**Key Features of the Education System**

**Public schools** provide primary and secondary education **free of charge**. Higher education is free for full-time students as well, providing that they do not exceed the standard length of study. Private and church schools may charge for education provided.

Slovak language is the **language of instruction** at most schools, however, schools with teaching languages of minorities or ethnic groups are founded as well. In addition to the state language, education takes place also in Hungarian, Ukrainian, Bulgarian, Ruthenian, and German language.

Education in all types of schools (ISCED 0-3) takes place in compliance with **state educational programmes**, which defines the compulsory content. State educational programmes are published by the **Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic** [1] (Ministerstvo školstva, vedy, výskumu a športu SR).

All primary and secondary school **teachers** and higher education teachers must have a master’s degree.

The Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic, the central **public administration authority for education**, is responsible for the development of the content, goals and methods of education. Local self-governance is within the competence of municipalities, which provide most of pre-primary, primary and lower secondary education in Slovakia. Regional governance is within the competence of higher territorial units, which provide most of upper secondary education. Municipalities and higher territorial units organise and fund the cooperation with founders in their territorial competence, provide methodological and counselling services, monitor compliance with generally binding legal regulations and provide space and material to schools they founded.

All schools that provide primary and secondary education are **legal entities**. The headteacher is responsible for the compliance with valid regulations, state and school educational programmes, school’s professional and pedagogical work quality and the efficiency of school’s economy.

**Higher education institutions** are independent institutions and they manage the course and focus of education, research, development, economy and their own internal organisation. Law defines the extent of self-governing scope of higher education institutions.

**Financing of schools** is normative-based. State budget allocates funds to schools according to the number of pupils, personnel and economic demands. In addition to public schools the state budget also finances private and church schools.

**Quality monitoring** of primary and secondary education is provided by internal and external
evaluation. Each school carries out internal evaluation as self-evaluation; external institutions carry out external evaluation - the State School Inspection (Štátna školská inšpekcia) and the National Institute of Certified Measurement in Education (Národný ústav certifikovaných meraní vzdelávania). Evaluation of higher education institutions is within the competence of the Accreditation Commission (Akreditačná komisia), which is a counselling body of the Slovak Government. Accreditation Commission evaluates the efficiency and quality of each higher education institution and gives recommendations on improving the institutions’ work.

Stages of the Education System

Nurseries (detské jasle) provide care of children between the age of 6 months and 3 years. Nurseries are not a part of the education system. Municipalities found nurseries; private entities or church can also run nurseries.

Pre-primary education is the first stage of the education system. Kindergartens (materské školy) for children between ages of three and six provide pre-primary education.

Compulsory school attendance lasts ten years (between the age of 6 and 16) and pupils complete it by finishing the first year of upper secondary education or by reaching the age of 16.

Primary and lower secondary education are a 9 year long single structure system (primary education lasts 4 years, lower secondary education lasts 5 years). Primary and lower secondary education takes place at primary schools (základné školy), where children start to fulfil their compulsory school attendance at the age of six.

Upper secondary education starting age is 15 and its organisation structure divides into general, vocational and art education. Four, five or eight-year Gymnasia (gymnáziá) (age of 11-18) provide general upper secondary education. In addition to upper secondary vocational education, secondary vocational schools (stredné odborné školy) also provide educational programmes of post secondary education and tertiary professional education. Study at secondary vocational schools lasts from two to five years. Conservatories (konzervatória), which are a specific type of school providing lower and upper secondary education as well as tertiary professional education, provide art education.

Higher education has three levels - Bachelor, Master and PhD study programmes – fully within the competence of universities (univerzity) and higher education institutions (vysoké školy).

Adult education provides a possibility to supplement, extend and enhance one’s obtained education, re-qualify or satisfy one’s interests (universities of the third age, language education). It takes place in further education institutions, schools and non-school institutions.

Structure of the National Education System

Common European Reference Tools Provided by the Eurypdice Network

- National Student Fee and Support Systems [7]
- Organisation of the Academic Year in Higher Education [8]
- Organisation of School Time in Europe [9] (Primary and general secondary education)
- Recommended Annual Instruction Time in Full-Time Compulsory Education in Europe [10](Presented by grades/stages for full time compulsory education as well as by subject and country.)
- Teachers and School Heads Salaries and Allowances in Europe [11](Salaries and allowances of teachers and school heads at pre-primary, primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education levels.)

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