

**MONOGRAPHS
CANDIDATE COUNTRIES
VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND
TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT
SERVICES IN THE
SLOVAK REPUBLIC**



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VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT SERVICES IN THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

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PREFACE

This country monograph is the result of a request from the European Commission (Directorate-General for Employment and Social Affairs) in the context of the Employment Policy Reviews launched in the future member states in 1999. According to this request, the key aim of the country monographs is to provide up-to-date detailed information and analysis on the vocational education and training systems and structures as well as of the public and private employment services in order to support the monitoring of the Joint Assessment Papers on Employment Priorities (JAP). This analysis is designed to enable the future member states and the European Commission to identify the most important needs and gaps.

In particular, the analysis aims at providing:

- 1) an instrument to assess the progress made by the countries to increase responsiveness of their education and training systems to labour market needs; this assessment addresses in particular, the challenges and priorities related to the development of lifelong learning;
- 2) a tool to assess the effectiveness of the public and private employment services to assist both unemployed young people and adults and those threatened by unemployment to enter the labour market; and
- 3) a basis for positioning the development trends of these systems in relation to those in EU member states.

The work has been conducted by a team of national, EU and ETF experts, under the responsibility of the European Training

Foundation and with the support of the National Observatory. The method of work combined desk research and field visits in the capital and a number of selected regions. The final document has been prepared by the European Training Foundation. Therefore, it primarily reflects an ETF viewpoint.

The preparation of the monographs has also benefited from close consultation with representatives of the national authorities, who were informed about this work right from the beginning of the process and invited to provide their opinion on the final draft. In addition, a seminar was organised on 27 September 2002 in Brussels with the aim of presenting and discussing the documents with the national authorities of the future member states as well as with the European Commission. This monograph also reflects the outcomes of this seminar and further discussions and comments from the country.

The document makes use of quantitative indicators from international institutions as well as from national sources. As discussed during the 27 September meeting, it should be acknowledged, that in relation to indicators used in the EU, some data are still missing, and others might refer to different realities. Therefore, figures must be interpreted with caution, taking into account the fact that statistics should be complemented by more qualitative assessments. Further analytical work will be needed to improve the overall picture and particularly the positioning of developments in the country with regard to developments in the EU.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The country monograph on vocational education and training and employment services provides a baseline for the assessment of progress in implementing the priorities identified in the Joint Assessment Paper on Employment Policy (JAP) agreed between the government of the Slovak Republic and the European Commission. Current EU policies based on the Lisbon conclusions, such as the lifelong learning initiative, and the European Employment Policy set the framework for the analysis.

1. THE CONTEXT

(a) Economic development

- After a significant slowdown in 1999 (due to the implementation of austerity measures to restore macroeconomic stability), real GDP showed a growth trend in the following two years. GDP growth rates were: 6.2% in 1997; 4.1% in 1998; 1.9% in 1999; 2.2% in 2000 and 2.7% in 2001. Eurostat estimates real growth rates of 3.5% in 2002 and 4.0% in 2003.
- GDP per head: € 10,800 in PPS in 2000 (equivalent to 48% of the EU average compared to 43% in 1995). The preliminary National Development Plan sets out the strategic objective of achieving a GDP per capita equivalent to 60-65% of the EU average by 2006.
- Important regional disparities: GDP per head ranging from 39% of the EU average in East Slovakia to 99% of EU average in Bratislava in 1998 (Source: 2001 Commission's Regular Report).

(b) Key employment and labour market developments

- Following a **continuously rising trend since 1997** (as a result of accelerated enterprise restructuring, deficiencies in the labour market, decline of employment and a growing labour force), the **unemployment rate** has stabilised at a high level in 2000 - 2001 and has shown a **steady decrease in the first eight months of 2002**. While at the end of January 2002, the number of registered unemployed was 563,946 and the unemployment rate was 19.7%, the respective figures at the end of August 2002 were 492,607 and 17.2%. The long-term unemployed continued to represent more than half of the total number of the unemployed in 2001. This share of long-term unemployed grew slightly, from 53.9% in 2000, to 55.7% in 2001. No positive development was registered in 2002.
- The figures of the **unemployment rate by level of education** show a high rate for people with primary education or "non-full" secondary vocational education ("trained with certificate of apprenticeship" and "secondary with final exam"). The lowest unemployment rates are among people with third-level education, followed by those with full secondary education "completed" with *maturita* (see table below). On the other hand, figures **on unemployment by age group** point to a significant unemployment rate in the 15-24 age group (32.7%, *LFS third quarter 2001*).

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Education	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001 (3.Q)
No education	44.2	39.5	64.3	66.7	88.5	40	-	33.3
Primary	27.7	27.3	23.9	27.6	25.8	35.4	47.5	42.4
Trained (with certificate of apprenticeship)	14.8	13.4	11	11	12.7	18.1	20.3	20.9
Secondary with final exam	14	13.2	10.2	11.3	10.8	20.6	18.1	20.1
Trained with school-leaving exam (<i>maturita</i>)	16.1	9.9	8.2	10.6	9.6	15.6	18.4	17.7
Full secondary general	13.8	14.7	12.1	14.6	13.8	17.3	16.2	18.7
Full secondary vocational	10.3	7.4	7.7	8.3	8.7	13.6	14.1	14.9
Higher (non-university)	-	-	3.5	6.1	4.5	6.1	-	-
University	3.9	2.9	3.5	3.3	4.1	6	5.7	6.0
Total	14.1	12.4	10.8	11.6	11.9	17.2	18.0	19.0

Source: Statistical Office of the SR, LFS 4Q

- **While the activity rate has remained stable (at around 70%), the employment rate has followed declined over the past few years** (the latter showed a slight increase for the first time in the first half of 2001). Employment rate was at 56.5% in 2001 and remains well below EU average (63.3%). The most significant drop in the employment rate can be observed for the age groups 15-24 and 55-64.

Eurostat's employment rates for older and younger people in the Slovak Republic (SK) and the EU 15 are:

	1999	2000
15-24-year-olds		
SK	31.1%	28.3%
EU 15	39.3%	40.3%
55-64-year-olds		
SK	22.2%	21.5%
EU 15	37.1%	37.7%

This is partly explained by the growing participation in education for the first age group and the lower retirement threshold (60 for men and about 55 for women, depending on the number of children) in force in the Slovak Republic as regards the second age group.

