

The education system of

Slovakia

described and compared with
the Dutch system

This document contains information on the education system in Slovakia. We explain the Dutch equivalent of the most common qualifications from Slovakia for the purpose of admission to Dutch higher education.

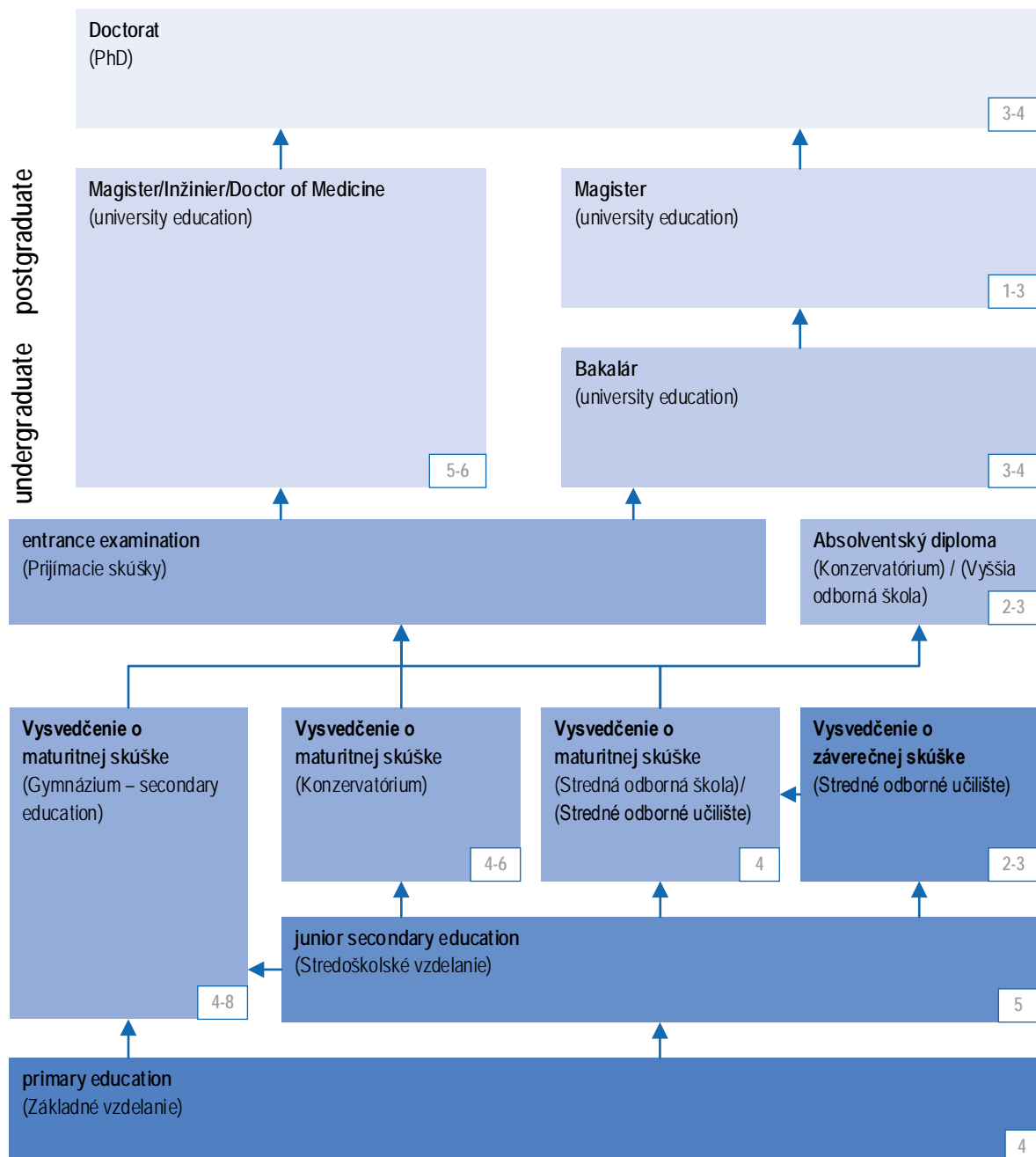
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We assemble the information for these descriptions of education systems with the greatest care. However, we cannot be held responsible for the consequences of errors or incomplete information in this document.



