

Common Template of EMN Study 2018

Attracting and retaining international students in the EU

National Contribution from the Slovak Republic

Disclaimer: The following information has been provided primarily for the purpose of contributing to a Synthesis Report for this EMN Study. The EMN NCP has provided information that is, to the best of its knowledge, up-to-date, objective and reliable within the context and confines of this study. The information may thus not provide a complete description and may not represent the entirety of the official policy of the EMN NCPs' Member State.

The topic of the "Attracting and retaining international students in the EU" study by the European Migration Network (EMN)¹ was chosen by the EMN Steering Committee within the 2018 working programme. Each EU Member State will draft their own study on the basis of a common specification – the questions below. The EC will use the national studies to prepare a summary report covering the main findings from the MS.

The study aims to provide information on the approach of the MS to attracting and retaining international students to the relevant institutions, their experts and policy creators on both national and EU level. The study also updates some information of the 2012 "Migration of Foreign Students" study by the EMN² and complements information on retaining foreign students. The study will also map the measures implemented in relation with the transposition of the Directive on students and researchers³.

Foreign students are the target group of the study: the third-country nationals who were granted residence for the purposes of the study and/are who are enrolled in one of the university study programmes at one of the study levels (Bachelor, Masters, PhD.)⁴ in internal⁵ form of study (including the students in exchange programmes).

The methodological approach to the preparation of this study is based mostly on secondary resources, especially on the legislative and strategic documents, studies and media outputs. The following institutions were asked to provide documents/information and/or statistics needed to prepare this study: Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the SR (Higher Education Institutions Division, International Cooperation and European Affairs Division), Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the SR, Bureau of the Border and Aliens Police of the Police Force Presidium, Slovak Centre of Scientific and Technical Information.

¹The European Migration Network (EMN) provides current, objective, reliable and comparable information on migration and international protection to support the EU and its MS policies creation. EMN implements their activities through national contact points in each EU MS and Norway in coordination with the EC, particularly the Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs. These activities focus on issues related to migration of third country nationals.

The EMN National Contact Point for the SR consists of the Ministry of Interior of the SR (Bureau of the Border and Aliens Police of the Police Force Presidium, Migration Office, Department of Foreign and European Affairs of the Office of the Minister of Interior), the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the SR (Department of Migration and Integration of Foreigners), the Statistical Office of the SR (Social Statistics and Demography Directorate), and the IOM. The EMN was established by Council Decision 2008/381/EC and is funded by the European Union and co-funded by the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic. More information about the EMN can be found at www.emn.sk and www.ec.europa.eu/emn.

²The Slovak study is available here: http://www.emn.sk/phocadownload/emn_studies/emn-sk_studia_migracia_zahranicnych_studentov_do_SR_sk.pdf, Summary EU MS report summarizing the results of national studies available here: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/reports/docs/emn-studies/immigration-students/0_immigration_of_international_students_to_the_eu_sr_24april2013_final_en.pdf

³Directive No. 2016/801/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council (recast)

⁴The definition is to be understood in compliance with the Art. 3(3) of the Directive on students and researchers. The following categories of students are excluded from the scope of the study: researchers, external students, TCNs who are family members of EU citizens, au pair, apprentices, interns, beneficiaries of international protection.

⁵The studies at all levels of tertiary education in Slovakia can be conducted in two forms – internal and external. The main difference between them is the length of studies. The external studies are organized in such a way that the students take less hours per academic year at school which extends the overall length of their study. Both forms can be organized as presence or as distance learning or as a combination. The contents and method of teaching should be the same in both forms. If this is not possible, the differences between the internal and external form of study cannot negatively influence educational results.

Top-line “Factsheet” (National Contribution) 1 page]

The top-line factsheet will serve as an overview of the National Contribution introducing the Study and drawing out key facts and figures from across all sections, with a particular emphasis on elements that will be of relevance to (national) policy-makers. Please add any innovative or visual presentations that can carry through into the synthesis report as possible infographics and visual elements.

Please provide a concise summary of the main findings of Sections 1-5:

Attracting and retaining foreign students is not a priority topic of any strategic government documents in the Slovak Republic (hereinafter SR). However, universities do intend to increase the number of foreign students and do mention it in their internationalization strategies. It relates mainly to the unfavourable demographic development and tendency of more Slovak students to study abroad. Since 2013, the number of Slovak students studying at Slovak universities has decreased by more than 30,000. The universities are currently not able to compensate for this loss by accepting students from the EU/EEA and Switzerland⁶ or from third countries⁷, even though the increase in the number of students from third countries is significant (almost 300% between 2013 and 2017).

This is one of the reasons for the current expert discussions on the need to reform the educational system including the internationalization of higher education as one of the priority topics. In June 2018, the Government of the SR adopted the National programme for the development of education which defines the direction of the Slovak educational system for the next 10 years. In 2019, the implementation of one of the measures – the creation of strategies for internationalization of tertiary education – should commence. However, the National programme for the development of education still does not differentiate between the EU/EEA foreign students and third-country foreign students.

The legislation of the SR concerning study and residence of foreign students has not changed much since 2013. In relation to the transposition of the Directive No. 2016/801/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council it was necessary to adopt only the changes related to foreign students' mobility. The legislation of the SR regarding other areas had been previously harmonized with the Directive.

There is no specific public institution in the SR which would be concerned particularly with study of foreign students or with the process of application to universities. Apart from the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the SR, the central government authority responsible for universities, it is the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the SR which is responsible mainly for granting scholarships for the entire length of their studies to foreign students in the SR within the official development assistance programmes. The administration of scholarship programmes created on the bases of Government decisions, bilateral and multilateral agreements as well as the promotion of Slovak higher education abroad is executed by the Slovak Academic Information Agency (SAIA) non-profit organization on the basis of contracts with MoESRS SR. The Erasmus+ programme is overseen by the Slovak Academic Association for International Cooperation (SAAIC).

Compared to other third-country nationals, the SR's criteria for granting residence to foreign students are less strict and the applications are decided upon within a shorter period of 30 days. The foreign students are obliged to supplement their application for temporary residence for the purposes of study with a proof of acceptance to study, criminal records and proof of financial means of support during their residence which should correspond to the amount of the minimum subsistence level per each month of the residence (max. for 12 months). Following the granting of residence, the student is obliged to present a proof of health proving that they do not suffer any illness which might endanger public health.

In special cases, the SR grants foreign students a temporary residence for the purposes of a special activity or temporary residence of a person with long-term residence in another EU MS.

Public universities in the SR are not allowed to collect fees from foreign students, if they study a programme in the Slovak language. The fees for studying in foreign languages range from several hundred euros to €11,000, depending on the study programme. On the other hand, universities provide the foreign students with motivational scholarships, accommodation in their own facilities and ensure basic counselling on living in Slovakia. In specific cases, the universities can provide them with loans from the scholarship fund. Some

⁶In 2017, 4,397 students from the EU/EEA and Switzerland studied at Slovak universities.

⁷In 2017, 3,575 students from the third countries studied at Slovak universities.

universities organize language and vocational training preparing them for studying at the individual faculties.

During their temporary residence for the purposes of study, the foreign students in the SR are entitled to engage in business activities and to work for a maximum of 20 hours a week. They also have the right to family reunification where the SR does not apply any waiting periods in this respect. After a successful graduation, they have the right to remain in the Slovak Republic (by renewing their temporary residence) for 9 months to find job or start a business. Successful graduation from a university in the SR provides foreign students with several advantages: they do not have to apply for employment permit or obtain the agreement of the respective Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family with filling a vacancy.

The SR has many bilateral agreements on education – with developed, developing and transforming countries. They usually cover a reciprocal award of a certain number of scholarships which cover the entire study or a part of the study at Slovak universities.

Section 1: National legal and policy framework in the Member State

This section aims to provide an overview of the national policies in the Member States and Norway related to entry and residence of third-country nationals as students. The focus should be put on the recent changes that have been introduced in Member States and Norway since 2012.⁸

Please note: Statistics provided in Annex 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 will be used to contextualise the national legal and policy framework reported on by Member States in this section.

Q1a. What is the **transposition status** of Directive (EU) 2016/801 in your national law?

[Possible visual element: map indicating transposition status in each Member State]

- transposition completed.
- in process: completion of transposition expected by:
- other, please specify:

Q1b. Are **doctoral candidates** (PhD students) treated as students or researchers under national law? *Please note that if doctoral candidates fall within the category of researchers, these should not be considered in the answers to the subsequent questions.*

- PhD students are treated as students
- PhD students are treated as researchers
- Other

Please elaborate:

Foreign PhD candidates are considered as students of the third level⁹ and are granted temporary residence for the purposes of study. In special cases, they can be granted temporary residence for the purposes of a special activity or temporary residence of a person with long-term residence in another EU MS.

Q1c. What are the **main changes** to: (a) law, (b) policy and (c) practice since 2012 with regard to international students? Please specify whether these changes were made in response to Directive (EU) 2016/081 or other national policy priorities.

Please describe briefly:

Since 2012, several laws have come into effect which modified the status of foreign students. It was the amendments of Act on Higher Education Institutions, Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on Employment Services and on changes and amendments to some acts and Act No. 404/2011 on Residence of Aliens.

As of 1 January 2013, the provisions of Act No. 57/2012 Coll. on changing and amending Act No. 131/2002 Coll. on Higher Education Institutions and on changes and amendments to some acts came into force. They

⁸ The last EMN studies related to this public were published in 2013 (see the study on Highly qualified migrants at https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/reports/studies_en)

⁹ Under the provisions of Sec. 54 Par. 1 of Act No. 131/2002 Coll. on Higher Education Institutions and on changes and amendments to some acts (hereinafter the "Act on Higher Education Institutions"), "The PhD study programme as a study programme of the third level (Section 2 Par. 5)... Graduates of PhD study receive higher education of the third level."

introduced a system of supporting students and applicants with special needs on the basis of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities ratification.

Starting from 1 September 2013, the following changes were introduced by the amendment to Act on Higher Education Institutions No. 455/2012 Coll.¹⁰: introduction of the obligation to pay fees for study in a language other than the state language, abolition of the possibility to collect fees (for study in the state language) from students in the standard length of study coming from other countries than the EU/EEA, Switzerland, the Republic of Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Macedonia, Moldova, Serbia or Ukraine or from the foreign students who do not have permanent residence in a EU/EEA MS and Switzerland, introduction of the possibility to grant motivational scholarships from the state budget to the students in the study fields determined on the basis of labour market analyses and prognoses, and definition of quota on the number of students who can receive motivational scholarship from the state budget.

Regarding the extension of the standard length of study, the last amendment to Act on Higher Education Institutions (Act. No. 270/2018) makes it possible to study for a year longer free of charge, if the student participated in a study exchange. Moreover, the amendment introduced a new type of study programme: interdisciplinary studies which enable the students to follow a unique study profile.