(c) Demographic projections

- Demographic projections indicate the continuing growth of the labour force up to 2005 - 2010 (which passed from 2.4

million in 1994 to 2.6 million in early 2000) followed by a moderate decline after that period. Projections for the 5-14 age group show a decrease of between 22-24% by 2010.

2. THE FOUNDATIONS FOR LIFELONG LEARNING NEED TO BE STRENGTHENED

- The importance of VET and lifelong learning are reflected within various policy papers (notably the National Programme for Upbringing and Education in the Slovak Republic in the next 15 to 20 years, the National Action Plan for Employment 2002/03 and the recently adopted – July 2002 – by the government's Concept of Further Education).

Nevertheless, there is still a **gap between the policy intentions and the feasibility of the proposed measures**. As a general rule, policy papers with general declarations need to be followed by the development of a balanced and realistic (in terms of obstacles, resistance trends, costs) implementation strategy with the close cooperation of relevant stakeholders (in this case the Ministry of Education in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Finance, regional state and self-governing administration bodies, Federation of Employers' Associations, Trade Union Confederation, etc.).

- Educational attainment levels for the economically active population (15-64 age group) continue to be low compared to EU average (in particular as regards people with higher education qualifications) but with progressively increasing trends. In 2001, only 11% possessed post-secondary and higher qualifications (ISCED 4-6) while the proportion of those with full upper secondary education (ISCED 3A) is around 40%, a large number of people (around 40%) with "lower" secondary qualifications (ISCED 3C) and 8.9% having achieved only primary education or with no education (ISCED 0-2).
- Data on enrolment in secondary education (ISCED 3) reveal an increasing proportion of students participating in education programmes leading to higher qualifications: **in the school year 2000/01, around 78% of the total student population was enrolled in programmes leading to the *maturita* (22.3% in grammar schools and 55.5% in vocational schools); the relative share of students enrolled in this type of programme was 70% five years earlier (school year 1995/96).** The system of secondary schooling is still marked by a predominant share of vocational schooling: in 2001 - 2002, most students of secondary school age were enrolled in "secondary specialised" (34.2%) and "secondary vocational" schools (83%), with considerably smaller numbers of students attending grammar schools (17%).
- Despite the significant rise in participation in tertiary education (from 54,350 full-time students in 1990, to 92,104 full-time students in 2001, i.e. a 75% increase over 11 years), this has been less dramatic than in other future member states (e.g. 84% in Poland over the four-year 1995 and 1999, period). It is equally acknowledged that demand is far from being satisfied. This is also related to the non-development so far of the higher non-university stream of education. The new Law on Higher Education, which is expected to come into force in April 2002, establishes this possibility.
- The figures on drop-out rates for the school year 1999/2000 indicate a more acute problem for female students in the "non-full" secondary VET stream (the one not leading to the *maturita* diploma).

Drop-outs from education 1999/2000

Years	General education			Sec. VET with <i>maturita</i>			Sec. VET without <i>maturita</i>			Total Sec. VET		
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
Number of drop-outs for a given year	318	505	823	2,999	2,083	5,082	1,602	1,169	2,771	4,601	3,252	7,853
Drop-out rates in a given year	1.3%	1.5%	1.4%	4.3%	2.6%	3.4%	4.3%	5.5%	4.8%	4.3%	3.2%	3.8%

Source: Institute of Information and Prognosis of Education (IIPE), tabled by the Slovak National Observatory / European Training Foundation

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- **There is an increasing proportion of adults participating in studies** within the formal education and training system, most of whom are attending courses at tertiary education level (see table below).

Number of adult students within the formal education system in 2000/01

	ISCED 3				ISCED 4	ISCED 5+
	Total	ISCED 3A General	ISCED 3A Vocational	ISCED 3C		
Total	9,077	1,532	6,222	1,323	1,474	43,097
Males	4,744	663	3,619	462	476	18,392
Females	4,333	869	2,603	861	998	24,705

Source: Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education

- **Facilitating the transition from school to work and vice versa**, as well as encouraging individuals and enterprises to increase their commitment to continuing vocational training appear among the key priorities in the National Action Plan for Employment (NAPE). To this end, the first three measures under the pillar "Employability" in the NAPE outline a number of priority actions in the development and implementation of which the Ministry of Education, in cooperation with other stakeholders, needs to take a leading role. The main focus of these actions refers to the strengthening of cooperation between schools, labour market institutions, individual businesses and social partners, the renovation of study and qualification areas, the sharing of information on the changing needs of

the labour market, the improvement of the guidance and counselling service, the monitoring of school-leavers' insertion into the employment system. The effective implementation of most of these actions would require a better definition of the operational steps to follow including the commitment of the appropriate resources. In addition steps to develop a modular based system (which also appears among the NAPE priorities) applying to both initial and continuing vocational training need yet to be taken.

- **The declining trend of resources for education and training could be a major source of concern.** Expenditure on education has decreased from 5% of GDP in 1995 to 4.4% of GDP in 1998 and 3.9% in 2000 (5.5% is the OECD average, 4.8% in Greece, 5.7% in Portugal).¹

1990 - 1999 Education expenditure in comparison to state budget and GDP

Indicator	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000
Education expenditure share in state budget (%)	10.9	13.2	13.9	10	10.7	13.8	12.2	12.6	16.2	14.7	14.6
Total education expenditure share in GDP (%)	5.1	5.5	5.9	5.2	4.4	5.0	4.5	4.7	4.4	4.4	3.9

Source: IIPE, adjusted and tabled by author.

¹ Education at a Glance, OECD, Paris, 2001.

The decrease in financing of primary and secondary education has to be considered in the light of an **overall decline of the school-age population** over the past years: The number of pupils in basic (primary) schools passed from 721,687 in 1990/91 to 650,966 in 2000/01. The number of students participating in secondary education went down to 264,709 in the school year 2000/01 from 342,129 in 1995/96.

It is to be noted, however, that the relative share of spending on secondary vocational education as a percentage of GDP has increased between 1990 and 2000 (0.7% in 2000 versus 0.6% ten years earlier) despite a drop in student numbers of about 13% in the same period.

3. VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

(a) Legal and policy framework

- The new **draft Law on Education** was submitted to the government for approval in April 2002. It is, however, unlikely that it will be approved by parliament and come into force before the elections scheduled for September 2003. The draft Law takes on board some of the goals set by the National Programme for Upbringing and Education in the Slovak Republic in the next 15 to 20 years. It envisages the integration of secondary “specialised” and secondary “vocational” schools into a new type of “secondary specialised school” offering four-year courses giving access to the *maturita*. Courses of a shorter duration leading to a certificate of apprenticeship will be offered only at the specific request of enterprises and trades. This new type of specialised school will have the possibility of offering post-secondary courses at ISCED 5B level.
- The recent (March 2001) setting up of the Council of the Minister of Education of Slovak Republic as a dedicated advisory body for vocational education

issues **represents a significant step forward** to reinforcing the involvement of **social partners and other stakeholders** in this area. This previously took place mainly through their participation in the Council of Economic and Social Agreement, the district/regional and school boards and expert commissions (established on the basis of study branches). However, despite the existence of these formal structures, their actual involvement in steering policy developments or defining the content of education and training is not yet systematic. In the course of the field visits, some social partner representatives expressed their scepticism about the effective impact of strategy/policy documents which are not usually followed up with active measures and criticised the insufficiency/inadequacy of education and training as one of the causes of the unemployment problem. One of the explicit aims of the rationalisation process of the secondary school network initiated in 1999 (see below under b) has been to support the adjustment of the education system to labour market needs.

(b) Structure and organisation

- The process of **establishing a self-governing regional administration** (split into eight regions) is only at its initial phase (which began with the regional elections last December). The final share of financial and managerial competencies between the state administration and the self-governing regional bodies regarding the education system will be very much dependent on the outcomes of the tax reform proposed by the present government² for implementation in 2005 but is by no means certain of being adopted in this parliament or by any future government.
- The **continuing shrinking of enrolment in secondary vocational schools** (from 149,981 in 1990 to 106,775 pupils in 2001) **contrasts with**

² The reform aiming at the decentralisation of the tax system, would allow for the raising of regional or municipal income taxes with a view to giving regions and municipalities full financial and managerial control of the provision of basic or secondary education.

- the substantially increased number of these schools** during the same period (from 311 to 374) and the comparatively smaller decrease of the number of teachers (8,623 in 1990 and 7,697 in 2001). This development points to a sub-optimal use of resources and has led the government to set up a so-called “Rationalisation Committee” (working under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education). Its main task is to prepare proposals for a more effective allocation of funds by merging/abolishing schools and study programmes. The results of this process, reinforced since 1999, have in some cases been hampered by sectoral ministries (until 2001) for some vocational schools. The rationalisation results remain insufficient.
- The parallel processes of developing **occupational and educational standards** were initiated by the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Education respectively. Educational standards continue to be developed under the supervision of the State Institute of Vocational Education (SIOV) but without the systematic involvement of social partners in this work. A National Standard of Secondary Vocational Education was adopted by the Ministry of Education in March 2002. The Ministry of Labour’s involvement in the development of occupational standards came to an end when the Vocational Information Resource Centre at its research institute (RILSAF) was disbanded in 2001.
 - Current **assessment/certification mechanisms** are school driven within the framework stipulated by the Ministry of Education. The new draft Law on Education introduces a **reform of the *maturita* examinations**, which are proposed to consist of two parts: in-school and external (nationwide). It is foreseen that business representatives will take part in the external exam boards. Preparation of material and teachers for this reform is taking place through donor-funded projects. Implementation of the reform is scheduled to start in 2004.
 - The adaptation of the **content and scope of vocational education** to new labour market requirements remains weak. Despite recent efforts to reduce their number, there are still over 1,000 narrowly defined study specialisations delivered by the VET school system. The National Programme for Upbringing and Education foresees a streamlining of the study branches with the development of a new structure composed of about 20 study clusters. According to the draft Law on Education mentioned above, the Ministry of Education will be responsible for defining framework education programmes, which may then be adapted by individual schools (subject to approval by the State School Inspection) for up to 40% of the curricula, in line with the features and requirements of the local labour market. Due to the lack of experienced and qualified educators, schools regularly fail to provide quality foreign language training and ICT training.
 - With regard to the educational preparation of **teachers**, the need to reinforce their opportunities for practical training and reduce the emphasis on “abstract theoretical education” is widely acknowledged. At the same time the offer of in-service training possibilities is limited and has to be strengthened. Teachers’ social status seems to have suffered from a gradual deterioration; their average salaries were at 93% of the national average in 2000.
- (c) Delivery**
- The former organic **links between enterprises and schools** having been broken down, there is currently a lack of systematic/structured contacts between these entities (in terms of exchange of information on skill needs, advice on adaptation of curricula, etc.). There are only a small number of students following practical training in enterprises. Quite often this is based on traditional contacts or personal relations between the respective school and the firm. Cooperation between schools and labour offices needs to be reinforced as well.

(d) Responsiveness to the needs of the labour market and promotion of social inclusion

- There is a **three-pillar vocational guidance and counselling (VGC) system** actually in place in the Slovak Republic. The first pillar is based on the traditional guidance system of the education sector represented by the school counsellor at schools and eight regional and 77 district pedagogical and psychological counselling centres. The school counsellor is a teacher, very often with limited special in-service training. School psychologists are still very rare in schools, due to the lack of qualified staff and a lack of funding at schools for opening this position. The second subsystem is managed by the Ministry of Labour and represented by the network of psychological counselling service centres with local units. The service concentrates on family counselling, and vocational and career guidance is present as a subcomponent of family counselling. The third pillar with close links to the second one is composed of the network of regional and district labour offices of the National Labour Office. They provide counselling services under the responsibility of the labour office counselling departments. Due to the decision not to consider VGC as part of active labour market policy, the modest resources allocated to active policy cannot be used for this purpose.
- Despite the various attempts to improve the socio-economic status of **the Roma community**, the serious **educational disadvantage of the Roma population** remains an important source of concern. So far the policy proposal on “Upbringing and Education of Romany children and pupils”, worked out by the Ministry of Education, has been followed by small-scale projects, funded either by national or foreign (mostly EU) resources. Such projects aim at assisting the integration of Roma children into mainstream education (through “accelerated programmes”) or providing pedagogical support to teachers working with Roma pupils. In April 2002, the government approved a

resolution whereby it calls upon the Ministry of Education and the designated commissioner for the Roma community to identify and quantify the priority actions emerging from the above-mentioned policy proposal on Upbringing and Education of Romany children and pupils, so as to be included in the 2003 state budget. Currently there is no statistical system providing information on the specific educational situation of the Roma population and which could track the results of policy interventions targeted at this group.