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Education system Slovakia



 Duration of education

Evaluation chart

The left-hand column in the table below lists the most common foreign qualifications applicable to admission to higher education. The other columns show the Dutch equivalent along with the comparable levels in the Dutch and European qualifications frameworks.

Degree or qualification	Dutch equivalent and NLQF level	EQF level
Vysvedčenie o záverečnej skúške obtained at a <i>Stredné odborné učilište</i>	MBO diploma, qualification level 1 or 2	1-2
Vysvedčenie o maturitnej skúške obtained at a <i>Stredná odborná škola</i>	HAVO diploma for the general education component	4
Vysvedčenie o maturitnej skúške obtained at a <i>Stredné odborné učilište</i>	HAVO diploma for the general education component	4
Vysvedčenie o maturitnej skúške obtained at a <i>Konzervatórium</i>	HAVO diploma for the general education component	4
Vysvedčenie o maturitnej skúške obtained at a <i>Gymnázium</i>	VWO diploma	4+
<i>Absolventský diplom</i> obtained at a <i>Vyššia odborná škola</i> or a <i>Konzervatórium</i> (2-3 years)	at most 2 years of HBO	5
<i>Diplom with Bakalár degree</i>	HBO or WO bachelor's degree	6
<i>Diplom with the degree of Magister/Inžinier</i>	HBO or WO master's degree	7

NB

- The information provided in the table is a general recommendation from which no rights may be derived.
- NLQF = Dutch Qualifications Framework. EQF = European Qualifications Framework.
- The EQF/[NLQF level](#) is not so much a reflection of study load or content; rather, it is an indication of a person's knowledge and skills after having completed a certain programme of study.
- Information about Dutch equivalent qualifications can be found on our website: [the Dutch education system](#).

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- [The Cooperation Organisation for Vocational Education, Training and the Labour Market \(SBB\)](#), evaluates statements on foreign qualifications and training at VMBO and MBO level. The evaluation may vary if SBB evaluates the diploma for admission to VET schools or the labour market in the Netherlands.

■ Introduction

From 1946 to 1989, the Czechoslovak Republic was a federation consisting of the Slovak and Czech republics. Czechoslovakia became independent following the Velvet Revolution of 1989. On 1 January 1993, the federation was dissolved and the Czech and Slovak republics parted ways. Slovakia is a parliamentary democracy with a president as head of state. Modern-day Slovakia has 8 regions. Slovakia became an EU Member State in 2004.

The education systems in the Czech Republic and Slovakia have a lot in common due to the nations' former unity. Slovakia's oldest university was *Academia Istropolitana*, founded in Bratislava in 1456 by Matthias Corvinus, king of Hungary. In 1919 the *Univerzita Komenského v Bratislave* (Comenius University) was founded in Bratislava. The foundation of Comenius University was a groundbreaking event that strongly influenced the cultural and social development of Slovakia.

After 1948, higher education was organized in accordance with the principles of 'united' education under state supervision. The former Higher Education Act No. 58/1950 was based on the communist model of planning and control of higher education institutions. The aim of higher education was to train 'specialists in the field of politics and profession' that were loyal to socialism.

Currently, there are 20 state universities and 6 recognised private higher education institutions with a total of 42 faculties. Also, there are 2 military and 4 theological institutions.

Following approval of Act No. 172/1990 of the Law Code on Higher Education, Slovakia's higher education system developed to reflect European higher education in such areas as academic freedom and study programme diversity. On 1 April 2002, the new education act, Act No. 131/2002 on Higher Education came into effect. This act lays down, among other things, conditions determining the legal status of higher education institutions, fields of study, academic titles, evaluations and accreditation. This act has been amended multiple times and supplemented with other laws, such as Law Code, 332/2005. The main aim of the most recent amendment to the higher education act, Act No. 363/2007 of the Law Code, is to raise the standard of higher education and higher education institutions. Slovakia has furthermore now introduced part-time education. Each higher education institute is free to decide what kind of part-time education it offers.