The 1 January 2014 amendments to the Act on Employment Services No. 495/2013 Coll.¹¹ enabled foreign university students to work for 20 hours a week (or for a corresponding number of hours a year) without being obliged to change the purpose of their temporary stay. The previous legislation enabled them to work only for 10 hours a week.

Effective from 1 May 2017¹², an exception from the rule on temporary residence cancellation was adopted which enables foreign students with temporary residence for the purposes of study or with temporary residence of a person with long-term residence in another EU MS to look for a job and seek a change in the purpose of their residence 30 days after a successful graduation.

Effective from 1 May 2018, in relation to the transposition of the Directive No. 2016/801/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council, Act No. 108/2018 Coll. was adopted¹³ by which respective changes were transposed into the Slovak legislation. These concern the mobility of foreign students and enable them to renew their temporary residence for the purposes of study by 9 months after graduation from university education in the SR for the purposes of job seeking or starting a business. The Act also modified the provisions of Act on Residence of Aliens concerning the possibility to submit temporary residence applications from the territory of the SR by explicitly eliminating the possibility to submit the temporary residence application for the purposes of study or special activity from the territory of the SR for Schengen visa holders.

Q1d. Are any changes planned to law/ policy/ practice regarding international students in your Member State? Such planned changes could relate both to the transposition of the Students and Researchers Directive or other changes not pertaining to the Directive.

Yes, changes planned related to the transposition of the Directive.

Yes, changes planned not pertaining to the Directive.

No changes planned

If you have answered yes, please provide details about the changes planned and the approximate timeframe, i.e. are these changes planned for the short- or long-term?:

In June 2018, the Government of the SR adopted the National programme for the development of education which defines the directions for the Slovak educational system for the next 10 years. Individual measures

¹⁰Act No. 455/2012 Coll. changing and amending Act No. 131/2002 Coll. on Higher Education Institutions and on amendment and supplement of other acts as amended, changing Act No. 455/2004 Coll. on Establishment of the General Milan Rastislav Štefánik Academy of Armed Forces, on Merger of the General Milan Rastislav Štefánik Military Airforce Academy in Košice and University of Technology in Kosice, on Establishment of the Marshal Andrej Hadik National Academy of Defence and on amendment and supplement of some acts, as amended by Act No. 144/2008 Coll.

¹¹Act No. 495/2013 Coll. changing and amending Act No. 480/2002 Coll. on Asylum and on changes and amendments to some acts, as amended

¹²Act No. 82/2017 Coll. changing and amending Act No. 404/2011 Coll. on Residence of Aliens and on changes and supplements to some acts, as amended

¹³Act No. 108/2018 Coll. changing and amending Act No. 404/2011 Coll. on Residence of Aliens and on changes and supplements to some acts, as amended

are elaborated into an implementation plan composed of five subsequent action plans, each for a period of two years. One of the measures which directly impacts the foreign students is the creation of university environment internationalization strategy which is to be implemented from 2019. It includes *"the proposals for the measures which will ensure a more intense academic mobility of students and employees of universities; lowering the obstacles to accessing the study in the SR (language of the study programmes, opportunities to obtain visa and residence permits, scholarships programmes); improve the conditions for filling a university teacher/researcher vacancy, the role of school fees in the study programmes in a foreign language, support integration activities and marketing activities focused on the applicants from abroad."*¹⁴

Q1e. Is attracting and retaining international students a **national policy priority, either within the national migration policies or compared to other national policies?** Please explain why.

- Yes, this is a national policy priority.
- No, this is not a major national policy priority.
- Other, please explain:

Please elaborate:

Several strategic documents related to higher education and/or migration mention the topic of attracting foreign students to Slovak universities and retaining them in Slovakia afterwards. However, none of them takes this topic as a priority, nor do they elaborate on it in detail. Moreover, documents mostly adopt a complex approach to foreign students and do not focus on the third-country nationals.

Manifesto of the Government of the Slovak Republic 2016 – 2020 (the 2018 Government is in full agreement with it) included the development of the educational system among the most important priorities of the current period.¹⁵ Anchoring the Slovak higher education in the European higher education area is to be a special task. In order to achieve this goal, the Government defined the following three ways to positively influence the interest of foreign students in higher education in the Slovak Republic: To promote the expansion of study programmes delivered in foreign languages, to remove barriers to organising inter-field study programmes and joint study programmes between domestic and foreign tertiary schools and to increase bi-directional mobility of tertiary school students and employees between Slovakia and foreign countries.¹⁶ The Manifesto also states that *"The Government will enhance the effectiveness of the system of government scholarships to students from the countries which Slovakia considers priority beneficiaries of development aid for studying at the public universities in Slovakia."*¹⁷

The Long-Term Intent for the Educational, Research, Development and Other Creative Activity for Higher Education Institutions 2016 – 2021 is a MoESRS SR strategic document regarding the tertiary education. One of its priorities is to ensure a varied university education. It underlines that the higher education system should reflect the various needs and expectations of society. It does not deem it necessary for all the universities to actively obtain foreign students but at the same time there should be sufficient overall capacity created for such (and other) activities.¹⁸ The effectiveness and credibility of the university environment should be achieved also by means of promoting openness. One of the elements of openness and a separate goal of the Slovak tertiary education development is its internationalization which should become *"an integral part of individual parts of university life as a tool to improve the quality of universities' activities or a better preparedness to act on a global level."*¹⁹ Even the Long-term Intent presupposes the creation of a separated strategic document on internationalization which would cover academic mobility, the presentation of the Slovak tertiary education as a part of the European higher education area, the development of scholarships programmes or attracting foreign experts to Slovak universities. It also identifies the existing obstacles to internationalization (such as visa policy, language barrier, the risk of foreign students' isolation) and the necessity to find the ways to remove them.

¹⁴ Source: The National programme for the development of education implementation plan. Available at: <https://www.minedu.sk/20212-sk/vlada-schvalila-narodny-program-rozvoja-vychovy-a-vzdelavania/>

¹⁵Manifesto of the Government of the Slovak Republic 2016 – 2020, p. 32. Available at: <https://www.vlada.gov.sk/data/files/7179.pdf>

¹⁶Ibidem, p. 37.

¹⁷Ibidem, p. 6.

¹⁸The Long-Term Intent for the Educational, Research, Development and Other Creative Activity for Higher Education Institutions, p. 3 Available at: <https://www.minedu.sk/dlhodoby-zamer-ministerstva-a-jeho-aktualizacie/>

¹⁹Ibidem, p. 7.

The **Learning Slovakia** document was drafted in 2017 as the basis for the National programme for the development of education (2018 – 2027) which was being prepared at that time. The document sees the internationalization of tertiary education a means to increase mobility, remove obstacles to foreign experts working at Slovak universities and to increase the number of foreign students.²⁰ It notes that the strict administrative procedures related to the residence and study of foreign students in Slovakia are a serious obstacle to internationalization. It also proposes to create better conditions at the Ministry of Education level.

The subsequently government-adopted **National programme for the development of education (2018 – 2027)** implementation plan expects the following measures within the “Internationalization” topic: the provision of special financial support to the universities which will be a part of the European universities network which is now being prepared, the provision of joint study programmes and the development of student and employee mobility as well as the creation of a university environment internationalization strategy. The strategy should contain a proposal for measures to strengthen academic mobility, lower the obstacles to foreign students studying at Slovak universities (related to the teaching language, administrative obligations related to their residence in Slovakia and funding of their study), support their integration in university environment and promote Slovakia to foreign applicants. The strategy should be ready in 2019 and a gradual implementation of the measures proposed should start in 2020.²¹

Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic: Perspective until 2020 states the need to update the legislative/legal conditions in such a way as to create more flexible forms of entry and residence of foreigners who will study or be economically active in Slovakia.²² The most recent published Migration Policy Action Plan in the domain of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the SR which was adopted for 2018 – 2020 proposed two measures in this respect: update of the Integration Policy of the SR and elaboration of the strategy of labour mobility of foreigners in the SR – a document in the field of strategic planning, management and regulation of labour mobility of foreigners on the labour market in SR.²³

In its analytical part, the **Strategy of Labour Mobility of Foreigners in the SR**, adopted on 10 October 2018 by government resolution n.473, emphasizes the importance and added value of qualified and highly-qualified third-country nationals for sustainable economic development and improvement of life in the country. It mentions the best practice from other countries with regards to attracting foreign students as a part of the regulated labour mobility.²⁴

The **Integration Policy of the Slovak Republic** states the need to set out mechanisms to ensure that the foreign students will remain in the country even after university graduation. It underlines that the policies for employment of foreigners should not focus only on filling the shortage professions in labour market; it should also support the legal migration of qualified foreigners including the students.²⁵ Integration Policy remains a valid document despite the fact that on 5 September 2018 the government has cancelled (by the resolution n. 405) the obligation of ministries to submit the annual status report to the minister of labour, social affairs and family which stems from the Integration Policy of the SR itself. The obligation to present the Summary status report to the government negotiations stemming from Integration Policy has also been cancelled.²⁶

The topic of foreign students is also mentioned in **The Medium - Term Strategy for Development Cooperation of the Slovak Republic for 2014 – 2018**, the main document covering the cooperation with developing countries. Slovak development aid traditionally includes Government scholarships which are granted for the entire length of study in Slovakia to students from selected developing countries. The goal of the programme is to *“contribute to the support of education, as an important element in promotion*

²⁰ Learning Slovakia, p. 191 Available at: <https://www.minedu.sk/uciace-sa-slovensko/>

²¹ The National programme for the development of education implementation plan (2018 – 2027). Available at: <https://www.minedu.sk/20212-sk/vlada-schvalila-narodny-program-rozvoja-vychovy-a-vzdelavania>

²² Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic: Perspective until 2020, p. 3 Available at:

https://www.employment.gov.sk/files/slovensky/ministerstvo/integracia-cudzincov/dokumenty/migracna_politika.pdf

²³ Migration Policy Action Plan in the domain of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the SR for 2018 – 2020, Available at: <https://www.employment.gov.sk/files/slovensky/uvod/informacie-cudzinci/akcny-plan.pdf>

²⁴ Strategy of labour mobility of foreigners, pg. 22-23. Available at:

http://www.rokovania.sk/File.aspx/ViewDocumentHtml/Mater-Dokum-222224?prefixFile=m_

²⁵ Integration Policy of the Slovak Republic, p. 28. Available at:

<https://www.employment.gov.sk/files/slovensky/ministerstvo/integracia-cudzincov/dokumenty/vlastny-material-integracna-politika-januar-2014.pdf>

²⁶ Available at: <https://www.employment.gov.sk/sk/informacie-cudzincov/dokumenty>

of social-economic progress in partner countries".²⁷ Within the current strategy, the scholarships are granted to the applicants from 12 countries (Afghanistan, Albania, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kenya, Kosovo, Moldova, Mongolia, the autonomous Palestinian self-governing territories, Ukraine and Vietnam).

