance shall be institutionally separated. In the framework of activities, focused on achievement of this goal, higher education institution should, from September 1, 2005, be able to enroll students for accredited study programs only. In order to achieve this goal, Slovakia is participating in European co-operation in the area of the higher education quality assurance with the aim to develop comparable criteria and methodologies in this field. Competitive environment is being actively created to serve as a stimulus for increased quality of work of the higher education institutions - there are opportunities for submitting development projects of the higher education institutions.

#### 4.1.6

Conditions were created for increasing the access to higher education and the possibilities of study at the first degree of higher education are also being extended through opening gradually more and more bachelor study programs, reflecting the needs of employers as well as new requirements of the labour market. Making the manner of acceptance procedure more effective is being considered especially for the first grade of higher education, which is being fostered also through realisation of a unified school leaving exam for the secondary schools graduates throughout Slovakia.

The centres of lifelong learning are being established at nearly every higher education institution. These centres are providing module courses and training in accordance with the needs of wider expert public or to those who are interested in improving their qualification with regard to the changing conditions of the labour market. So far, the Slovak Republic has no system elaborated for transfer of credits from the system of non-formal education to the tertiary system.

#### 4.1.7

Partnership of higher education institutions is being created and developed with the state, public and entrepreneurial organisations with the aim to achieve update of the content of education, society support for development of both the basic and the applied research, in order to extend the supply of further education for higher education institution graduates and school leavers from secondary schools – for working experts, creating conditions for their lifelong learning. Providing further services for the public (social, cultural, healthcare, sport and other ones) has become an integral part of the mission of higher education institutions.

Slovakia shall use one part of the funds from the European Social Fund for support of linking of the regional actors into partnerships, reflecting the needs of the region and in co-operation of the higher education institution – enterprise –secondary vocational school – regional self-government (the so-called „learning regions“) - to create tailor-made programs of lifelong learning and guidance. At the same time, transfer of technologies together with mobility of research workers into industrial enterprises shall be supported from these sources. In this respect, Slovakia tries to effectively utilise the structural funds resources and to achieve results with a high added value.

### **4.2. Obstacles and areas for further progress**

Current problems of higher education system in Slovakia can be summarised within the following points:

- need for speeding up implementation of basic changes, introduced by act on higher education institutions from 2002 especially in the area of the quality assurance
- need for increased quality of public higher education institutions management
- need for strengthening the stimuli for maintaining and attracting highly qualified teachers;

## **5. INCREASING THE QUALITY AND ATTRACTIVENESS OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

### **5.1 Main policies / measures**

#### *5.1.1*

One of the important features of vocational education and training is the increase of its quality and effectiveness as well as that of the school leavers from this system. This effort is also reflected in the document called „National Program of Quality Tasks in the Area of Education for Years 2004 – 2005“. The focus of vocational education and training on quality is more than just introduction of demanding education standards, it is also the elaboration and, primarily, the introduction of the system of accreditation, certification and monitoring of results. Generally, this will bring higher demands on evaluation of outputs of vocational education. Focusing on quality is also very important in relation to another two distinctive changes of the vocational education and training system, which are the following:

- introduction of the flexible vocational education and training system, anticipating the changes of the labour market and employment as such, anticipates the needs of further education of people during their productive age and which has a rooted ability to adapt to the development as well as to the differentiated sectoral and regional needs;
- decentralisation of competencies in management of vocational education, which mainly relates to the decision-making on structure of vocational education and distribution of funds.

The self-evaluation system of school shall be secured through reports of the school principal on training and education activity, its results and conditions of schools and school facilities for the founder and the school council.

The highly reforming act on the state administration in the school system and the school self-government<sup>26</sup> provided for the following:

- decentralisation of founding of schools whereby the putting into the school network can be understood as a certain way of accreditation of the training and education institution;
- start-up of the creation process of school network reflecting the regional labour market needs;
- conditions for the regional school financing system reform.