The *Ministerstvo školstva, vedy, výskumu a športu SR* (Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic) is responsible for the strategy and policy with regard to the education system. The ministry defines the content of the educational programme and is responsible for financial policies.

In Slovakia, higher education is provided through a unitary system in which the distinction between academic education and higher professional education is often not clear. Some programmes have the characteristics of both higher professionally oriented education and university education. Examples include teacher training for primary education at universities.

Although education is provided in the Slovak language, there is a slow but steady trend towards English-taught programmes in higher education due to the influence of the Bologna Process. Slovakia also has bilingual (French or Hungarian) secondary schools.

The period for compulsory school attendance is set at 10 years and starts at the age of 6. Pre-school education (for children between ages 3 and 6) is not compulsory.

The academic year runs from September to August.

■ Primary and secondary education

Schools are classified on the basis of the nature and level of education they offer.

The *materská škola* (pre-school or kindergarten) provides pre-primary education for children in the age 3 to 6 group. This form of education is not compulsory. The *predškolská výchova* can also provide special education for children with specific learning needs.

Základné vzdelávanie (basic and general education) is provided by the *základná škola* (basic education), has a duration of 9 years and is compulsory. From the age of 6, children can be admitted to the *základné vzdelávanie*. The first stage lasts 4 years (grade 1-4, ages 6-9) and the second stage lasts 5 years (grade 5-9, ages 10-14).

After completing the first stage, pupils can transfer to an 8-year *Gymnázium* or to secondary (vocational) education. Pupils can also transfer during the second stage (up to the sixth year) to a 6-year *Gymnázium*. Upon completion of primary and lower secondary education, pupils will have achieved the level of *základné vzdelávanie*, or general secondary education level. They are only awarded a *Vysvedčenie*, or final report, which is not a diploma.

After having completed the *Gymnázium* and taken a final examination, pupils are awarded the *Vysvedčenie o maturitnej skúške* (literal translation: final examination certificate). Pupils take final examinations in 4 subjects: oral or written exams in Slovak language and literature, an oral exam in mathematics or a foreign language and oral exams in 2 electives.

Pupils generally receive 31 hours of instruction per week. Each diploma states the results for each subject as well as the average final grade (varying from 'graduated' to 'outstanding with honours'). The bottom centre of the page always features a stamp from the school at which the diploma was obtained.

In terms of level, the *Vysvedčenie o maturitnej skúške* obtained at a *Gymnázium*, is comparable to a VWO diploma.

The *Vysvedčenie o maturitnej skúške* is also issued by *Stredná odborná škola* or *Stredné odborné učilište* (see below). It is thus important to check from which type of school the diploma was obtained. The top left-hand corner of the diploma will state at which type of school the diploma was obtained. The accompanying *Vysvedčenie* lists the pupil's subjects and grades.

Secondary vocational education

Secondary vocational education is provided at *Stredná odborná škola* (secondary vocational education) or *Stredné odborné učilište* (secondary education).

Stredná odborná škola (SOŠ) are secondary vocational programmes that prepare pupils for a career in management, education, healthcare, technology, economics, social law, administrative or artistic professions. After completion of a 4-year programme, pupils receive a *Vysvedčenie o maturitnej skúške* (final examination certificate). Education builds upon the first stage of lower secondary education (9 years of education) and starts at age 15. Most programmes have a nominal duration of 2 to 4 years.

Stredné odborné školy teach both general education subjects (40%) and vocational subjects (60%). The final examination tests knowledge of two general education subjects and three vocational subjects (practice and theory). The *Vysvedčenie o maturitnej skúške* (final examination certificate) offers access to higher education entrance examinations.

Most SOŠ programmes have a nominal duration of 4 years, but there are also 2 and 3-year programmes, which are completed by the award of a *Výučný List* (apprenticeship certificate). The 4-year programme is the only programme to be completed with the *Vysvedčenie o maturitnej skúške*. This diploma has the same legal validity as a *Vysvedčenie o maturitnej skúške* obtained from a *Gymnázium* and grants access to higher education entrance examinations.