Q1f. Does your Member State have a **national strategy**, or a **lower level (e.g. ministerial, regional) strategy**, for attracting and/or retaining international students?

- Yes, national strategy in place.
- Yes, lower level strategy in place.
- No, a national strategy is not in place.

If you have answered yes, please indicate whether the strategy focuses on attraction, retention or both, and provide details about the main elements of the strategy (e.g. name, policy goals, year of adoption):

There is no national level strategy for attracting and retaining foreign students in the SR. However, the preparation of an internationalization strategy is a part of the approved National programme for the development of education. The document should also consider the question of how to attract students from abroad.²⁸ The aim will be to support those universities and study programmes where there is a potential for the Slovak universities to succeed in the international marketplace and programs which can be attractive for foreign students. An important step towards making the university environment in Slovakia more attractive for foreign students and employees is the 2016 application call of MoESRS SR for granting subsidies to projects which focus on the improvement of the quality of university environment by means of internationalization²⁹. The aim of the call is for the supported projects to contribute to a systemic change in using internationalization to develop universities and in this way add value for the widest possible academic community. So far, projects of 9 universities have received support between 2017 and 2019. The planned national strategy for internationalization should follow up on the results of these projects.

Intention to increase the number of foreign students is mentioned in the long-term plans of individual universities as well as their internationalization strategies. Among the measures for attracting foreign student will be the following: the provision of study programmes in foreign languages, creation of joint study programmes with foreign universities, support of Slovak language courses for foreign students, support of language competence of academic and non-academic staff universities, admission examinations abroad and more intense abroad promotion of studying in Slovakia.³⁰

Q1g. Does your Member State target **specific fields of studies/subject areas** (outside bilateral/multilateral cooperation) as regards the attraction and/or retention of international students? If so, please briefly elaborate on the reasons why these fields of studies/subject areas are targeted. *Please select all boxes that apply.*

- Yes, specific fields of studies are targeted for the attraction of international students.
- Yes, specific fields of studies are targeted for the retention of international students.
- No specific fields of studies are targeted.

If you have answered yes, please provide a list of the study fields targeted and the reasons. Please differentiate clearly between attraction and retention:

Nationally, attracting and retaining international students is not oriented to specific fields of study, nor is it planned in the upcoming internationalization strategy. Publication *The Study in Slovakia: Study programmes in foreign languages* is prepared every year by the SAIA non-profit organization within the

²⁷Medium - Term Strategy for Development Cooperation of the Slovak Republic for 2014 – 2018, p. 17 Available at: https://www.mzv.sk/documents/10182/68590/Strednodoba+strategia+ODA+SR+2014-2018_SK_11_02_2014.pdf/7e146c6b-a621-42a5-b56c-76c58a6c8a5a

²⁸ Source: Information provided by MoESRS SR (questionnaire).

²⁹2016 application call for subsidies for projects which focus on the university environment quality improvement by means of internationalization. <https://www.minedu.sk/vyzva-na-rozvojove-projekty-zvysovanie-kvality-vysokoskolskeho-vzdelavania-prostrednictvom-internacionalizacie/>

³⁰See e.g. the Comenius University Long-term Development Intent 2014 – 2024. Available at: <https://uniba.sk/fileadmin/ruk/legislativa/2014/dlhodoby-zamer-uk-2014-2024.pdf>, Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice Long-Term Intent 2016 – 2021. Available: <https://www.upjs.sk/public/media/3165/dlhodoby-zamer-UPJS-2016.pdf>, Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica Long-Term Intent 2015 – 2020. Available at: <https://www.umb.sk/app/cmsFile.php?disposition=i&ID=5141>.

cooperation with MoESRS SR which is used for the promotion of Slovak tertiary education abroad (e.g. distributed at foreign educational public fairs) and contains the offer of study programmes in all the fields of study.

Traditionally, foreign students used to come to Slovakia especially for medical fields of study which have been provided in English for a long time. Recently, the number of students in technical or some economic fields have been increasing and universities are gradually creating conditions to accept students of humanities or social sciences.

Q2. Is there a current or recent **public debate** (i.e. within the past year) with regard to international students in your Member State (e.g. in Parliament, media, etc.)?

Yes, there is a public debate at national level.

No, there is no significant public debate at national level.

If you have answered yes, please elaborate on the main issues of the debate:

The need for internationalizing tertiary education has been a more frequent topic in Slovakia recently, especially as a part of a wider discussion on the condition of the Slovak educational system as a whole and the need for substantial changes.

The public discussion on the need to increase quality and competitiveness and to change the funding methods within the educational system has become more intense in recent years as a result of several factors such as the teachers' strike, the growing number of high school graduates leaving to foreign universities or the relatively low evaluation of Slovak universities.

The topics related to the focus of this study, however, started to appear in public and media discussion only in recent years. The need to internationalize the Slovak tertiary education is underlined mainly due to its expected benefits; it is expected to improve the quality and competitiveness of the Slovak tertiary education, to help compensate the brain drain and to support the brain circulation which should ensure a continual exchange of up-to-date knowledge here in Slovakia.

The creation of 2017 *Learning Slovakia* expert document³¹ on the planned reform of MoESRS SR was an important step in planning the significant changes in education and educational system. It was commented upon and discussed by both public and experts. The document mentions internationalization as one of the priorities for the tertiary education. It explains in detail the need to offer more study programmes in foreign languages, to change the rules for granting long-term residence to foreign lecturers, researchers and students in order to address the obstacles encountered during the long-term expert activities performed at the universities, (see Q1e). Initiatives of professionals such as the 2015 campaign *Chceme vedieť viac* [We want to know more] also attest to the intense public discussion and the need for vision and changes in the Slovak educational system. Within this campaign, professionals offer their visions for the development of educational system and map current developments. Tertiary education internationalization is mentioned only sporadically but still as a key part of the much-needed nation-wide educational reforms.

Regarding the initiation and facilitation of expert discussions on the benefits of tertiary education internationalization, the following organizations are very important players: SAIA non-profit organization³² and SAAIC organisation³³. They administer, promote and monitor the mobility of students and researchers. Since 2015 SAIA non-profit organization has been regularly organizing meetings of vice-deans of the Slovak higher educational institutions who are committed to the exchange of experience among schools as well as discussions on the conditions of attracting and admission of foreign students. Representatives of the MoESRS SR also participate on these meetings,

The topics related to international students in Slovakia as well as underlining the need for educational system internationalization have been more frequently echoed in the Slovak media in recent years. There is a lot of articles or interviews about how they perceive Slovakia and what problems they encounter.

There is a weekly session of Slovak Radio called "Príbeh na týždeň [This week's story]"³⁴ which included stories on several aspects of foreign students lives in 2015, videoblogs „Čo si myslia zahraniční študenti

³¹ https://www.minedu.sk/data/files/6987_uciace_sa_slovensko.pdf

³² Available at: <https://www.saia.sk/sk/>

³³ Available at: http://www.saaic.sk/main.php?prog=SAaic&str=saaic_o_nas.html

³⁴ Available at: <https://slovensko.rtvs.sk/relacie/81995/zahranicni-studenti-na-slovensku-1.-cast>

o Slovensku"[What foreign students think about Slovakia], interviews with experts and foreign students³⁵. Apart from them, the topic in general is very often mentioned in mainstream, student and university media³⁶.

The topic of students from the third countries appeared also in connection with the SR development assistance and the obstacles they have to face when administratively arranging their residence. The media often mention the options for Slovak language courses for foreign students.³⁷

Articles and news reports about the increasing number of foreign students in Slovakia often describe their motivation to come to this country. In this respect, the following were defined as the main motivational factors: relatively low school fees, low living expenses as compared to the Western European countries.³⁸

Attracting the foreign students to Slovakia has been a more frequent topic mentioned in media, public and expert discussions. It is mentioned mainly positively and in terms of issues such as increasing the competitiveness of universities, improving the quality of teaching, increasing multiculturalism at schools and the opportunity for the Slovak students to communicate with their peers in English. Financial income from the fees which are paid to the universities by foreign students is a topic too as well as other potential contributions if they find employment in Slovakia after graduation – they would pay taxes and contribute to the state budget, create demand for new services and participate on create new jobs.³⁹

Therefore, the media present the internationalization of tertiary education as a necessary and key part of further development of Slovak educational system.

Q3. What is the **structure and governance of the national higher education system** in your Member State? *Please answer by elaborating on the following aspects:*

Q3a. Is there a specific **public entity(ies)** at national level which is responsible for international students in regards to their studies and what are they competent for? What is its role in the application process/supervision of these students?

Please explain:

There is no single state institution in Slovakia which is specifically concerned with study of foreign students or with the process of their enrolment. In terms of responsibilities, these are divided as follows: selection of countries of which nationals will be granted scholarships for an entire study to foreign students in the SR within the official development assistance programmes is the responsibility of Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the SR (MoFEA SR).

Signing bilateral and multilateral agreements which define also the possibilities for short-term study in Slovakia is coordinated by MoESRS SR. They also set the framework conditions for the admission process of foreign students and decide upon the sum of the scholarships.

The administration of scholarship programmes created on the basis of Government decisions, bilateral and multilateral agreements as well as the promotion of Slovak higher education abroad is executed by the Slovak Academic Information Agency (SAIA) non-profit organization on the basis of contracts with MoESRS SR. The Erasmus+ programme is overseen by the Slovak Academic Association for International Cooperation (SAAIC).

Q3b. Do migration authorities cooperate with HEIs? If yes, in what ways do they cooperate? Is there an institutionalised cooperation mechanism?

Yes, migration authorities cooperate with HEIs.

No, migration authorities do not cooperate with HEIs.

If you have answered yes, please explain the ways in which they cooperate:

³⁵ Available at: <https://europskenoviny.sk/2017/02/18/zahranicnym-studentom-sa-slovensku-paci/>

³⁶ Available at: <https://www.startitup.sk/slovaci-snivaju-o-zahranici-ale-zahranicni-studenti-su-spokojni-aj-na-slovensku/>

³⁷ Source: EMN media monitoring

³⁸ Source: EMN media monitoring

³⁹ Source: EMN media monitoring

Migration authorities cooperate with higher education institutions in the issues of foreign students migrating to the SR. The cooperation is not institutionalized in any way, it is on an ad-hoc basis and aims to solve specific problems and tasks. If needed, the meetings of universities' representatives and the Bureau of the Border and Aliens Police of the Police Force Presidium (BBAP PFP) are organized at which the higher education representatives can learn about changes in residence legislation. The MoESRS SR representatives are usually invited to the regular working meetings of the BBAP PFP representatives with the directors of the individual Aliens Police departments of the BBAP PFP. The meetings deal with residence related topics. The cooperation takes form of exchanging information about e.g. the study of TCNs studying at Slovak universities, the termination end of their studies, etc. In order to make the temporary residence application process more efficient, since 2018 the universities have been enabled to arrange their own deadline (electronically) to submit temporary residence applications for their students if they are the recipients of government scholarships or PhD candidates. The use of electronic information submission is currently (November 2018) undergoing a pilot testing at the Aliens Police department in Bratislava. Later it is to be introduced to all Aliens Police departments across Slovakia.