4. EMPLOYMENT POLICY/EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

- **The National Labour Office (NLO)** is a strong executive arm with a de facto dominant role (through its experience and know-how) in the employment area. However, in some cases it seems that the institutional capacity within **the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (MoLSAF)** has not been up to the need to take those policy initiatives required for the improvement of the employment services. As in the case of vocational institutions, the impact of the ongoing decentralisation reform (establishment of regional self-government) on NLO competencies is still uncertain.
- A recent positive development regards the preparation by MoLSAF of the **National Action Plan for Employment (NAPE) for 2002 - 2003** in accordance with JAP priorities and which identifies several quantitative targets. The objectives of the NAPE are broken down in 232 measures (NLO’s involvement is foreseen at 70% of these measures). NAPE emphasises the priorities of increasing the education levels of the population as well as widening access to tertiary education, and stresses the need for balanced provision of general knowledge, core competences and specific skills. Consultation with key stakeholders on this document has taken place within the framework of the Council for Economic and Social Agreement.

The proposed cooperation/division of responsibilities between different actors in the implementation of the plan is also reflected in the text. This plan was approved by the government in April 2002 but the links/consistency between the measures envisaged in the NAPE and other related policies (in particular budgetary policy) are not clear. As is the case in other countries, the commitment of the Ministry of Finance to employment policy objectives is rather low. In addition, the methods foreseen for the implementation of the often ambitious targets and measures in the NAPE remain vague.

- **Employment policy is funded through employers' and employees' contributions** for unemployment insurance collected and managed by the . They amount to 3.75% of the payroll, shared between employees (1%) and employers (2.75%). The contribution of self-employed people is fixed at 3%. 16% of these contributions feed into the so-called Administrative Fund and is used to cover the expenses related to the NLO operations.
- **Expenditure on employment policy amounted to 0.8% of GDP in 2001. Active labour market measures in general and retraining for unemployed are not sufficiently developed:** they represented 0.17% of GDP in 2000 and 0.23% in 2001; in 2001 out of the total labour market policy expenditure (around 7 billion SK) 32% were devoted to active labour market measures (the same ratio was 29.5% in 1998, 7% in 1999 and 20% in 2000). The part of retraining within labour market expenditure was very modest (around 197 million SK in 2001) whereas retraining expenditures represented 9% of active labour market costs in 2001 (7% in 1998, 15.5% in 1999 and 4% in 2000). The trend is expected to be reversed in 2002 with budget allocation for active measures of 3.9 billion SK in 2002 as opposed to the 2.2 billion SK allocated in 2001.
- **Average duration of retraining programmes** in 2001: 110-130 hours but the goal is to reinforce the longer-term retraining programmes in the future. Retraining programmes are contracted out to training providers (accredited by MoE) **without open tender or sufficiently clear procedures/criteria.**
- NLO follows specific procedures for the selection of unemployed to participate in active LM measures. It has also a system to track/measure the **success rate of retraining programmes** (in terms of leading to a job within six months after participation in the programme) which is currently **estimated at around 50%** (against 37.1% in 2001).
- NLO's Development Strategy until 2002 was approved by its board of directors in 1999. It is based on a SWOT analysis and sets out as major strategic objectives the shift to a client-oriented organisation, focusing on problematic regions, prioritising the supply side (improving employability) rather than the demand side (offer of job opportunities). It calls for a new management process based on quantifiable objectives for the work of regional and district labour offices as well as a shift of emphasis from administrative/management of funds to job mediation and counselling. The need for legislative changes as a prerequisite for implementing parts of this strategy (e.g. those related to organisational changes) is being advocated as the main reason/constraint regarding **the insufficient progress so far in putting this strategy into place.**
- NLO claims to have a vision on how to **progress to an internet-based information system on job opportunities** but implementation depends again on prior legislative arrangements. In parallel there are reserves expressed by senior NLO staff as regards the possibility for the unemployed to make effective use of such a system as well as concerns relating to the protection of individual data (reported that around 50% of employers do not agree with publishing vacancies on the internet). However, there is an agreement between the NLO and a private agency (Profesia) on the creation of a common website.

■ As of 1 January 2002, there were 5,062 people employed at the NLO (compared to 4,900 working in the Czech Employment Services and 3,180 working in Hungary). Of this number, 4,523 were at the 79 district labour offices. The total number of NLO staff is judged by its management as insufficient. Possible alternatives which are put forward refer to freeing

capacities by getting rid of what are considered to be “non-core” activities (collection/management of contributions); or reforming the organisational structures (regional capacities to be transferred to field activities in the districts). According to its own estimates, NLO’s market share is at 10-12% of total job vacancies.

1. INTRODUCTION

1

The economy in Slovakia has gone through three distinct phases since it began its transition from a planned to a market economy in 1989. The first phase was one of shock therapy: 1991 was characterised by a rapid increase in prices and an equally rapid increase in the rate of unemployment as old markets disappeared. The impact in the Slovak Republic was substantially greater than in the Czech Republic, due to the concentration of heavy industry in Slovakia. The differing impacts were one of the reasons for the dissolution of the Czechoslovak Federation in 1993.

The economy continued to shrink during 1993, but there were signs of recovery in 1994, which were sustained through 1995.

From 1996, however, indicators showed the economy to be once again in decline, with falling GDP and rising unemployment. Austerity measures introduced in 1998 and 1999, including the floating of the Slovak Koruna, resulted in a considerable slowing down of the growth in GDP and a significant increase in the unemployment rate. The three stages in the transition are demonstrated in the macroeconomic indicators in the table below. While the decline in GDP has been reversed since 1999 (2.2% growth in 2000 and 2.7% in 2001 and Eurostat estimates real growth rates of 3.5% in 2002 and 4.0% in 2003), unemployment rates continue to rise: in January 2002, the registered unemployment rate was about 20%.