In terms of level, a *Vysvedčenie o maturitnej skúške* obtained at a *Stredná odborná škola* is comparable to a HAVO diploma for its general education component.

The *Stredné odborné učilište* (secondary vocational school) provides secondary vocational training at the following 3 levels:

1. The *Učilište* (vocational school) provides vocational education for pupils with less than 9 years of basic education. The programme concludes with the award of a *Vysvedčenie o záverečnej skúške* (final examination certificate). A *Vysvedčenie o záverečnej skúške* obtained at a *Učilište* is comparable to 2 or 3 years of general secondary education in the Netherlands.
2. Vocational training programmes with a duration of 2 to 3 years, concluding with a *záverečná skúška* (final examination). The main purpose of these programmes is learning a trade.

In terms of level, a *Vysvedčenie o záverečnej skúške* obtained at a *Stredné odborné učilište* following a nominal 2 to 3-year programme is comparable to an MBO diploma at qualification level 1 or 2.

3. Secondary vocational training programmes with a duration of at least 4 years, concluding with a *Vysvedčenie o maturitnej skúške* (final examination certificate). After completion of this programme, students have access to higher education entrance examinations. The programmes consist of both theoretical and practical subjects, often in combination with an internship. The programmes have a duration of at least 4 years, following 9 years of basic education. After completion, pupils will be qualified for specific technical and economics professions and positions requiring a high level of technical skills. In addition to the *Vysvedčenie o maturitnej skúške*, pupils are also issued the *Výučný list* (apprenticeship certificate).

In terms of level, a *Vysvedčenie o maturitnej skúške* obtained at a *Stredné odborné učilište* is comparable to a HAVO diploma for its general education component.

The 4-year programme at a *Stredné odborné učilište* is the only programme to be completed by obtaining a *Vysvedčenie o maturitnej skúške*. This diploma has the same legal validity as a *Vysvedčenie o maturitnej skúške* obtained at a *Gymnázium* and grants access to higher education entrance examinations.

Art education

Music schools (*Konzervatórium*) offer a specific type of vocational training. Music schools provide programmes in music, singing, dance and theatre and usually last 6 years. The dance programme has a duration of 8 years. The programmes conclude with a *Vysvedčenie o maturitnej skúške* (final examination diploma) or *Vysvedčenie o absolventskej skúške* together with *Absolventský diplom*. After completion, students will have access to higher education entrance examinations. Also see the information under 'Post-secondary education'.

In terms of level, a *Vysvedčenie o maturitnej skúške* obtained at a *Konzervatórium* is comparable to a HAVO diploma for its general education component.

In terms of level, an *Absolventský diplom* together with *Vysvedčenie o absolventskej skúške* obtained at a *Konzervatórium* is comparable to at most 2 years of higher professional education (HBO).

Post-secondary education

Post-secondary education is provided at higher vocational training schools/professional programmes (*Vyššia odborná škola*). These programmes are not part of the higher education system. Pupils enter these schools around the age of 19. The schools provide vocational training programmes lasting 2 to 3 years, for example programmes with a focus on healthcare (3 years). Music schools also provide programmes at this level with a nominal duration of 2 years, during which pupils can select an area of concentration in singing, a musical instrument or dance.

Secondary schools provide advanced 3-year professional programmes at the level of post-secondary education. These programmes include a substantial portion of practical skills training. There are programmes in finance, informatics, tourism, management and business, electrical engineering, social work, management, mechanical engineering, general nursing, forestry and rural tourism.

The curricula have been drawn up in close collaboration with EU institutions of higher professional education in order to ensure alignment with the European labour market. Graduates take a final examination and are awarded the *Absolventský diplom* and *Vysvedčenie o absolventskej skúške*.

In terms of level, an *Absolventský diplom* obtained at a *Vyššia odborná škola* following a nominal 2- to 3-year programme is comparable to at most 2 years of higher professional education (HBO).