Q3c. Is there an approval procedure⁴⁰ in place in your Member State for public/private HEIs for the purpose of hosting international students? If so, are international students only allowed to study in those HEIs?

Yes.

No.

Please explain. If you have answered yes, please indicate whether international students are only allowed to those in those HEIs:

In Slovakia, there is no special approval procedure according to the Art. 15 which would allow universities to accept foreign students. Foreigners can apply for study at the selected university in compliance with the conditions defined by the said university.

The statutes of universities usually contain framework study conditions for foreign students at that university. The foreigners can study the standard study programmes under the same conditions as the Slovak citizens, on the basis of international treaties and agreements which are binding on the SR or on the basis of cooperation agreements and student mobility agreements. Some universities reserve the right to verify sufficient knowledge of the language of instruction, if the foreign students apply for the programmes taught in the Slovak language.

Q3d. Is higher education for third-country nationals funded by the state (i.e. state-sponsored) in your Member State?

Yes, higher education is state-sponsored for third-country nationals.

No, higher education is not state-sponsored for third-country nationals.

Other (e.g. state support depends on the student's country of origin):

Please elaborate:

The study at public universities is not subject to a fee, if the students study the programmes in the Slovak language and if they do not exceed the standard length of the study. The students who study programmes in the Slovak language but exceed the standard length of the study or students who study the programmes taught solely in a foreign language are obliged to pay tuition fee. The rule applies regardless of the nationality of the students: it applies to students from Slovakia, Member States of EU/EEA/Switzerland and third-country students.

The universities have the right to collect tuition fees for the programmes provided exclusively in a foreign language. When it comes to the obligation of paying fees however, there is one exception. If generally there is no possibility to study the selected study programme in the Slovak language because no public university provides as a part of the given degree and field of study, citizens of Slovakia, EU MS and TCNs with permanent residence in a EU MS are not obliged to pay the tuition fees for the study in a foreign

⁴⁰ Article 15 of the Students and Researchers Directive

language. However, those TCNs without permanent residence in the EU are at any rate obliged to pay the tuition fees for a study conducted in a foreign language.

State budget subsidies are the main source of funding of the public universities. The amount of funding for a particular university is defined (among other criteria) on the basis of the number of enrolled and registered students (regardless of the fact if the student is a Slovak national or a foreigner) while the students who are obliged to pay the tuition fees do not count. The study of third-country nationals is therefore sponsored by the state, if they study a programme in the Slovak language in the standard length.

The study at private universities is subject to a fee, while the amount is defined by the individual universities.

Section 2: Measures and incentives to **attract** international students

This section examines the measures and incentives to attract international students in place in the Member States in terms of admission conditions; hosting and welcoming international students; special incentives and measures; external factors; challenges and good practices in attracting international students.

2.1 Admission conditions for international students

Q4a. Which are the common immigration **admission conditions** applicable for all international students determined by the immigration authorities for the purpose of residence in the territory of your Member State?

Please elaborate:

Foreign students from third countries are obliged to apply for temporary residence for the purposes of study, special activity or temporary residence as a person with long-term residence in another EU MS while they also must prove the purpose of the residence, a clean criminal record and financial means. After obtaining temporary residence they are obliged to take out health insurance and prove that they do not suffer from a health condition threatening public health. None of the abovementioned temporary residences is required for foreign students within 90 days from entering the territory of the SR.

Are the following **admission conditions** listed under Q4b-Q4i required in your Member State? *Please answer with Yes/No and shortly describe the admission condition.*

IMPORTANT: *Please explain also under each question Q4b-4i how each of the below listed admission conditions are considered to attract international students / are used to attract them / are used flexibly in order to attract international students, or are there some that are considered disincentives.*

[Possible visual element: for the Synthesis Report, the applicable admission conditions (including fees) could be visualised in one infographic page]

Q4b. Is a proof of **acceptance** by HEI required in your Member State in order to obtain the visa/residence permit?⁴¹

Yes.

No.

If you have answered yes, please elaborate:

When applying for temporary residence for the purposes of study or temporary residence of a person having long-term residence in another EU MS, the applicants are obliged to prove the purpose of their stay. This is usually done by the proof of acceptance of the TCN to the studies – issued either by the respective public administration authority or the HEI itself. In exceptional cases, when the students study on the basis of a Slovak Government programme or an EU programme, the purpose of the study is not proven by a proof of acceptance but by a proof that the student will be studying in the SR on the basis of that programme. This proof is issued by the organisation which administratively covers such programmes.

In case of temporary residence for the purposes of special activity, the foreign students prove the purpose of the residence either by the proof from a public administration body which is responsible for the activities under the programmes approved by the SR or the EU programmes or by a proof from the organisation which administratively covers such programme on the basis of a contract with the respective public administration body.

Proving the purpose of residence by the HEI acceptance proof is the basic condition of obtaining a temporary residence in the SR. It is not possible to assess it as an incentive or a disincentive for foreign students.

Q4c. How is the **academic recognition** of foreign academic degrees regulated in your Member State? Is this done in a centralised manner (e.g. by a specific organisation) or by each HEI?

Recognition of degrees carried out centrally.

Recognition of degrees carried out by each HEI.

⁴¹ Article 11 (1) of the Students and Researchers Directive

Other.

Please explain:

The recognition of a document attesting to a finished university education, i.e. a university diploma, a certificate of state exams and a proof of awarded academic degrees, scholarly-teaching degrees and artistic-teaching degrees issued by a recognized university in another EU/EEA member state, Switzerland or a third country in order to continue the study is decided by the following:

- a) a recognized university in the SR which provides study programmes in the same or similar fields of study as those stated in the proof of education,
- b) the MoESRS SR if there is no university in the SR which provides study programmes in the same or similar fields of study as those stated in the proof of education,
- c) Ministry of Defence of the SR, if this is a proof of education issued by a military university or
- d) Ministry of Interior of the SR if this is a proof of education issued by a police university.⁴²

The higher education recognition system for academic purposes is set in such a way as to enable the recognition of education at the school at which the foreign student plans to continue their study. This measure can be considered as a means to attract foreign students.

Q4d. What are the **level of tuition fees for third-country nationals** in your Member State? ⁴³ *If applicable, please distinguish between the different qualifications levels (ISCED levels 5-8).*

- If possible, please provide here a range of the level of tuition fees per academic year in euro/national currency:
- Is the level of fees for third-country nationals determined centrally (e.g. by the state) or by each HEI?

Internal study in the Slovak language at public and state universities in the SR is free of charge at all levels for the Slovak nationals and foreign students. A public university can collect tuition fees only in the following cases:

- a) if the study is conducted exclusively in a language different to the national language (however, this does not apply if the study is conducted also in the language of national minorities and the mission of the university or one of its faculties at which the study programme is provided at the time of the student's acceptance includes the provision of tertiary education to professionals belonging to the minority),
- b) if the student is simultaneously studying two or more study programmes of the same level provided by a public/state university in a given academic year,
- c) if the student studies the study programme longer than the standard length of study.

Tuition fees under b) and c) are limited by the law. Each academic year it is set by the university Rector (if the study programme is conducted at the faculty based on the Dean's proposal) and the amount cannot exceed five times the basic amount.

The basis for determining tuition fees and other fees related to study at a public higher education institution is 10% of the average amount per one internal study student of the total current expenditure provided to the public universities by MoESRS SR from the state budget within the budget plan approved in the previous calendar year.

For the academic year 2018/2019 it amounts to €425 and for the year 2019/2020 to €470.

Tuition fees under a) are determined by public/state universities without limits. Depending on the programme, the tuition fees range from several hundred euro to €11,000 in medical programmes.

Tuition fees at private universities are not limited and are determined directly by the private institutions.

As the tuition fees related rules for foreign students equate to those for the Slovak citizens, this system can be considered as a means to attract foreign students to study in Slovakia.

⁴²Section 33 Paragraph 1 of Act No. 422/2015 Coll. on Recognition of Education Documents and on Recognition of Professional Qualification changing and amending to some acts, as amended by Act No. 276/2017 Coll.

⁴³ See Article 11(1)(b) of the Students and Researchers Directive

Please indicate:

– Is evidence of payment an admission condition?

Yes.

No.

– Are the fees capped in your Member State (i.e. is there a higher/lower threshold limit imposed)?

Yes.

No.

Only the fees at public and state higher education institutions are capped. Tuition fees at private universities are not limited.

– Are the fees for international students the same as those for domestic students? If no, what is the difference (i.e. are they higher or lower)?

Yes. See above.

No.

If you have answered no, please elaborate:

– Are specific groups of international students exempt from fees? Which ones and why?

Yes.

No.

If you have answered yes, please elaborate on which groups are exempted and why:

Only the foreign students who study on the basis of bilateral/multilateral agreements are exempt from fees if the treaty specifies so.

Q4e. What is the level of **administrative fees** for third-country nationals in your Member State? Please elaborate also on other types of fees (e.g. administrative fees at universities)

Please elaborate:

Public and state higher education institutions can collect the following fees from students:

a) fee for organizing the admission procedure; the amount depends on the real costs the university has to spend for these activities and cannot exceed 25% of the basic amount (see Q4d),

b) fee for activities related to the rigorous procedure and the rigorous thesis defence; the amount cannot exceed 150% of the basic amount,

c) fee for activities related to issuing a diploma by which an academic degree is awarded to MA study graduates who passed the rigorous examination; the amount cannot exceed 30% of the basic amount,

d) fees for issuing the proofs of study and their copies, proofs of graduation if needed in a foreign language and copies of proofs of graduation; the amount is defined by an internal regulation of a public higher education institution and depends on the real costs connected to these activities.

The amount is the same for Slovak citizens and foreign students.

As the rules related to various administrative fees for foreign students equate to those for the Slovak citizens, this system can be considered as a means to attract foreign students to study at a higher education institution in Slovakia.

Q4f. Are international students required to provide a proof of sufficient **knowledge of the language** of the course?⁴⁴ If so, what is the required level? Does the student have to provide an attestation (e.g. TOEFL test)?

Yes, proof of sufficient knowledge of the language of the course is required in general.

⁴⁴ See Article 11(1)(c) of the Students and Researchers Directive

- A proof is required for specific courses.
- No, proof of sufficient knowledge of the language of the course is not required.

If proof is required (either in general or for specific courses), please elaborate and specify the required level, using the levels defined by the CEFR:⁴⁵

Please elaborate:

- The student has to provide an attestation.
- Yes, an attestation is required for all courses.
- An attestation is required for specific courses.
- No.

Q4g. Are international students automatically qualified for **health insurance**?⁴⁶

- Yes, students automatically qualify for health insurance.
- No, students need to submit proof of health insurance.