A Standard of secondary vocational education and training in the Slovak Republic<sup>27</sup> was elaborated for the formal vocational education and training at secondary schools. At the same time, education standards for ongoing and output quality assessment of training and education process are being prepared. In relation to the content of education a complex curricula transformation is under way, new education programs are being prepared together with textbooks and study material with modern content, respecting also the European dimension in education. In order to support creation of new education

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<sup>26</sup> Act No. 596/2003 Coll.

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.siov.sk/siov/dokhtm/1vzdprog/12standr.htm>

programs, the methodology handbook called „Secondary vocational education curricula” was issued at the national level.

#### 5.1.2

Pilot projects were organised for pupils from socially disadvantaged environment, primarily the introduction of the position of teacher assistant for pupils with special training and education needs. Since June 1, 2004, pupils of secondary schools from socially disadvantaged environment are being provided social scholarships, the amount of which depends upon their study results.. Measures were adopted for minority language groups, which through supplementary Slovak language training, supporting their knowledge of the majority population language make the children of immigrants and refugees equal in the area of their access to education.<sup>28</sup>

#### 5.1.3

Impact of the foreign investments, primarily in the area of automotive industry, creates the linkage of vocational education and training directly to teaching of new work procedures and technologies, which can be immediately upon graduation from the school used by the school leaver from vocational education and training at his/her employer. Combination of vocational education in a study specialisation with the possibility to continue in higher education makes the vocational education and training more attractive for the school leaver.

#### 5.1.4

The new concept of the school leaving and final exam, which after being tested at pilot schools, took place for the first time in the school year 2004/2005 at all school of vocational education and training. This concept responds to the needs of external environment, requiring comparable standards of achieved education and skills. Taking into account the uniformity of the written part of the school leaving exam, it also becomes an instrument for providing equality in the education system.

From the point of view of linking the vocation education and training with requirements of the labour market, the following facts play an important role:

- the topics for the theoretical part of the specialised component and the practical part of the specialised component of the school leaving exam are reflecting the needs of the future “consumers” (higher education institutions, employers) and are based upon co-operation of education, methodical and research institutions of particular sectors and social partners in the area of vocational education and training;
- the above mentioned “consumers” can participate in the school leaving exams as well as final exams;
- profession chambers are providing their statements to the topics of both the written and the practical part of the final exam.

Acquiring the education certificate presents an important reference point for the employers and the individuals on the labour market. In relation to the transformation of economy and the requirement of the adaptable workforce, the number of citizens, obtaining competence in both formal and non-formal education is increasing. The re-evaluation of the system of acknowledgement of the documents on education is therefore under preparation together with the new procedure of acknowledgement of results of formal and non-formal education, which should result in acquiring formal certificates.

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<sup>28</sup> For details see Concept of Migration Policy of SR

One of the possibilities is the realisation of education in the form of a module approach and the respective credit system, which should introduce the European credit transfer system in vocational education and training (ECVET).

#### 5.1.5

Slovakia is starting to pay significant attention to the area of education of older employees as the pension reform in Slovakia raises the age of retiring people. Within a medium term there will be tens of thousands of people on the labour market who would not be there pursuant to the current pension system. At present, these people are in age where they do not find it effective to invest in development of their competence due to the short horizon of time remaining before they retire. The only alternative of coping with this situation is creation of an open and easily accessible system of further education of older employees. The existing mechanisms include education of older employees through centres of lifelong learning at higher education institutions.

#### 5.1.6

At present, extension of the general part of vocational education is under way. Introduction of the new school leaving exam was accompanied by the general education at all types of secondary schools getting more linked. The new school leaving exam creates conditions for wider access to higher education and the wider access (through opening of gradually higher number of bachelor study programs) to the first grade of higher education is under way. Introduction of the bachelor grade within higher education focused primarily on obtaining practical skills, has a closer linkage to vocational education and training, which makes it more attractive for its school leavers. Successful passing of the school leaving exam provides for more justified access to the higher education study.