■ Admission to higher education

Admission to study programmes at Slovak higher education institutions requires a *Vysvedčenie o maturitnej skúške* and an entrance examination. In theory, this can be obtained at a *Gymnázium*, *Stredná odborná škola* or even a *Stredné odborné učilište*. In practice, however, *Gymnázium* pupils will have received pre-university education, and will thus be better prepared for a faculty entrance examination

■ Higher education

Higher education is provided at *Vysoké školy*, the collective name for universities, academies, and non-university higher education institutions. The universities provide all types of accredited programmes (Bachelor, Master and Doctoral), non-university higher education institutions provide mainly accredited bachelor's programmes. They may also provide accredited programmes at master's level. *Vysoká škola* literally means 'university of applied sciences', and all these institutions have an academic status.

A large number of non-university higher education institutions and universities offer a mix of academic and higher professional education. There is no strict distinction between higher professional education and academic education, as in the Netherlands.

At present, there are 20 *Verejné vysoké školy* (public higher education institutions) in Slovakia. There are also 3 *Štátne vysoké školy* (state-run higher education institutions); these include military academies and healthcare training. In 1999 the very first private higher education institution (*Súkromné vysoké školy*) was established, of which Slovakia currently has 13. These institutions offer programmes in management, economics, safety and healthcare. Finally, there are also 4 foreign (Czech) institutions in Slovakia, the *Zahraničné vysoké školy* (foreign or international higher education institution).

Higher professional education is provided, amongst other, at music schools, in art education, professional training in healthcare and in other secondary vocational programmes. These programmes are best described as specialised studies. For further information, see under 'Post-secondary education'.

■ University education

University education was regulated by the higher education act, Act No. 172/1990. This act has facilitated diversity in the nature and types of higher education offered, as the following study programmes illustrate:

- Man and society: this includes a broad range of programmes including Medicine, Veterinary Medicine, Pharmacy, Philosophy, Law, Teacher training, Economics and Theology;
- Civil engineering, Mechanical engineering, Chemical engineering, Electrical engineering and computer science, Transport and telecommunication, Mining engineering, Metallurgy;
- Forestry, Agriculture, Woodworking and wood processing industry and the Agricultural industry; Economics, Management, Business;
- Teacher training programmes: pedagogy faculties provide teacher training with areas of concentration in primary education and (lower) secondary education;
- Art schools provide both theoretical and practical programmes in music, dance, film and drama, architecture and sculpture.

The new higher education act (adopted in April 2002), Act. No. 131/2002, saw the implementation of higher education reform as a part of the Bologna Process. The bachelor and master's degree system has since been introduced, and institutions are now obliged to apply the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) (generally 60 ECTS per academic year).

Study programmes are provided at the following levels:

- *Bakalár* (Bc.) with a nominal duration of 3 to 4 years
- *Magister* (Mgr.)/*Inžinier* with a nominal duration of 1 to 3 years
- *Doktor* (PhD.) with a nominal duration of 3 to 4 years (5 years part-time)

After completion of a master's programme in a technical specialisation, students obtain the academic degree of *Inžinier* (Ing.), or *inžinier architekt* (Ing.arch.) after completion of programmes in architecture or design. After having obtained a master's degree in general medicine, students are awarded the degree of *doktor všeobecného lekárstva* (MUDr.) and after having obtained a master's degree in dental medicine students are awarded the degree of *doktor zubného lekárstva* (MDDr.). Students of veterinary medicine obtain the degree of *doktor veterinárskeho lekárstva* (MVDr.).

After completion of a doctoral study, students are awarded the degree of *doktor 'philosophiae doctor'* (PhD.).

Higher education (*Vysoké školy*)

Vysoké školy offer study programmes in 3 stages:

- *Bakalár* (bachelor);
- *Magister/inžinier/doktor lekárstva* (master)
- *Doktor* (doctoral programme), following the master's programme.

Doctoral studies usually last 3 to 4 years and are centred around conducting scientific research.

All 3 study types can be taken on a full-time, part-time or distance learning basis.