Please elaborate:

Generally, the foreign students do not automatically qualify for public health insurance because of their study. Obligatory public health insurance is automatic only for those foreign students who study in the SR on the basis of an international agreement.

Other foreign students are obliged to arrange (commercial) health insurance within three working days after accepting the proof of residence. Foreign students with temporary residence for the purposes of special activity or having temporary residence as a person with long-term residence in another EU MS are obliged to submit a proof of health insurance to the respective Foreign Police Department of the Police Force within 30 days after accepting the proof of residence. Those foreign students with temporary residence for the purposes of study are not obliged to submit the proof of health insurance to the Foreign Police Department of the Police Force. However, this does not mean they are not obliged to have a health insurance during the entire length of their residence in the SR.

The fact that the foreign students generally do not have access to public health insurance can be considered an obstacle in attracting them to study in the SR.

Q4h. Is there a pre-determined level of **sufficient resources** for international students at national level?⁴⁷ If so, what is the level of sufficient resources and what type of resources are accepted?

- Yes.
- No.

– What is the level of sufficient resources and what documents are accepted as proof?

Please explain:

Foreign students are obliged to prove they have sufficient resources for the entire length of their residence in the SR at the time of their temporary residence application submission. The level is pre-determined to a subsistence minimum per each month of the residence. If the residence exceeds 12 months, the proven resources must attain to 12 times the subsistence minimum. The amount of subsistence minimum changes each year. In 1 July 2016 it was €205.07.

Proving sufficient resources for their entire stay in the SR in the case of foreign students is on the same basis as for other foreigners coming from the countries outside of the EU/EEA and Switzerland. It could therefore serve as a flexible tool to attract foreign students to study in the SR.

– *What type of resource(s) are accepted by your Member State? Please check all applicable boxes.*

⁴⁵ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/common-european-framework-reference-languages/table-1-cefr-3.3-common-reference-levels-global-scale>

⁴⁶ See Articles 7(1)(c) and 11(2) of the Students and Researchers Directive

⁴⁷ See Articles 7(1)(e), 7(3) and 11(1)(d) of the Students and Researchers Directive

- Bank statement.
- Guarantee by a third person.
- Other, please specify:

Sufficient financial resources may be proven also by the proof of a scholarship award.

Q4i. Other admission conditions

If applicable, please describe any other admission conditions for the purpose of residence on the territory of your Member State:

Please elaborate:

At the time of temporary residence application submission, the SR requires foreign students to provide clean criminal records from the country of origin as well as each state in which they spent more than 90 days during six consecutive months within the past three years.

Following the granting of residence, the student is obliged to present a proof of health condition proving that they do not suffer any illness which might endanger public health.

A clean criminal record and no infectious diseases are the basic conditions for obtaining a temporary residence, or allowing further residence in the SR for all foreigners (if the proof of health condition proving that the foreigner does not suffer any illness which might endanger public health is not submitted within legal deadline, Foreign Police of Police Force cancel the residence). Therefore, it is not possible to assess these conditions as an incentive or a disincentive for foreign students.

2.2 Special incentives for attracting international students

Q5. Please indicate which of the incentives listed below (Q5a-Q5i) are in place in your Member State *and please provide a brief description*. What are the incentives/measures carried out 'centrally' or by individual HEIs. *If measures are carried out by the state/regional authorities, individual HEIs and/or private entities (e.g. companies, research organisations, etc.), please provide examples.*

NB: *Please also state whether measures to attract are targeted to a specific qualification level (ISCED levels 5-8) or sciences/fields of education (e.g. STEM⁴⁸).*

[Possible visual element to be included in the Synthesis report: the incentives used in Member States could be visualised in a one infographics page]

Q5a. Does your Member State carry out **promotional activities and dissemination of information in the countries of origin?** *Please select all boxes that apply and elaborate.*

- Yes, carried out centrally.
- Yes, carried out by HEIs.
- Yes, carried out by other (educational) organisations.
- No.

If you have answered yes, please explain/elaborate by giving 1-2 examples.

The promotion of high education for the MoESRS SR is carried out by SAIA, n.o. (Slovak Academic Information Agency), both by direct participation in international tradeshows abroad, as well as tradeshows organized within the project Study in Europe 2, financed by EC or by providing materials and publications to the diplomatic missions of the SR abroad participating in these expos.

In the case of cooperation with partner countries (third countries) within the Erasmus+ programme, the Slovak Academic Association for International Cooperation (SAAIC) which is the National Erasmus+ Agency for education and vocational training organizes or participates in the common Central European information seminars aimed at informing about the possibility to cooperate with the "partner countries" on the opportunities offered by the Erasmus+ centralized events. It also participates in the NEO/ICP meetings (National Erasmus+ Offices and International Contact Points in the National Agencies). It promotes the possibilities of cooperation on their website and provides exhaustive information during information campaigns, instruction seminars or regular meetings with programme coordinators. It also supports the

⁴⁸ Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics

higher education institutions by means of promoting the networking at the common National Agencies portal.⁴⁹

Promotional activities at individual universities are organized in compliance with their respective internationalization strategies. The higher education institutions promote themselves mainly by participating in the international educational tradeshows or by means of social networks.

Q5b. Are scholarships and bursaries available? *Please select all boxes that apply and elaborate by giving 1-2 examples (incl. the amount, type and length of the scholarship/bursary).*

Yes, provided by the state/regional authorities. *Please elaborate by providing 1-2 examples:*

The SR currently provides government scholarships within the scope of development assistance for foreign students from developing countries. Part of the Government scholarship programme are also Government scholarships within the offer for Slovaks living abroad for foreign students who are Slovaks living abroad.

The Government scholarships are provided for the standard length of study. The scholarship amounts to €280 a month for the study programmes of the first and second level of tertiary education and for language and vocational training in preparation for the study at all levels of tertiary education or to €330 for a third-level study programme. If the average study results of the scholarship beneficiaries stay under 1.3, their scholarship in the following academic year rises by €50 a month. If the PhD candidates pass their exams in the regular period, a motivational addition of €170 is added to their scholarship. Scholarship beneficiaries at all levels of higher education also get a one-time benefit of €35 upon beginning study and of €100 upon graduation.

The SR provides also scholarships resulting from bilateral agreements also concluded with third countries. The scholarship amount equals to the amount of Government scholarship. Conditions and quotas for each country are specified in individual bilateral agreements.

The SR also provides scholarships for foreign students within the National scholarship programme (referred to as "NSP"). The Government of the SR approved in 2005 the creation of NSP to support the mobility of students, PhD students, university teachers, researchers and artists. NSP is financed by MoESRS SR. NSP is also intended to support the mobility of foreign students, PhD students, university teachers, researchers and artists for stays at Slovak Universities and research institutions.

Yes, provided by HEIs. *Please elaborate by giving 1-2 examples:*

Public and state universities can grant motivational scholarships from the state budget and scholarships from their own resources (scholarship fund) to both Slovak and foreign students.

The motivational scholarships from the state budget are the following:

a) field motivational scholarships – the fields of study in which they can be awarded are defined by the MoESRS SR on the basis of labour market analyses and prognosis. They are awarded on the basis of the study results of the student in the previous school year,

b) motivational scholarship for outstanding study results,

c) motivational scholarship for exceptional results in study, research, development, art or sports.

The scholarships under a) can be awarded to a maximum of 50% of students and under b) and c) to a maximum of 10% of students altogether.

The own resources scholarships are granted mainly for outstanding fulfilment of study work, exceptional results in study, research, development, art or sports or as a one-time or regular social benefit.

The conditions for granting both types of scholarships are defined by the scholarship rules of individual universities and faculties while the amount is defined by the university in the decision on scholarship awards.

Yes, provided by private entities. *Please elaborate by giving 1-2 examples:*

Penta Foundation scholarship for Ukrainian students – the entire tuition fee plus €300 per month in selected study programmes at Slovak higher education institutions.

⁴⁹ Source: Questionnaire

No.

Q5c. Are there any other financial incentives or financial support (e.g. loans, tax benefits, etc.) in place?

Yes, provided by the state.

The SR offers the students the possibility of a student loan from the Education Support Fund – in the case of foreign students this applies only for the holders of a Slovak Living Abroad certificate.

Yes, provided by HEIs.

Public and state higher education institutions can provide their students with loans from the scholarship fund in order to cover expenses related to the study and to their other social needs. The conditions for the provision of such loans are defined in the scholarship rules of individual universities.

Yes, provided by private entities.

No.

If you have answered yes, please elaborate by giving 1-2 examples:

Q5d. Are any incentives with regard to family reunification in place?

- Do family members of international students have access to family reunification in your Member State?

Yes.

No.

If yes, do family members have the right to work in your Member State?

Yes.

No.

If you have answered yes, please explain:

The following qualify as family members of a foreign student:

- a) a spouse if both are at least 18 years old,
- b) a single child younger than 18,
- c) a spouse's single child younger than 18,
- d) their dependent single child older than 18 or their spouse's dependent single child older than 18 who cannot care about themselves due to a long-term illness,
- e) their or their spouse's parent who is dependent on them and in their country of origin does not enjoy adequate family support (does not apply for foreign students with the temporary residence for the purposes of study).

They can obtain temporary residence for the purposes of family reunification in the SR.

Such family member can work without needing a special work permit one year after they had been granted temporary residence. During the first year of their stay they can work only on the basis of a work permit.

Q5e. Is any support targeted at **spouses and other family members of international students** offered in your Member State (e.g. counselling spouses to find employment, continue their education or engage in voluntary work, social and networking activities for spouses, help with enrolling children in kindergartens/schools)? *Please select all boxes that apply.*

Yes, support for spouses available.

Yes, support for children available.

Yes, support for other family members available (please specify which family members this includes when elaborating below).

No.

There are no programmes specially targeted to the family members of the foreign students in the SR. All the support forms are provided within the general programmes for supporting TCNs such as employment

counselling, legal counselling, support of education and Slovak language courses via the IOM Migration Information Centre.⁵⁰

Q5f. Are courses offered in English/other languages than the national language(s)?

- Yes.
 No.

If you have answered yes, please elaborate:

Some study programmes are offered in English (medical, economic, technical, humanities), French (humanities, economic) and German or in a combination of Slovak + other language (teaching, humanities, economic).

As compared to the programmes conducted in the national language, it is possible to collect fees for the programmes conducted in a foreign language. This means that the higher education institutions are motivated to provide such courses.

Q5g. Are there any incentives from the state for HEIs providing courses in other languages?

- Yes.
 No.

If you have answered yes, please elaborate:

Q5h. Is there a possibility for a fast-track application for visa/residence permits?

- Yes.
 No.

If you have answered yes, please elaborate:

The SR decides on temporary residence within 90 days. In the case of temporary residence for the purposes of study and special activity, the residence is decided upon within 30 days.

In the case of foreign students who require a visa to enter the Schengen Area, the SR grants them a national visa which enables them to apply for temporary residence on the territory of the SR which in turn considerably speeds up the process. While the national visa is valid, they can study in the SR.