1990-1999 Basic macroeconomic indicators

Indicator/Year	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
GDP	-2.5	-14.6	-6.5	-3.7	4.9	6.7	6.2	6.2	4.1	1.9
Unemployment rate	1.5	11.8	10.4	14.4	14.6	13.1	12.8	12.5	15.6	19.2
Inflation rate	-	61.2	10.1	23.2	13.5	9.9	5.8	6.1	6.7	10.6

Source: Statistical Office of Slovak Republic.

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The long-term unemployed comprised more than half of the total number of the unemployed in the year 2001, its share rising from 53.9% in 2000, to 55.7% in 2001.

Macroeconomic indicators disguise considerable regional disparities. Bratislava and the immediate surrounding area benefit from full employment and enjoy a per capita income at 99% of the EU-15 average. This contrasts with a per capita income of 39% of the EU-15 average in eastern Slovakia and unemployment rates of up to 25% with black spots in some Roma communities reaching 100%.

These imbalances in the labour market have resulted in significant outmigration amongst higher-skilled workers from the more depressed regions to Bratislava and to the Czech Republic. The economy in the east is based to a considerable extent on relatively low-skill, low-wage industries, such as the garment industry.

Notwithstanding these structural weaknesses, with the privatisation and restructuring processes now substantially completed, the economy can be described as an functioning market economy in which entrepreneurs and enterprises can operate in a reasonably stable and predictable environment. However, the reform process will have to continue, particularly with regard to the labour market.

Slovakia is still relatively unsuccessful in attracting foreign investors although it has now introduced a scheme of industrial parks with tax breaks to encourage foreign and domestic investment. Tax breaks were initially reserved for foreign companies investing in Slovakia, but, due to domestic lobbying, the tax holidays are also available to Slovak firms.

In addition to tax breaks, investment is encouraged through a programme of job creation and assistance in retraining. In areas of relatively low unemployment the investment threshold is 400 million SK. In areas of high unemployment the figure is reduced to 200 million SK.

A framework of support for SMEs will be introduced in 2003, consisting of a National Agency for SMEs, a Slovak Guarantee and Development Bank plus seed venture capital. Currently companies have to provide collateral to the value of 150% to 200% of a loan from private banks. The guarantee and development bank will underwrite loans in future. Collateral will include both moveable and immovable assets.

Corporate taxes have been reduced from 40% in 1998 to 25% in 2002. Profitability has improved by 250% over the same period. Loss-making companies have decreased by 90%.

While salaries are low, labour is not cheap because of the employment tax wedge, which places wage costs in the top one-third of OECD countries.³

As there are no reliable data on the provision of training by employers for their employees⁴ it is difficult to assess the extent of this provision. It is clear, however, that the larger and usually foreign employers make a considerable commitment to training. Volkswagen, which has a large assembly plant to the west of Bratislava, has developed its own *maturita* examination which low-qualified workers who show promise are encouraged to prepare for at the company's expense. Volkswagen also offers a limited number of work placements for VET school students, the best of whom it retains in its workforce. A large domestically-owned company (Chemosvit) in eastern Slovakia, during our field visits, claimed that individual career paths had been developed and training needs analysed for each member of staff by heads of department in collaboration with the personnel department, although we have not been provided with any evidence of a training plan.

That there is a buoyant market for continuing training is evidenced by the large number of training providers in the state, private and NGO sectors. The contribution of the state to the provision of training is considerable, although it is again

³ Source: interview at the Ministry of Finance.

⁴ The Slovak Republic did not participate in Eurostat's CVTS2.

difficult to quantify in the absence of hard data. It is noteworthy that, as the economy improves and individuals' disposable incomes increase, there is evidence that people are prepared to spend their money on training.

The provision of training for the unemployed is inadequate. In 2001, 0.02% of GDP was spent on training, which compares poorly with other future member states (e.g. Hungary 0.07% or Czech Republic 0.02%, which have, however, a much lower unemployment rate - 6.4% and 9% respectively as opposed to 20% in Slovakia). The policy of the Public Employment Service (PES) is to provide an individualised service for difficult-to-place registered unemployed which would include guidance and counselling, targeted retraining, job placements and job creation schemes. However, the PES is overstretched by its workload, which includes the collection of unemployment insurance from employers and employees and the distribution of benefits to the unemployed, and its front-line staff is inadequately trained to implement national employment policies. The collection of labour market intelligence by PES is not systematic and collaboration between district labour offices and vocational schools needs to be further strengthened.

The reform of the curricula in vocational schools is ongoing, but its implementation can, at best, be described as gradual. Narrowly focused occupational profiles are being rationalised into 20 occupational groups with associated educational standards. However, the process is being driven mainly by educationists rather than by a partnership of labour market experts and educationists. Furthermore, the process is not well informed by labour market intelligence at the local level for reasons mentioned above.

The draft law on education presented to the government in April 2002, allows for a 40% deviation from the national curriculum in order to reflect local needs. However, there is some doubt that this localisation of the curriculum will be exploited, due partly to the lack of labour market intelligence and partly to inertia in an environment in which training facilities are inadequate and training materials out of date.

The integration of secondary specialised schools and secondary vocational schools should allow for greater permeability between the two streams and contribute to the government's policy of increasing the number of secondary school-leavers with the *maturita* examination.

The concept of lifelong learning has been embraced by national authorities and current and draft legislation make provision for extending lifelong and lifewide learning opportunities to all citizens. However, a structured and unitary framework for the provision, assessment and recognition of initial and continuing vocational education and training is lacking and this places a constraint on the promotion of lifelong learning opportunities. Moreover, the concept of lifelong learning is not well embedded at the regional and local level and there is scope to increase the use of the formal schools network and infrastructure for the provision of learning opportunities to the local community.⁵

Social exclusion from the school system and the labour market remains a serious problem, as in many other countries. Positive steps have been taken, such as the creation of the Office of the Plenipotentiary for the Roma Community which works closely with government in promoting and monitoring socially inclusive interventions, but the impact of such interventions tends to be limited both in terms of scale and time. However, the problem is recognised and is being addressed. It is not one that can be overcome in the short term.

⁵ During the field visits there was some evidence of school facilities being made available to the general public outside normal school hours, but the practice is not widespread.