Bakalár

The programmes in preparation for a *Bakalár* degree have existed since the academic year 2002. Before 2002 students could attend the unitary 5-year *Master* programme. *Bakalár* (bachelor's) programmes prepare students for a profession and provide access to master's programmes. The admission requirement is the *Vysvedčenie o maturitnej skúške*. The nominal duration of the programmes are 3 to 4 years (6 to 8 semesters). In most cases, the study concludes with a state examination and a final paper. After having completed the programme, students are awarded the *Diplom* certificate and are entitled to use the academic title of *Bakalár* (Bc.).

In terms of level, a *Diplom* with a *Bakalár* is comparable to a WO or HBO bachelor's degree in a similar area of study, depending on the content of the programme.

Magister/Inžinier

Magister/Inžinier (master's) programmes are aimed at acquiring and intensifying theoretical knowledge through scientific research, and are taken after completion of a *Bakalár* programme. The nominal duration of the programme is 1 to 3 years. Students can also opt for arts education at the *Magister* level.

Magister (short-term)

As of 2002 there are also short-track programmes leading to a *Magister* degree, which build on *Bakalár* programmes, and have a nominal duration of 1 to 3 years. The final qualification level obtained in these programmes is basically the same as that of long *Magister* programmes. Students must have a *Bakalár* diploma in order to be admitted. Students conclude the programme with a state examination and a defence of a final paper or thesis. Having successfully completed the programme, they are awarded the *Diplom* certificate and are entitled to use the academic title of *Magister* (Mgr.).

Magister/Inžinier/Doktor lekárstva (long-term)

Longer unitary *Magister / Inžinier / Doktor lekárstva* programmes have a nominal duration of 5 to 6 years. This category includes several medical programmes, such as in pharmacy, veterinary medicine, general medicine, and dentistry.

In terms of level, a *Diplom* with a *Magister/ Inžinier* is comparable to a WO or HBO master's degree in a similar area of study, depending on the content of the programme.

Postgraduate education

All final university *Magister/Inžinier/Doktor lekárstva* exams grant access to the doctorate, with the exception of *Bakalár* programmes. In order to qualify for a doctorate, candidates must successfully complete an entrance examination. The duration of the doctoral study is 3 to 4 years (5 years when studying on a part-time basis). Candidates take a state examination and write a doctoral thesis, and upon successful completion receive the degree of *Doktor* (abbreviated as PhD.) and in the art doctoral study programmes the degree *Doktor umenia* (abbreviated as ArtD.); an exception to this rule is the degree in catholic theology (ThLic. – *licenciát teológie*) which is awarded after completion first part of doctoral study in the field of catholic theology. The academic title is used after the name.

Please note that the *Higher Education Act No. 131/2002* specifies that PhD programmes can be completed at both higher education institutions (*Vysoké školy*) and non-university higher education institutions.

■ Assessment systems

The Slovak education system applies 2 assessment systems: one for secondary education and another one for higher education.

Secondary education

Numerical grade	Description	Meaning
1	<i>Výborný</i>	Outstanding
2	<i>Chváľitebný</i>	Commendable
3	<i>Dobrý</i>	Good
4	<i>Dostatočný</i>	Pass
5	<i>Nedostatočný</i>	Fail

The final assessment on a *Vysvedčenie o maturitnej skúške* can be: *Prospela* (graduated), *Prospela s vyznamenanim* (graduated with honours) or *Prospela veľmi dobre* (graduated with distinction). This last assessment is most common on older diplomas.

Higher education

Description	Meaning
Výborný A (1)	Excellent/Outstanding
Veľmi dobrý – B (1,5)	Very good
Dobrý – C (2)	Good
Uspokojivý -D (2,5)	Satisfactory
Dostatočný – E (3)	Sufficient
Nevyhovel -FX	Fail

The *Vysvedčenie o štátnej skúške* (State Examination Report) and *Dodatok k diplomu* (Diploma supplement) accompanying a *Diplom* states the results earned for the main subjects and final paper and the final result. In some cases, translators or schools convert the above assessments into a grade for each subject (in accordance with the US assessment system, or ECTS), for example: *Výborný* represents an A grade, while *Dobrý* represents a C grade. Most institutions apply the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). One year consists of 60 credits, a semester consists of 30 credits. More information on ECTS is available in the [ECTS User's Guide](#) issued by the European Commission.