In order to fast track granting of temporary residence to foreign students, the Foreign Police Department of the Police Force makes it possible for the universities to arrange online a special deadline for the submission of temporary residence applications of their students. However, this concerns only the beneficiaries of the Government scholarships and PhD candidates and unfortunately is not available at other Foreign Police Department of the Police Force yet.

Q5i. Are any other incentives not listed above in place?

If applicable, please describe any other incentives in place not mentioned above.

Answer:

Graduating in the SR provides an advantage when seeking temporary residence for the purposes of employment. Each foreign student who successfully graduates at a higher education institution in the SR can work in Slovakia without having to obtain an employment permit or an agreement to fill a vacancy.

2.3 Hosting international students: preparation, arrival and housing

Q6a. What is the nature of the document issued (long-stay visa or residence permit)? *Please indicate the type and length of the residence permit. Please select all relevant boxes.*

- Long-stay visa issued in the third country:

National visa (D type) is granted for 90 days if the issue relates to granting of temporary residence in the territory of the SR and for 1 year (at most) if it is issued in relation to the obligation of the SR based on an international agreement.

⁵⁰ <https://www.mic.iom.sk/sk/>

Residence permit issued (please specify the type and length of the permit):

- a) temporary residence for the purposes of study is granted for the presupposed length of the study, max. for 6 years,
- b) temporary residence for the purposes of special activity is granted for the time needed to achieve the purpose, max. for 2 years,
- c) temporary residence of a TCN who holds a long-term residence permit in another EU MS is granted for the time needed to achieve the purpose, max. for 5 years.

The temporary residence can be renewed in all the cases.

Other (please specify):

- If your Member State issues a residence permit, is this issued in the territory of your Member State or in the third country?

Residence permit issued in the third country:

Residence permit issued in the territory of the Member State. *If so, do you issue a long-stay visa in the third country first (yes/no)?*: yes

Q6b. What are **processing times for visa/residence permit applications** for third-country nationals in your Member State (minimum, maximum and average)?

Please elaborate:

Diplomatic missions of the SR abroad decide on the application for a national visa within 30 days from receiving the application. However, the application must be submitted in person-, after arranging an appointment with the diplomatic mission. At some busy diplomatic missions this can take several weeks and even months.

The Foreign Police decides on the temporary residence permit for the purposes of study and a special activity within 30 days following the submission of the application or its delivery to the respective department of the Foreign Police, if the application was submitted at a diplomatic mission of the SR abroad.

Temporary residence of a TCN with long-term residence in another EU MS is decided by the Foreign Police within 90 days after the submission of the application.

The overall duration of temporary residence application processing significantly depends on the country of origin of the applicant. For the applicants who do not need a visa to enter the Schengen Area or who are authorized to reside in the Schengen Area and are authorized to submit their temporary residence application from the territory of the SR, the Foreign Police departments decide within the legal period (30 or 90 days). As the Foreign Police only accepts complete temporary residence applications (containing all the necessary documents), the procedure might be interrupted and the overall decision-making time prolonged in a small number of cases (e.g. if there is a doubt on the authenticity of a document).

However, the entire process is much longer for the applicants who are not authorized to submit their temporary residence applications on the territory of the SR. As the diplomatic missions accept the applications only in person (as they are obliged to conduct an interview with the applicant), the waiting periods at some busy diplomatic missions are several months long. The need to transfer original documents to competent Foreign Police Department of Police Force is another factor considerably affecting the length of the process, as the submission of original documents which the Foreign Police Departments of Police Force decide upon is a legal condition of the process. The decision deadline starts only after the application is delivered to the respective Foreign Police department of the Police Force while the delivery of documents from some diplomatic missions to Slovakia takes several weeks. If the applicant uses the express courier delivery at his own expenses, the length of the delivery can be considerably shortened.

Q6c. What are the main requirements for the **renewal of a residence permit** for international students (e.g. does the student need to prove his/her attendance in HEI courses or is the study progress measured)?

Please explain:

The main precondition of renewing the temporary residence is that the applicant still studies at the higher education institution. The applicant therefore submits to the Foreign Police the application for the renewal

of the temporary residence together with the confirmation of the high education institution of being a student at the given institution.

In Slovakia, non-attendance or study results are taken into consideration only if they result in the interruption/abolition of the study or the expulsion of the foreign student. The university and the student (in the case of temporary residence for the purposes of study) or only the student (in the case of temporary residence for the purposes of special activity and temporary residence of a TCN who is a person with long-term residence in another EU MS) are obliged to inform the Foreign Police on this fact within three working days which leads to the initiation of the procedure to cancel the temporary residence due to the termination of the purpose of the residence.

Q7. Please indicate if the **hosting initiatives and measures** listed below (Q7a-Q7e) are in place in your Member State. Please state which institution is responsible for these measures.

Q7a. Is induction and orientation support provided in your Member State (incl. opening a bank account, registering in the healthcare system, etc.)? *Please select all relevant boxes.*

Yes, state-organised measures for support in place.

Yes, support provided by HEIs.

No.

If you have answered yes, please elaborate on the support measures provided:

Depending on the number and interest of foreign students the universities organize basic orientation courses or answer foreign students needs on an individual basis through the student tutors.

Q7b. Is support with finding housing and accommodation provided in your Member State? Please select all boxes that apply.

Yes, state-organised measures for support in place.

Yes, support provided by HEIs.

Yes, support provided by other organisations.

No, support not available.

If you have answered yes, please elaborate on the type of support provided:

Higher education institutions offer the foreign students housing in their own student dormitories.

Q7c. Are preparatory courses (incl. language courses, orientation courses, multicultural sessions, intercultural awareness/diversity courses) offered in your Member State?

Yes, state-organised measures for courses in place.

Yes, courses provided by HEIs.

Yes, support provided by other organisations.

No.

If you have answered yes, please elaborate on the courses provided:

Some Slovak higher education institutions offer language and vocational training courses in order to be able to study at the higher education institution. They generally take 2 terms (10 months) and are comprised of 20 – 25 hours per week. Depending on the intended field of study it is possible to take modules for medical, technical, natural science, economics, humanities and law fields. The price ranges between €3 000 and 4 000. The aim is to get the students to the B2 level. The Government scholarships (Q5b) cover these courses, too.

Participation in such a language or vocational training course which is organized and conducted by a higher education institution in the SR is in itself a reason to grant a temporary residence permit for the purposes of study.

The language and vocational training courses in order to be able to study at a higher education institution are also provided by some language schools. However, it is not possible to obtain temporary residence due

to participation in such a course (a foreigner can use the study at a language school only to obtain a national visa).

Slovak language and culture courses are available, too. They are focused mostly on history and culture of Slovakia. They are organized during summer break, take 100 hours and cost approximately €600. Foreigners with the status of Foreign Slovak can benefit from a special scholarship programme aimed at studying on such a course.

Q7d. If applicable, please describe **any other hosting initiatives and measures not mentioned above**.

Please elaborate:

No.

2.4 Rights of international students

Q8. Right to work

Q8a. How many hours are international students allowed to work per week or months per year?⁵¹

[Possible visual element to be included in Synthesis report: map indicating the number of hours in each Member State.]

Please elaborate:

Being allowed to work in the territory of the SR depends on the type of the temporary residence of the student.

- a) temporary residence for the purposes of study – can work 20 hours a week or a corresponding number of days or months a year,
- b) temporary residence for the purposes of special activity – can work only if an international agreement specifies so,
- c) temporary residence of a person with long-term residence in another EU MS – can work after the first year following the granting of temporary residence without any limits and during the first year only on the basis of special work permit.

Q8b. Are any restrictions in place in your Member State in terms of the **type/field of work international students** are allowed to work in?

- Yes, restrictions in place.
- No.

If you have answered yes, please elaborate on the type of restrictions in place:

There are no special restrictions for foreign students per se. However, there are certain positions that can be filled only by the nationals of the SR and/or the nationals of the EU/EEA and Switzerland (public administration, judiciary, police, army etc.).

Q8c. Do students need to obtain **prior authorisation** for the right to work in accordance with national law?

- Yes, prior authorisation required.
- No.

If you have answered yes, please elaborate on the purpose of this prior authorisation and the entity responsible for granting it:

The foreign students with temporary residence for the purposes of study do not need a special employment permit given they were granted the temporary residence for the purpose of study.

If a foreign student was granted temporary residence for the purposes of special activity on the basis of an international agreement, the SR Government or EU programme, the right to work depends on the conditions specified in the agreement or the programme. The right to work can be specified in two ways. Firstly, it can be specified directly which means that foreign students can work without having to obtain a special permit. Secondly, the international agreement can specify that foreign students will be granted employment permits without analysing the labour market situation. In such case they or their employer have to apply for the employment permit at the respective Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family.

For the foreign students having temporary residence as a person with long-term residence in another EU MS, a special work permit issued by the respective Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family is required during the first year following the granting of temporary residence.

The necessity to obtain a work permit is caused by the need to protect the Slovak labour market.

Q8d. Are international students entitled to exercise **self-employed economic activity**?

⁵¹ See Article 24 of the Students and Researchers Directive.

Yes, self-employment possible.

No.

If you have answered yes, please elaborate on the regulations in place:

Foreign students with temporary residence for the purposes of study/having temporary residence as a person with long-term residence in another EU MS may engage in business in the SR during the entire length of their residence, i.e. be self-employed or own a business entity. The only limit is the fulfilment of qualification criteria for individual business fields.

The foreign students with temporary residence for the purposes of special activity may not engage in business.

Q9. Do students have the right to **carry out in parallel to their studies or defer their studies for a training or a job** in the Member State?

Yes, deferral of studies possible.

Yes, carrying out a training/job in parallel to studies possible.

No.

If you have answered yes, please elaborate on the regulations in place:

Foreign students have the right to participate in internships and trainings during their study. To enter employment or conclude work agreements outside employment is allowed only for those foreign students whose temporary residence allows it while adhering to all the legal limits (see Q8a).

If performing such activities required interrupting their studies, foreign students with the temporary residence for the purpose of study/special activity would not be allowed to perform those activities without changing the purpose of their temporary residence (e.g. changing it to employment). Interruption of the study is not a reason for cancelling such temporary residence permits.

Foreign students having temporary residence as a person with long-term residence in another EU MS have the right to undertake various activities at the same time during their residence without the need to change the purpose of the temporary residence.

Q10a. Do students have to **complete their studies within a maximum period of time**?

Yes.

No.

If you have answered yes, please indicate the period:

Yes, the studies cannot exceed the standard length in the individual levels by more than two years.

Q10b. In accordance with Directive 2016/801 Article 21(3),⁵² Member states may withdraw a visa/residence permit in case of a lack of progress in the relevant studies. Has your Member State transposed this provision?

Yes.

No.