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2

2.1 OVERVIEW OF THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM

2.1.1 LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND INSTITUTIONAL SETTING

Basic and secondary education

The basic and secondary education system in the Slovak Republic is governed by Act No 29/1984 on the system of primary and secondary schools (the Education Law). Together with the subsequent set of decrees and regulations issued by the Ministry of Education to enforce its framework provisions, it stipulates operational conditions, entry and completion requirements, organisational and technical issues related to teaching staff, etc. The law also establishes equality of access to the education system without

regard to gender, nationality or ethnicity, but see the discussion on special primary schools in section 2.1.4 below.

The Education Law has been extensively complemented and amended since the beginning of the transformation process to respond to the needs of the democratisation and the transition towards a market economy.

The major amendments date back to 1990. The Law No 171/1990 paved the way for private and confessional schools. Secondary schools became independent legal entities and school autonomy was reinforced. Basic schooling was extended to nine years and the mainstream way to *maturita* to 13 years. Moreover, this Law transferred the responsibility for running secondary vocational schools from company associations to public administration bodies and cooperatives.

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The Act No 542/1990 on state administration and self-governance in education, replacing the Law No 79/1978 Coll. introduced a sectoral management structure for vocational education. The Ministry of Education (MoE) assumed responsibility through its district and regional offices for the management of basic, grammar and specialised secondary schools and also for a small part (approximately one-sixth) of the secondary vocational schools. The largest proportion of vocational schools came under the line management of sectoral ministries while some secondary vocational schools remained under the responsibility of cooperatives. The Law No 542/90 also provided for the establishment of self-governing school boards and district and regional educational boards.

In 1996 the management responsibilities of the MoE were transferred to the state regional administration entities (consisting of eight regional and 42 district offices). In 2001 most vocational schools previously under the line management of sectoral ministries were also brought under the authority of the state regional administration (with the exception of those - secondary vocational or secondary specialised schools - under the authority of the ministries of the interior, health and defence).

Further important legal provisions⁶ concerned:

- The provision of subsidies from the state budget to private schools (Government Regulation No 113/1991 Coll.);
- The Act 279/93 which established the status of other education institutions, facilities and infrastructure (kindergartens, youth clubs, dormitories, canteens, etc.) that complement the formal provision of education;
- The teaching load of teachers and the educational work of other pedagogic staff (Government Regulation No 229/1994 Coll.);
- The entry qualifications of teachers (Decree No 41/1996 Coll., amended by Decree 200/2002);
- The in-service training of teachers and other educators (Decree 42/1996);
- The extension of compulsory education from nine to ten years, i.e. from six to 16. Currently, basic education covers the first nine years and comprises primary (grades 1-4) and lower secondary (grades 5-9). In the final year of basic school students choose from one of four streams of secondary education, grammar school, secondary specialised school and secondary vocational school;
- The law on the financing of primary and secondary schools and educational establishments (Act 503/2001) which came into effect in 2001. Its objective is to provide for a greater degree of transparency in the funding of schools (including private and church-affiliated schools) by establishing a complex set of formulas for allocating funds to individual schools.

The Act 416/2001 on the transfer of competencies to self-governing regional and district bodies brought major new changes to the management structure of the educational system by devolving various responsibilities to the elected regional and municipal authorities:

- opening and closing primary and secondary schools, vocational schools and centres of practical training (with the approval of central authorities);
- being consulted on the schools' work plan and allocating the budget for schools and school facilities within its competence;
- providing premises and equipment, teaching aids, the financial means for operation and maintenance of the school infrastructure, financial resources from the state and regional budgets;
- allocating financial resources to private secondary schools, church-affiliated secondary schools, private school facilities and church-affiliated school facilities according to special regulations and monitoring the management of these resources.

⁶ As of January 2002, the full list of legislative provisions relevant for primary and secondary education included six Acts, four Government Regulations and 39 Decrees of the MoE.

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Exceptionally, the state regional administration continues to keep the responsibility as regards those schools considered to be of national importance (bilingual grammar schools and special schools, see the section on grammar schools in 2.1.4 below).

New comprehensive legislation concerning compulsory and secondary education is currently under preparation (the draft act on upbringing and education in schools and educational establishments), which will, if adopted, replace the 1984 Education Law.

The draft act derives from a consultation document, the so-called "Millennium Project"⁷ which seeks to define the structure, inputs and outputs of the basic and secondary education system over the next 15 to 20 years. The main objectives of the draft act are:

- The introduction of a "zero" year in basic schools for those children who have not benefited from kindergarten and who, at the age of six, are inadequately prepared for school education. Parental consent is required.
- The integration of secondary specialised schools (SSS) and secondary vocational schools (SVS) into secondary VET schools (sVETs) offering both 4-year courses leading to the *maturita* and courses of a shorter duration leading to a certificate of apprenticeship. The integrated schools will also offer post-secondary courses at ISCED 4A level as well as courses of continuing training (for further details see sections 2.1.3 and 2.1.4 below). The integration of the SSS with the SVS is motivated by the need for greater efficiency in terms of management and by government policy to make the secondary vocational education system more permeable, responsive to the needs of the labour market and able to facilitate the progression towards higher education.
- The definition of framework curricula by the Ministry of Education. The curricula

may be adapted by individual schools, subject to approval by the State School Inspection. Up to 40% of the curricula may be adapted to reflect the needs of the local labour market (compared to the current 30% limit). Framework curricula for vocational education and training will be approved by the Ministry of Education following consultations with representatives of employers and employees, their professional associations (chambers and unions) and respective ministries.

- The reform of the *maturita* examination (to be introduced in 2005), which will consist of two parts: in-school and external. Business representatives will participate in the external exam boards.
- The introduction of "non-secondary specialised" schools which will replace the current "affiliated" vocational schools (see 2.1.4 below). These schools would cater for students who had failed to complete the first nine grades in basic schools and would lead to a training certificate.

The draft law was submitted to government in April 2002. However, given the general election scheduled for September 2002, it is unlikely that the law will be adopted before the dissolution of the current parliament and its re-adoption by an incoming government cannot be assumed.