#### 5.1.7

Upon organisation of a couple of pilot projects it is necessary to improve the conditions for study and preparation of pupils with special need for job in common secondary schools systematically as follows:

- through vocational preparation of teachers in the framework of their pre-gradual preparation and further education;
- definition of measures for improvement of the effectiveness of work with talented and gifted pupils where the attention is paid, compared with the current model, more to the teachers developing the interest of students in a subject either during the school lessons or through various tools for development of their talents<sup>29</sup>;
- introduction of the position of teacher assistant for pupils with special training and education needs at secondary schools and feasible application possibilities (finances);
- emphasising the need and utilisation of special pedagogic counselling and interventions for physically handicapped pupils and their teachers at common type secondary schools;

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<sup>29</sup> subject olympiads, correspondence seminars, specialised courses, summer schools, camps and training and similar education activities

- providing for sufficiency of compensation aids.

#### 5.1.8

The current and following reform of goals and content of vocational education and training in the Slovak Republic is primarily based on the change from learning large volume of facts to development of key abilities as well as on emphasis on teaching foreign languages together with information and communication literacy. In the area of vocational education and training the focus is being moved from narrow specialisation to wide profiled specialisation, with more emphasis on internal differentiation and individualisation of education, taking into account specific needs of the pupils. The reform of school leaving from secondary education is focused on the final and school leaving exams, introducing higher objectivity of both the written and the practical part of the exam, in which the employers and entities involved with vocational education and training shall also play an important role. The national project on creation of an open system of lifelong learning will also contribute to better connections between vocational education and preparation and the current and future labour market needs.

### 5.2 Obstacles and areas for further progress

The Slovak Republic identified the following to be the main obstacles of progress in this area:

- problems of employers accepting the bachelor grade of education;
- identification of changes of qualification needs of the labour market not being sufficiently timely.

## 6. CONSOLIDATING THE EUROPEAN DIMENSION OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING

### 6.1 Increase mobility through removing obstacles and active promotion

#### 6.1.1

Act No. 48/2002 Coll. on stay of foreign citizens made the mobility of citizens easier, especially for citizens moving from the European Union member states to the Slovak Republic in such a way that the police department issues a temporary stay permission for a foreigner for an activity pursuant to special programs, which may be a study, research, scientific, lector or art activity or if it results from the programs of the Government of the Slovak Republic. There was a national structure created in the Slovak Republic – Centre for acknowledgement of education certificates and the National Centre Europass is also developing its activities.

The problems with transparency of competence and qualification due to fragmentation of the system of vocational education and training are also hindering mobility. There is up to 1300 learning and study specialisation in the Slovak Republic whereby in countries of the European Union this figure spans from 400 to 700 learning and study specialisation.

#### 6.1.2

The Ministry of Education considers the fact that the community programs Socrates II and Leonardo da Vinci II are organised under the roof of one organisation, which is the Slovak Academic Association for International Co-operation, very positive.

Virtual mobility, connected with utilisation of new information and communication technologies, is the alternative of physical mobility and transportation and it is realised primarily as e-work (telework), e-business & e-commerce, e-services (e-government services, e-learning, telemedicine, etc.). Its realisation depends upon possibilities of extended internet access. At present, several measures are under preparation at the level of the government, the aim of which is to extend the IT equipment of schools, households, state administration, and the self-government. These measures are an integral part of the Action plan for the area of information society, following the National Lisbon Strategy, adopted by the government.

Virtual mobility in Slovakia is only being born so far. It was applied in some of the projects, executed by higher education institutions (virtual universities) and by the State institute for vocational education (training companies). The TT-net initiative of CEDEFOP, which is the virtual network of institutions and experts, involved with education and training of teachers, also enjoys quite a lot of publicity. This form is very seldom systematically utilised, for example for the work of research and managing employees in the area of education (e.g. participation in virtual networks and discussion forums or groups).