If you have answered yes, please elaborate on how the lack of progress is assessed by your Member State:

Lack of progress in studies influences the foreign student's residence status only indirectly – if it causes the student to interrupt or abandon the studies or if they are expelled. In this case the foreign student ceases to be a student of the higher education institution and the purpose of their temporary residence ceases to exist which in turn becomes the reason for cancelling their temporary residence by the Foreign Police.

Q11. Do the **number of years** an international student possesses a residence permit for the purpose of studying count towards being granted access to long-term residence or citizenship?

Yes.

No.

If you have answered yes, please elaborate on the regulations in place:

In order to fulfil the condition of 5-years of uninterrupted residence in the territory of the SR to obtain long-term residence, the years the foreign students stayed as temporary residents for the purposes of study/special activity count in half-length. At the same time, holders of these temporary residence types are not entitled to apply for long-term residence; at the time of applying for long-term residence, their temporary residence has to be granted for another purpose such as employment or entrepreneurship. Temporary residence of a foreign student with long-term residence in another EU MS counts in full.

In order to fulfil the condition of 10-years of uninterrupted residence in the territory of the SR to obtain long-term residence, any type of temporary residence of foreign students counts in full.

⁵² See Article 21(2)(f) of the Students and Researchers Directive

External factors affecting attracting international students

Q12. Based on existing national sources (evaluation reports, media reports, etc.), what are the **external factors** affecting the attraction of international students in your Member State? Please select all relevant boxes.

- HEI rankings
- Member State is a hub for specific fields
- Language in which courses are taught
- Culture
- Socio-economic factors (e.g. living costs)
- Other (please specify):
- No information available.

Please elaborate:

The MESA 10 organisation organized the "To dá rozum [Learning makes sense]" research project in 2017 – 2018⁵³. The project found that the number of foreign students at Slovak universities is increasing but various obstacles to their integration and to the use of their potential exist. It states that the main obstacles of integrating foreign students into the Slovak environment include their limited contact with the Slovak students due to separated education and different study conditions. As for attracting foreign students and employees and using their potential, the research defined the following main obstacles: low number of study programmes in English, complicated administration and conditions for granting residence, insufficient time for the graduates to find jobs.⁵⁴

The foreign students themselves consider the following as the main motivational factors: relatively low school fees, low living expenses as compared to the Western European countries. The language barrier is the main obstacle.⁵⁵

Other factors of interest of potential students whom Slovak exhibitors abroad promoting studies on Slovak universities meet at international education fairs are: placement of Slovak universities in the ranking of the best universities in the world and security situation of the country. Those factors may also play a role in the decision making.

2.5 Challenges and good practices in attracting international students

Q13. What are the (a) **challenges** and (b) **good practices** that have been observed in your Member State on attracting international students and for whom is it considered a challenge/good practice (HEI, Member State, student, other)? For each challenge/good practice: why is this considered a challenge/good practice and is this based on input from experts (if so, which experts)/surveys/evaluation reports/interviews/other?

a) Challenges:

Please elaborate:

MoESRS SR considers the following to be the main challenges in attracting foreign students: improving the quality of service infrastructure (dormitories, lack of language competencies of non-teaching staff at the higher education institutions), better promotion of the study possibilities in the SR (the need for a more substantial investment), public health insurance, funding the language education of foreigners studying in other than the national language, tuition fees for study in a foreign language and complicated authorisation procedure.⁵⁶

b) Good practices:

Please elaborate:

⁵³ Available at: <https://todarozum.sk/>

⁵⁴ Available at: <https://eduworld.sk/cd/zuzana-granska/3142/s-lukac-zahranicnych-studentov-pedagogov-i-vedcov-je-na-slovensku-malo-je-tu-mnogo-barier>

⁵⁵ Sources: <http://gaudeo.sk/zahranicni-studenti-na-slovensku/>, <https://europskenoviny.sk/2017/02/18/zahranicnym-studentom-sa-slovensku-paci/>, <https://www.startitup.sk/slovaci-snivaju-o-zahranici-ale-zahranicni-studenti-su-spokojni-aj-na-slovensku/>

⁵⁶ Source: Questionnaire for MoESRS SR

During their temporary residence for the purposes of study, the foreign students in the SR are entitled to engage in business and to work for a maximum of 20 hours a week. They also have the right to family reunification where the SR does not apply any waiting periods in this respect. After a successful graduation, they have the right to remain in the Slovak republic (by renewing their temporary residence) for 9 months in order to find job or start a business venture. Successfully graduating from a university in the SR provides foreign students with several advantages: they do not have to apply for employment permit or obtain the agreement of their respective Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family for filling a vacancy.

Officially anchoring of the possibility to obtain scholarships for study of foreign students in SR based on bilateral agreements or multilateral programmes is considered as a good practice by the MoESRS SR.

Section 3. Measures and incentives to **retain** international graduates

3.1. Measures and incentives for the retention of international graduates.

This section examines the measures and incentives to retain international graduates after their studies in place in the Member States. Statistics provided in Annex 1.4 and Annex 1.5 will be used to contextualise the measures and incentives reported on by Member States.

NB: in your answers to Q14-16, if applicable, please indicate whether the policy/offer/strategy differs between qualification levels (ISCED levels 5-8).

Q14. Measures and incentives to **retain** international graduates in Member States.

Q14a. What are the conditions for **access after study** to national labour market/ self-employment/ start up or spin-off activities/ research project?

Please briefly outline the conditions:

- For what period of time does your Member State allow students to stay after studies in order to seek employment or set up a business?⁵⁷ What happens after this period?

After their graduation, foreign students with temporary residence for the purposes of study have the right to apply for the renewal of their temporary residence permit for the purposes of study by 9 months in order to look for employment or start a business. However, this does not apply to those foreign students who have temporary residence for the purposes of special activity and to those foreign students with long-term residence in another EU MS (but they can use directly their residence type to be employed or to engage in business).

During the full 9 months, the foreign students have the right to apply for a change of their residence purpose to employment, business or any other temporary residence purpose according to the Act on residence of Foreigners. Otherwise they are obliged to leave the territory of the SR by the last day of their authorized residence at the latest.

Please indicate:

- Does your Member State have any restrictions in place regarding the job field in which the international student can seek employment or set up a business?

Yes.

No.

If you have answered yes, please elaborate on the restrictions in place:

Foreign graduates of Slovak higher education institutions do not have the right to perform those activities which are dependent on citizenship of the SR or of the EU/EEA or Switzerland.

- Does the international student require a minimum level of degree in order to be allowed to stay after studies in order to seek employment or set up a business?⁵⁸

Yes.

⁵⁷ See Article 25(1) of the Students and Researchers Directive

⁵⁸ See Article 25(2) of the Students and Researchers Directive

No.

If you have answered yes, please indicate the minimum level required:

It is the graduation of any level of tertiary education in the territory of the SR; in Slovakia this means the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) level 6.

Q14b. Are there any other particular **policy measures** or incentives to retain international students in place? *Please select all relevant boxes:*

- Lowered salary requirement for a work/residence permit.
- Unrestricted access to the labour market.
- Other incentive(s).
- No.

If you have answered yes, please briefly elaborate on the measures or incentives in place.

Graduating in the SR provides an advantage when seeking temporary residence for the purposes of employment. Each foreign student who successfully graduates at a higher education institution in the SR (regardless of the level) can work in Slovakia without having to obtain an employment permit or an agreement to fill a vacancy.

Q15. Are there **initiatives of HEIs or the private sector** whereby support is provided to students following the completion of their studies? (e.g. in specialised or niche areas, in the form of counselling, contract with students to commence work with a company after the completion of their studies). Please also consider initiatives at a regional level. *Please select all relevant boxes and if applicable, please provide best practice examples of the initiatives of universities/HEIs, private sector, local governments, etc. in the retention of international graduates (e.g. in specialised and niche areas, in the form of scholarships, apprenticeship contracts, counselling, etc.).*

- Yes, initiatives implemented by HEIs.
- Yes, initiatives implemented by the private sector.
- Other initiatives.
- No.

If you have answered yes, please elaborate and provide 1-2 examples of best practices:

The higher education institutions organize career counselling activities for final year students (future graduates). However, these are not directly specialized and/or limited to foreign students. Typical activities in this respect include the consultation on drafting a CV, preparation for job interview, organizing career days or work opportunities tradeshows. Some higher education institutions have created a specialized portal for graduates where they publish job offers in relevant fields. Another interesting venture is the creation of university careers clubs whose members (employers) can publish job offers, organize lectures, workshops, discussions, or (model) job interviews (on-campus recruiting) directly at the higher education institution. There are also employment/training programmes for the graduates in the private sector, too, but these are not specifically targeted to foreign students.⁵⁹

Q16. Does your government and/or HEIs implement any strategies in your Member State to **encourage former international graduates** (i.e. international alumni who have already left the Member State) to establish and/or maintain a connection to the national labour market)? *Please select all relevant boxes.*

- Yes, strategy implemented by HEIs.
- Yes, strategy implemented by the government.
- No.

If you have answered yes, please elaborate on the main elements of the strategy:

3.2 Challenges and good practices in retaining international students

⁵⁹ See <http://www.trainee-vw.sk/>

Q17. What are the (a) **challenges** and (b) **good practices** that have been observed in your Member State on retaining international students and for whom is it considered a challenge/good practice (HEIs, Member State, student, other)? For each challenge/good practice: why is this considered a challenge/good practice and is this based on input from experts (if so, which experts)/studies/evaluation reports/surveys/interviews/other? Please briefly summarise the input and findings of these experts/studies/evaluation reports/interviews/other.

A) Challenges:

Please elaborate:

The main challenge in Slovakia is to retain any foreign graduates. Nationally, there is no comprehensive strategy for retention and on the legislative level there have only been a few measures adopted in this respect, e.g. the possibility to prolong the granted temporary residence permit for the purposes of university study by 9 months in order to look for employment or set up a business, not analysing labour market when employing the foreign graduates of the Slovak higher education institutions. However, these measures are accompanied by challenges. If the graduates do find employment, they do not have the right to get employed right away under their extended residence. They have to apply for a change of the temporary residence purpose to employment which can take further 1 – 3 months depending on the employer.

Another challenge is the integration of foreign students, increasing contact with Slovak students what is currently very limited⁶⁰.

Regarding student mobility within the bilateral agreements or international programmes, there is a problem of insufficient scholarships as their amount does not always correspond to the living expenses in Slovakia.

Foreign students do not have access to the public health insurance may be considered as a barrier to attracting foreign students to study in the SR.

B) Good practices:

Please elaborate:

A relatively good practice is not analysing the labour market when employing foreign graduates of Slovak higher education institutions.⁶¹ When granting the residence, it is not checked whether the vacancy can be filled by a job seeker (registered in the COLSAF database) which shortens the period of obtaining the temporary residence for the purposes of employment. The Labour market check is not only omitted when changing the residence purpose for the first time (from study to employment) but also later when renewing the residence permit or changing employment.

The fact that the students are allowed to engage in business during studies without having to change their residence purpose gives them room to test the local market and better prepare for the after-graduation change of residence purpose.