Higher education

The law on higher education institutions (No 172/1990) re-established academic freedom and autonomy to institutions of higher education. It related only to university tertiary education leading to an ISCED 5A qualification. Under the 1990 legislation courses provided at tertiary level are in principle of five years' duration and highly theoretical and research oriented. They lead to a Master's degree (ISCED 5A) and, exceptionally, to a Bachelor's degree.

A recent (2000) amendment to 172/1990 introduced the possibility of establishing private institutions of higher education.

⁷ Proposals developed in the Millennium Project, but not adopted in the draft law are dealt with under section 2.1.2 policy.

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The new law on higher education (No 131/2002) which came into force in April 2002, aims at addressing the narrow interpretation of higher education characteristic of the previous act by allowing for the introduction of a non-university tertiary education and non-research-based university education. The law continues to encourage the development of a three-cycle model: bachelor, master and doctoral studies in conformity with the Bologna Declaration.

The new act introduces a constraint on the provision of continuing training opportunities by tertiary education, as it prevents higher education institutions from offering paid-for courses as had been the case until the act was introduced. So far, the number of part-time adult students (which had declined considerably in the early 1990s) showed a considerable increasing trend as disposable incomes increased, reaching, in the late 1990s, 27% of all students in higher education institutions. Most attended courses on a fee-paying basis.

Further education

The Act No 386/97 on further education recognises continuing vocational education and training as a constituent part of the education system in Slovakia. It also acknowledges the right of every citizen, regardless of age and educational attainment to continue his/her education in accordance with his/her abilities and interests. The act specified the prerequisites an institution needed before providing continuing training, the criteria for accreditation and certification procedures. The act has encouraged the increase of part-time studies within formal education, especially at universities.

As a result of the continuing discourse on lifelong learning, an amendment to the act was approved by parliament on 12 December 2001 (Act No 567/2001) and came into force on 1 January 2002. The act clarifies the criteria for accreditation of institutions providing continuing training

and thereby seeks to improve the quality of training. In its draft version the act also included a proposal for a levy on enterprises of 1% of the payroll to be used for funding of further training, but this proposal was turned down by the Ministry of Finance before submission to the parliament.

The Law Code on Employment (Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic No 387/1996)⁸ as amended by subsequent provisions regulates the provision of training for unemployed (see chapter 3).

Responsibilities of public authorities

The Ministry of Education is responsible for policy development and legislation concerning initial vocational education and training (IVET) and continuing vocational training (CVT). **The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family (MoLSAF)** is responsible for policy development and legislation concerning active and passive measures for the unemployed. **The National Labour Office** is responsible for implementing employment policy, including training of unemployed and the Ministry of Education is responsible for the accreditation of institutions providing training for the unemployed.

The Ministries of the Interior, Health and Defence and Justice retain line management of IVET schools within their disciplines.

State Regional Administrations (Bratislava, Trnava, Trencin, Zilina, Presov, Kosice, Banska Bystrica, and Nitra) had devolved responsibility for the administration of the regional allocation of the national education budget and for the management of the provision of VET within their respective regions until July 2002.

As part of the ongoing administrative reforms⁹ some or all of the functions of the state regional administration relating to education are being passed on to elected **regional (for secondary education) and municipal (for primary education)**

⁸ This act replaced the Employment Act (1991) which placed responsibility for the training of the unemployed with the Czechoslovak Ministry of Labour, Social and Family Affairs.

⁹ Introduced on 1 January 2002. The heads of the regional self-governing bodies were elected in December 2001.

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self-governing bodies since 1 July 2002.¹⁰ However, during a transition period (i.e. until 2005), the state will retain responsibility for the funding of education through a decentralisation subsidy transferred to regions and municipalities as well as for the network of schools within the region. State regional administration will equally retain responsibility for the running of bilingual grammar schools and special schools. The final share of financial and managerial competencies between the state administration and the self-governing regional bodies regarding the education system will be very much dependent on the outcomes of the tax reform proposed by the present government¹¹ for implementation in 2005 but by no means certain of adoption by any future government.

A cause for concern is the potential conflict of interest between the regional offices' authority to recommend the opening and closure of schools and their management of the budget devolved from the state administration. At a time when there is a pressing need to continue the rationalisation of the school network, regional offices may be reluctant to lose part of the central funding that would result from the closure of schools.

A second cause for concern is linked with the degree of the envisaged tax decentralisation which, unless compensatory measures are taken, may lead to a fragmentation of the education system with current regional disparities being exacerbated by a lack of management capacity in some regions and a lack of resources in less developed regions.

Responsibilities and involvement of social partners and other stakeholders

Significant progress has recently been made in embedding the principle of participation of stakeholders in the governance of the VET system in Slovakia

since, in addition to the long-established Council of Economic and Social Agreement and the regional/district and school boards, a dedicated consultative body has been set up at national level with representation from the social partners. Furthermore, social partners are represented in expert groups, which are responsible for delivering specialist advice on the content-related aspects of VET.

(a) Council of Economic and Social Agreement

All legislation relating to education is subject to scrutiny by the tripartite **Council of Economic and Social Agreement (CESA)**. The CESA was originally established under the Federal Republic of Czechoslovakia in October 1990 to provide a tripartite forum to consider questions of economic and social development. At the same time, national CESAs were established in the Czech and Slovak republics. When the autonomous Slovak Republic was established in 1993 the Slovak CESA continued its activities as a national body. Seven members, appointed by the government, represent the government in the CESA, and the president is the deputy premier for economy appointed by the SR government. Trade unions are also represented by seven members appointed by the Trade Union Confederation of the Slovak Republic, while the employers are represented by seven members of the Federation of Employer's Associations.

The CESA also sets up tripartite commissions, some permanent and some temporary, on an ad hoc basis. The number of commission members is usually from three to five. In 1999, the temporary working group for employment of young people was established to deal with balancing labour market demands with the outputs of the education system. This temporary working group acts as an advisory body aimed at helping to solve the youth employment problems. Its activities

¹⁰ As already said, the state regional administration continues to be responsible for the management of those schools considered to be of national importance (e.g. bilingual grammar schools and special schools).

¹¹ The reform aiming at the decentralisation of the tax system, would allow for the raising of regional or municipal income taxes with a view to giving regions and municipalities full financial and managerial control of the provision of basic or secondary education.

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are focused mainly on the evaluation of projects supporting youth employment and on facilitating the cooperation between employers, trade unions, governmental bodies and labour offices in employing young people.

