The tertiary education in Slovenia includes the short-cycle higher vocational education and higher education. Since 2012, both domains have been under the responsibility of the Ministry of education. Both subsystems of tertiary education are interrelated. The graduates of the short-cycle higher vocational education may and can continue their studies to advanced Years of the higher education, and by the decision of the Council of experts for higher education as a rule, in the second Year of higher technical education. The final say on it have higher education technical institutions and faculties. Tools for greater transparency of education (credit system, diploma supplement, and system of quality, including the system of external evaluation) are instituted at all levels of tertiary education.

**Short-cycle higher vocational education**

The short-cycle higher vocational education in Slovenia is specified by law, namely the Higher Vocational Education Act. It is provided by both public and private higher vocational colleges. The practice orientated study programmes extend over 2 years and emerge out of actual economic staffing needs. The students develop vocational competences as specified by vocational standards adopted by the minister of labour under the recommendation of the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for vocational education and training. The graduates are qualified to manage, plan, and supervise work processes.

The short-cycle higher vocational education, in Slovenia too, has been interrelating increasingly to the international environment, and its development has been under great influence of the Bologna declaration (since 1999) and the Copenhagen declaration (2002). To implement freedom of movement of persons and recognition of vocational qualifications in the EU member states, the law specifies explicitly that vocational standards and study programmes shall be comparable at the European level. The responsible authorities promote and encourage the combined study programmes and programmes of continuous training and/or lifelong training. In 2016, the competent council of experts amended in agreement with the minister of education the Starting points for the development of short-cycle higher vocational education study programmes, and now, it will be possible to develop programmes of continuing education and training or specialisation not to award new level of educational qualification, but to improve and extend vocational competences.

**Higher education**

The higher education in Slovenia is provided by law, namely the Higher Education Act. The studies are organised by both public and private universities, and other higher education institutions, namely at faculties, art academies, and higher vocational colleges. Private faculties and art academies, and public and private higher vocational colleges may be established as autonomous higher education institutions that may further form an association of higher education institutions. Under special conditions, it is allowed to form an international association of universities.
The main functions of the higher education institutions, i.e. scientific R&D and education, are provided by law. The five to ten year strategic goals are defined with the Higher Education Master Plan that is adopted by the Parliament. The development of such a plan is the result of higher education partners, the Council of Experts of the Republic of Slovenia for Higher Education, and the National Science and Technology Council joined forces.

The key goals of the Higher Education Master Plan from 2011 to 2020 (sl) that the Parliament adopted in May 2011 are quality and excellence, diversity and accessibility, internationalization, diversification of study structures, and substantial financing of higher education; in particular the plan's goals are:

- redefine the types of higher education institutions and requirements or conditions of founding and pursuing the activities of such institutions
- enable autonomous decision-making about internal organisational structure within the new arrangement of higher education institutions
- create a system of internal organisation of universities that shall promote cooperation between departments and/or members and support greater number of interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary programmes
- arrange adequate conditions for separate provision of academic and professional tertiary education
- reduce the number of study programmes and allow for greater selectivity of content
- update the system of habilitations and reduce the number of habilitation domains
- arrange workloads, compensations, and progression of staff
- to improve the cooperation of higher education institutions with public research institutions, and
- to improve the cooperation of higher education institutions with the economic and non-commercial sectors.

The amended Higher education Act (sl) constitutes legal framework for the implementation of the three-cycle higher education system that recognises the goals of the Bologna process and the goals of a common European higher education space. The first cycle study programmes or bachelor degree programmes are academic or professional. The second cycle programmes are master programmes. The common master study programmes that lead directly to master's degree shall focus on education and training for occupations or professions according to the EU directives or special rules of the Republic of Slovenia. The third-cycle programmes are PhD programmes. At all three levels, students may choose to take combined study programmes. The higher education institutions may develop, accredit, and provide programmes of further training, i.e. within the scope of lifelong learning. The implementation of the credit system (ECTS) has been required since 2002.

Universities, faculties, and art academies may provide study programmes of all cycles. Higher vocational colleges provide, as a rule, the first cycle programmes (undergraduate); if they meet special stipulations, they may provide the second cycle programmes (graduate). The entry requirements are provided by law provisionally, in detail they are specified for a given study programme. If certain requirements are met, students have the option to transfer from one study programme to another at the same level. Graduates receive a diploma and a professional or academic title in accordance with the Professional and Academic Titles Act (sl). Since 2001/2002, graduates receive diplomas and diploma supplements, and since 2007, they receive them both free of charge in Slovene language as well as in one of the official languages of the EU.

The studies are either full-time or part-time. The school year begins on October 1 and ends on September 30. The study programmes are specified in detail by higher education institutions, namely the institutions issue respective study calendars. The school year commonly includes two semesters of 15 working weeks each, and three periods of examination. The language of instruction is Slovene.
Under conditions stipulated by law and relevant Statute, higher education institutions may provide a specific study programme or part of it in a foreign language, too.

To assure quality of the higher education institutions and study programmes, one institutes the procedures of accreditations and applies an internal and external evaluation. From 1994 to 2010, the accreditation of higher education institutions and study programmes was the responsibility of the National Council for Higher Education of the Republic of Slovenia [8]; since 2006, its responsibilities extended to the voluntary external evaluation. In the spring of 2010, one founded the Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (NAKVIS [9]) to assume those functions. The internal evaluation remains the responsibility of higher education institutions.

In accordance with the Assessment and recognition of education Act (sl [10]), the studies completed abroad shall be recognized in Slovenia, as well.

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