Information about the value of foreign grades can be found on our [website](#) (Dutch only).

■ Bologna process

All higher education institutions in Slovakia have adopted the bachelor's-master's degree structure. Some programmes are still offered as continuous 5- or 6-year programmes, such as the programmes in medicine, veterinary medicine and pharmacy (entrance examination is *Vysvedčenie o maturitnej skúške*).

Information on the current situation can be found on the official website of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA): www.ehea.info/page-slovak-republic

■ Qualification frameworks

In 2005, the Bologna Framework (overarching framework for qualifications of the European higher education area) was adopted. Development of a complete national qualifications framework including non-higher education qualifications is still under way.

■ Quality assurance and accreditation

In Slovakia, accreditation is carried out by a special accreditation commission, the *Akreditačná komisia*. It assesses applications for the accreditation of programmes, and is also involved in appointment procedures. The commission determines whether individual institutions may or may not be categorised as universities and whether private institutions are eligible for state recognition. The commission's evaluations and recommendations are presented to the Ministry for approval.

More information about the commission can be found on their website, see under [Useful links](#).

■ International treaties

Slovakia signed the Lisbon Convention in 1997 and ratified it in 1999. The Slovak Republic maintains bilateral agreements with various nations, including the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, Romania, and Croatia.

In addition, the Slovak Republic is a signatory of the following treaties:

- Convention on the Recognition of Studies;
- Diplomas and Degrees concerning Higher Education in the States belonging to the Europe Region;
- Protocol of the European Convention on the Equivalence of Diplomas leading to Admission to Universities CETS No.: 049;
- European Convention on the Academic Recognition of University Qualifications CETS No.: 032;
- European Convention on the Equivalence of Periods of University Study, CETS No.: 021.

Recognition of education obtained in countries with bilateral agreements can also be found at: www.minedu.sk/pravne-predpisy-dolezite-dokumenty-a-publikacie

■ Diploma Supplement

A growing number of Slovakian education institutions are issuing Diploma Supplements in order to clarify the content and assessment of study programmes.

A number of institutions have developed their own format, while others use the European Diploma Supplement model.

More information on the Diploma Supplement is available on the website of the European Commission: http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc1239_en.htm

■ Composition of file

A complete secondary education file consists of a final diploma (*Vysvedčenie o maturitnej skúške/Vysvedčenie o záverečnej skúške*). Additional information can be found in the annual reports, which also contain the transcripts and grade list. Diplomas state the result for each subject and provide an average final result (varying from pass to outstanding with honours). The centre of the lower page section always features a stamp from the school at which the diploma was obtained, while the top left-hand corner of the diploma specifies which type of school issued the document. The accompanying annual reports (*Vysvedčenie*) provide an overview of the various subjects (and relevant grades). In many cases, a Diploma Supplement drawn up by the institution will also be enclosed. A complete higher education file consists of a *Diplom, Vysvedčenie o štátnej šzverečnej skúške* and in some cases a logbook (*Výkaz o štúdiu na vysokej škole*).

■ List of higher education institutions

www.uips.sk/sub/uips.sk/images/MK/web_vs_podla_nazvu.pdf and www.uips.sk/sub/uips.sk/images/MK/web_vs_podla_datumu_vzniku.pdf
Websites of the Ministry of Education, including a complete list of higher education institutions.

■ Useful links

- www.enic-naric.net/slovak-republic.aspx
Website of the Slovakian ENIC/NARIC
- www.minedu.sk/about-the-ministry
Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport website.
- www.srk.sk
Website of the *Slovenská Rektorská Konferencia*, the association of Slovak higher education institutions.
- www.portalvs.sk/en
Higher education portal (financed by the Ministry of Education) with a very specific and detailed information,
- www.studyin.sk
Information on Slovak higher education in English.
- www.akredkom.sk/en/
Website of the Slovak Accreditation Council (*Akreditačná komisia*).