Section 4: Bilateral and multilateral cooperation with third countries

Q18. Has your Member State concluded and/or intends to conclude any **bilateral and/or multilateral agreements** with countries of origin concerning international students? Please distinguish between agreements in place with countries with developed economies and those with developing economies⁶² as classified by the United Nations⁶³ and summarise and provide an overview of the type of agreements – without listing all the agreements and detailed provisions.

[Possible visual element to be included in the Synthesis report: map indicating the regions/countries of origin with which agreements are in place.]

⁶⁰ Information provided by the MoESRS SR.

⁶¹ Ukrainian Students in Slovak Republic: Policies of Engagement, Integration, Students' Motivation and Plans. Available at: <https://cedos.org.ua/en/articles/ukrainski-studenty-u-slovachchyni-polityky-zaluchennia-intehratsii-ta-motyvatsiia-i-plany-studentiv>

⁶² This distinction is relevant as the objectives and purpose of such agreements could differ significantly between these two categories.

⁶³ http://unctadstat.unctad.org/EN/Classifications/DimCountries_DevelopmentStatus_Hierarchy.pdf

☒ Yes, bilateral/multilateral agreements in place or planned with industrialised countries. Please elaborate on the aspects listed below):

- The most common provisions of the agreements;
- Most common world regions/countries of origin with which agreements have been concluded;
- Are specific fields of studies or qualification levels covered in the agreements?
- Are specific categories of persons covered under the agreements? (e.g. specific age groups; gender; other socio-demographic characteristics).

The SR has concluded two international agreements concerning foreign students in the SR with developed economies. Although the nature of agreements with the US and Israel is rather different, they still enable the nationals of the two countries to conduct a part of their studies in Slovakia. The agreement with the US is governed by the J. W. Fulbright Commission for Educational Exchange in the Slovak Republic. The agreement itself does not specify the provisions on the Commission programmes or the number of supported students. However, it does state the following as one of the main Commission activities: *"to prepare, adopt and implement the Commission programmes such as funding of studies, research, training and further educational activity of the United States citizens or persons with a permanent residence in the territory of the United States in the Slovak Republic."*⁶⁴ The Community, through the Fulbright Student Programme, currently grants the American students one academic year long scholarships to study or conduct research in any field of study in Slovakia. In 2017 (28.06), the Government of SR approved material of the MoESRS SR *"Proposal for Amendment to the Agreement between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of the Slovak Republic concerning the J. William Fulbright Commission for Educational Exchange in the Slovak Republic, signed on 22 March 2005 in Bratislava"*. The Amendment to the Agreement entered into force on 30 July 2017. The subject of the Amendment to the Agreement was the modification of conditions of residence for American holders of J. W. Fulbright scholarship and their direct family members during the study stay in Slovak Republic. Thus, national visa type "D" can be issued to the American holders of scholarship, which will simplify the process of ensuring their stay in SR.

The agreement with Israel is a time-limited cooperation programme with specific measures regarding education, science, culture, youth and sports. Regarding the acceptance of Israeli students to studies in the SR, the SR contractually committed to grant one scholarship a year for the Studia Academica Slovaca (SAS) language course by the Comenius University and one scholarship for one academic year long scholarship stay in SR for a PhD candidate.

Although the agreements with Canada and New Zealand on the mobility of young people do not directly concern the studies of foreign students, they enable the citizens of the two countries to reside in Slovakia for a maximum of one year within the working holiday programme. The programme can be used not only to obtain work experience but also to get further education by means of studying in Slovakia.

☒ Yes, bilateral/multilateral agreements in place or planned with developing countries. Please elaborate on the aspects listed below):

- The most common provisions of the agreements;
- Most common world regions/countries of origin with which agreements have been concluded;
- Are specific fields of studies or qualification levels covered in the agreements?
- Are specific categories of persons covered under the agreements? (e.g. specific age groups; gender; other socio-demographic characteristics).

Slovakia has concluded five bilateral agreements with developing countries⁶⁵. In two cases (India and Mexico) they are framework agreements and contain general provisions on educational cooperation including the declaration of willingness of contractual parties to organize student exchanges or promote doctoral studies. (Also the Memorandum of Educational Cooperation with the Republic of Korea speaks

⁶⁴Agreement between the Government of the Slovak Republic and the Government of the United States on the J. W. Fulbright Commission for Educational Exchange in the Slovak Republic. Available at: <https://www.minedu.sk/data/files/1910.pdf>

⁶⁵UNCTAD classification:

http://unctadstat.unctad.org/EN/Classifications/DimCountries_DevelopmentStatus_Hierarchy.pdf

about university students exchanges, but by its introductory provisions it is not an international agreement setting the contractual parties' rights and duties under the international law.)

In three other agreements (with China, Egypt and Turkey), the SR commits to the provision of scholarships for short- and long-term study stays. The citizens of contractual parties get 1 – 2 scholarship places in the SAS summer Slovak language course including accommodation, food and travelling costs (within Slovakia) to excursions within the course programme and allowance.

The number of scholarships for a part of university studies differs in individual cases (e.g. max. 15 persons a year in the first to third level of study, 15 months a year divided between the students of the first and second level of study while an individual can stay for 3 – 5 months, the 8-month long scholarship for PhD candidates which can be divided in two 4-month long stays). The scholarship beneficiaries can study free of charge, get a scholarship to cover their living expenses and can use the accommodation and food facilities of the higher education institutions as can the Slovak students. In one case the agreement counts on the possibility of allocating money for two scholarships for the entire (three year long) doctoral studies.

☒ Yes, bilateral/multilateral agreements in place or planned with transition countries. Please elaborate on the aspects listed below):

- The most common provisions of the agreements;
- Most common world regions/countries of origin with which agreements have been concluded;
- Are specific fields of studies or qualification levels covered in the agreements?
- Are specific categories of persons covered under the agreements? (e.g. specific age groups; gender; other socio-demographic characteristics).

Slovakia has the most agreements concluded with the transition countries. Apart from 8 bilateral agreements (Belarus, Montenegro, Kazakhstan, Macedonia, Moldova, Russia, Serbia, Ukraine), six countries from this category (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Moldova, Serbia) are the contractual parties to the Central European Exchange Programme for University Studies (CEEPUS) Agreement.

The bilateral agreements usually contain the provisions on scholarships for a part of university studies and a language course. Five agreements guarantee 1 – 5 scholarship places (the numbers differ in individual countries) in the summer SAS Slovak language course. Slovakia also commits to accepting the students of all levels of study, usually for one- or two-term stays. The quotas of individual agreements are defined either by the number of persons or an overall number of scholarship months with a minimum or maximum length of the individual stays (e.g. 6 scholarship places for students while the overall length of stay for each of them is 10 months, 30 months for all three levels of study while the minimum length of one study stay is three months). Doctoral students are included and evaluated in the research/teaching employees category in four cases, in the student category in three cases and have a special separate quota in one case. The highest quota is the one for the Russian students who get 20 5-month long scholarship places (together max. 100 months) for the first and second level of study. The scholarship beneficiaries' can study free of charge, receive scholarship payments and get the accommodation under the same conditions as the Slovak students.

Separate quotas are reserved for term-long stays of Slovak language teaching students as well as for a complete tertiary education of persons of Slovak origin (the "Slovaks Living Abroad").

The CEEPUS agreement enables the students and PhD candidates from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Macedonia, Moldova and Serbia⁶⁶ to come for 3- to 10-month long study stays or short-term stays (1 – 2 months) connected with the preparation of their Bachelor, Master or Doctoral thesis at Slovak higher education institutions. Slovakia every year defines the number of scholarship months available to foreign students while (in compliance with the given agreement) each contractual party is obliged to define a quota of at least 100 scholarship months per one academic year.

The Agreement Concerning the Establishment of the International Visegrad Fund is a specific agreement concerning the study of foreign students. Although no third country is a contractual party to this agreement, the fund established by the agreement grants the scholarships and grants not only to the V4 applicants but

⁶⁶For the purpose of this study and in compliance with its focus only those contractual parties are selected from the complete list which are not the EU Member States.

also to the applicants outside of the V4, especially to the Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership countries. It enables the Master students and PhD candidates from Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Georgia, Republic of Kosovo, Macedonia, Moldova, Serbia and Ukraine to come for max. 4-term⁶⁷ study stays (among other countries) to Slovakia.

No bilateral/multilateral agreements in place or planned.

Q19. Are there any measures or incentives in place to avoid **brain drain** in the country of origin when attracting and retaining international students?

Yes, measures related to brain drain in place.

No.

If you have answered yes, please elaborate on the measures in place:

The prevention of brain drain from the countries of origin is not a priority issue at the moment, especially given the fact that Slovakia belongs to the countries whose citizens leave to study abroad in large numbers.⁶⁸ In terms of bilateral agreements, the term brain circulation is used as the students who complete a part of their study in Slovakia, go back to their domestic university and finish their education there. Regarding the Government scholarships granted within the official development assistance, the graduates are again expected to return back to their countries of origin afterwards.⁶⁹

Q20. Do HEIs in your Member States have **initiatives and cooperation agreements with HEIs** in third countries in place? If so, what types of agreements and for which purpose (e.g. student exchange programmes)? *If there are many different agreements in place, please only provide 1-2 examples of agreements in place.*

Yes.

No.

If you have answered yes, please elaborate on the initiatives/cooperation agreements in place and provide 1-2 examples:

Slovak higher education institutions have many cooperation agreements concluded with third-country higher education institutions. The most frequent aim of such agreements is to enable student and employee exchanges (academic and non-academic), to organize joint scientific events and joint research, to cooperate in international projects, to publish joint publications or create joint study programmes.

Q21. What are the (a) **challenges** and (b) **good practices** that have been observed in your Member State with regard to bilateral and multilateral agreements and for whom is this considered a challenge/good practice (HEIs, Member State, student, other)? For each challenge/good practice, why is it considered a challenge/good practice and is this based on input from experts (if so, which experts)/studies/evaluation reports/surveys/interviews/other? Please briefly summarise the input and findings of these experts/studies/evaluation reports/interviews/other

A) Challenges:

Please elaborate:

Information not available.

B) Good practices:

Please elaborate:

Participation of the MoESRS SR in international activities and initiatives in the foreign students' mobility and integration.

⁶⁷The max. length of 4 terms applies to the Masters students. The PhD candidates can apply for scholarships of max. 2 terms.

⁶⁸ Source: Questionnaire for MoESRS SR

⁶⁹The indicator of an effective and successful programme is a successful graduation and subsequent employment of graduates in their countries of origin, if they return. (Strednodobá stratégia rozvojevej spolupráce [Mid-Term Development Cooperation Strategy]: https://www.mzv.sk/documents/10182/68590/Strednodoba+strategia+ODA+SR+2014-2018_SK_11_02_2014.pdf/7e146c6b-a621-42a5-b56c-76c58a6c8a5a)