### 6.1.3

In the Slovak context it is necessary to stress the importance of mobility in the community programs due to the fact that in the framework of both formal and non-formal education mobility plays a strategic role, especially taking into account the numbers of those sent out and those received. However, we must say that mobility, especially of a higher education institution teacher, is not sufficiently reflected in his/her career growth. Projects for preparation of future teachers are supported at a national level in the framework of the Socrates/Comenius program and at the same time the teachers as well as other members of pedagogic staff have the opportunity to participate in other courses and hence to proceed with their education.

In this area, the activities are focusing on the following:

- co-operation with national agencies of the Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci programs with the aim to increase the quality of counselling service, provided for schools and more intensive participation of these offices in the European co-operation programs;
- transfer of experience, obtained in partnerships in the framework of the Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci programs (e.g. SOLT, ESIST, ESDP, MeCMAP, ACC MEAS, eFashion).

### 6.1.4

There is significant interest in the foreign mobility in this area and Slovakia contracts the entire global grant, provided by the European Commission each year. The popularity of the mobile projects in the Leonardo da Vinci program is also increasing because of decentralised management of this procedure

On the other hand we are not successful so far to sufficiently activate especially the local self-government and the company sphere for the support of mobility despite of the fact

that this was one of the national priorities of the Leonardo da Vinci program in recent years.

#### 6.1.5

The basic problem and shortcoming are the missing concepts at a national level, defining the basic framework as well as the financial support, which are available for activities, focused on international or transnational co-operation of institutions and individuals.

Taking into account the limited funds from the state budget, a national fund for support of mobility is significantly absent as it is clear that the current economic and social situation of the citizens of the Slovak Republic does not make it possible in most cases to finance such activities from the private sources respectively that mobility becomes only an activity for the „elite“. This way the original idea of mobility, which was the extension of the possibilities of workforce being successful on a unified European labour market, is getting lost.

## 6.2 Consolidate the European dimension of education

### 6.2.1

Concerning strengthening of the European dimension in education, there are several project realised in secondary education, for example the project of testing a new study specialisation of secondary grammar school, focused on the European studies, project of the bilingual secondary grammar school of Visegrád Four at Čadca, experimental testing of the European language portfolio, elaboration of language portfolio in harmony with other EU member states and other project. The content of particular teaching subjects is being innovated with the aim to implement and strengthen in the subject the components of the European dimension in education, especially in social science subjects.

### 6.2.2

The Ministry of Education is preparing the Strategy of teaching of foreign languages at primary and secondary schools, which is going to define the goal for the secondary school leavers to have the command at minimum 2 foreign languages. One of the main goals, apart from other things, is to improve the system of further education of teachers, to provide for teachers of foreign languages being informed on the latest trends and methods in language education and the requirement to utilise this knowledge in their work.

Following issues are being considered in the curricula of primary and secondary school:

- strengthening of the multicultural aspect;
- strengthening of language skills;
- participation in evaluation and comparing of achievements;
- achieving compatibility of the school leaving exams;
- harmonisation of the school structure with other EU member states base on ISCED requirements;
- achieving comparable curricular documents within the EU.

In some of the methodical-pedagogic centres there is preparation of teachers carried out, focused on teaching the basics of economic thinking through new, modern teaching methods with the aim of better understanding of the knowledge based economy,

education of training counsellors of primary and secondary schools in the area of preparation of the school leavers for the European labour market and lifelong learning and for understanding of the European dimension of career counselling.

Another area where the European and intercultural dimension is strengthened is the education of teachers of primary and secondary schools in the area of application of ICT in particular subjects with the aim to utilise ICT actively during the teaching process to get both the schools and the individuals involved with international projects and to enhance the utilisation of information, available in internet for the needs of the education process.

### 6.2.3

It is necessary to achieve progress in the following areas:

- education of teachers, their career growth,
- economic and social status of the teacher,
- school legislation,
- increased participation of parents and the rest of public in the school administration and questions related to education,
- utilisation of schools as education centres in the headquarters of the school in accordance with the principle of an open school,
- increased education of pupils towards understanding the art.