The CESA provides a useful forum for discussion, but it is criticised by the social partners on the ground that it does not always adequately scrutinise proposals for legislation.

b) The Council of the Minister of Education of the Slovak Republic for Vocational Education

The Council of the Minister of Education for Vocational Education is an expert advisory body, which assists the Minister of Education in dealing with issues of vocational education and training and continuing vocational education. The council was established by the Government Resolution No 213, point H.1 of 7 March 2001. (The previous Council of the Government for the Issues of Preparation of Youth for Occupations in Secondary Vocational Schools and Practical Training Establishments was abolished on 30 April 2001).

The council's remit is to:

- assess vocational education and training, submit proposals for improvement of VET with regard to methodology, contents, structure, management, financing, legislation, links with labour market and employment of graduates;
- contribute to the preparation of measures designed to resolve problems of quality and the content of education, financing and management of VET in schools and training establishments;
- scrutinise proposals and recommendations submitted by schools with regard to issues and concepts concerning the provision of VET in schools and training establishment;

- based on its own initiative propose to the Ministry of Education or relevant bodies possible ways of resolving problems relating to training in schools and training establishments;
- commission studies and expert opinions in the field of VET in schools and training establishments and its impact on employment policy relevant institutions; and
- cooperate with ministries, state administrative bodies, self-governing bodies, employers' representatives, trade unions research and other institutions dealing with VET in schools and training establishments.

The council consists of 28 members – representatives of the Ministry of Education, State Institute of Vocational Education and Training (SIOV), National Institute for Education, State School Inspection, Slovak National Observatory on VET (SNO), sectoral ministries, social partners and self-governing regional bodies.

The council has the potential to influence the policymaking process in a meaningful way should the current practice of regular deliberations¹² be consolidated.

c) Expert commissions

Since 1 January 2002¹³ 14 new expert commissions, gradually established by the SIOV (on the basis of groups of study and training branches followed in secondary specialised and vocational schools), have operated at the national level in advising the MoE on VET issues. The role of the expert commissions is to advise on the content, methodology and assessment of IVET programmes (see below, curriculum design in 2.2) and to scrutinise the policy documents and implementation plans relating to IVET. The decisions of the expert commissions are non-binding on the MoE.

The chairmen of individual expert commissions are appointed by the Minister of Education. Deputy chairmen and

¹² The Council has already met three times since its establishment to provide opinions on important draft policy and legislative documents (e.g. the draft Act on Upbringing and Education) and has created working groups to study specific topics.

¹³ The new expert commissions replace the previous sectoral expert commissions (16 for secondary vocational schools and 18 for secondary specialised schools), which came under the authority of the respective sectoral ministries.

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members of the commissions are appointed by the SIOV. The commissions include representatives of SIOV, labour market institutions, professional chambers, employers' associations and federations, companies, secondary schools, higher education institutions and regional offices.

d) The Coordination Council for Vocational Training and Preparation in Secondary Vocational Schools

The Coordination Council headed by the Director of SIOV and including the chairmen of the 14 discipline specific expert commissions advises the Ministry of Education on the secondary vocational school curriculum. The council was established in February 2002 with a remit to coordinate the activities of the expert commissions, synthesise their outputs and develop proposals for submission to the Council of the Minister for VET.

The chairman of the Coordination Council is the director of SIOV and the members are the chairmen of individual expert commissions.

It is too early to comment on the effectiveness of the newly established expert commissions and the Coordination Council, although the experience from the previous commissions indicates a risk of weak and non-systematic participation of social partner representatives in their work.

e) Regional/district education boards and school boards

Act 542/90 established self-governing educational bodies in the four (later eight) regions and 42 (later 79) districts and at the school level. At the regional/district levels the boards act as consultative bodies to the regional and district offices on the regional/district education budget, development plans and annual reports etc. but their conclusions are not binding on the head of the regional or district office who represents the state administration in education.

Similarly, school boards have a consultative function over the school budget and development plans, but their

decisions are not binding on the school director. A school director is appointed by the head of the regional/district office on the recommendation of the school board. By right, a school director cannot be dismissed without the agreement of the respective school board, but there are occasions when this has happened.

School and regional/district education boards comprise teachers, parents and representatives of the community and regional or local institutions. The boards of secondary schools may also include pupils. The head of the regional/district office and school directors cannot be a member of the regional and school boards, respectively.

While the participation of representatives of the regional/district labour offices; and other social partners is not explicitly stipulated in the law, they may be included among the third "external part" besides teachers and parents.

2.1.2 POLICY FRAMEWORK

Initial vocational education and training (IVET)

a) As noted above, the government's major policy initiative regarding the provision of VET and lifelong learning has been developed in the National Programme of Upbringing and Education in the Slovak Republic for next 15 to 20 Years (the Millennium Project adopted by the government on 19 December 2001) and is reflected in the JAP.

The main points of the proposed reform are as follows:

- To increase public expenditure on the school system to at least 5% of GDP until 2006 and to 6% of GDP from 2006 to 2010.
- Enrolment in general education, i.e. in the grammar schools, will be encouraged with a concomitant decrease in the number of students enrolling in the vocational branches (in 2001, 22% or 19,160 students enrolled in 217 grammar schools, 56% or 27,878

students enrolled in 373 secondary specialised schools (SSS) and 22% or 42,610 students enrolled in 374 secondary vocational schools (SVS). At the same year 13,995 students graduated from the grammar schools, while 22,135 and 35,733 graduated from SSS and SVS respectively.

- Four-year programmes leading to the *maturita* examination will be promoted in VET with three-year certificate courses only being offered at the request of enterprises and in those schools maintained by enterprises.
- A National Curriculum Board and the Institute for Curriculum, Standards, Accreditation and Certification in VET should be established. While there is some resistance to the proposed new institute on the grounds that existing bodies¹⁴ could perform these functions, it is recognised that, currently, insufficient attention is paid to questions of quality assurance.

The “Millennium” document does not provide clear guidelines as to how its ambitious targets will be implemented (e.g. as regards increase of expenditure, shift of enrolments to general education, etc.)

- b) With the recently adopted proposal (15 November 2001) on the “**principles of transformation of secondary vocational and affiliated vocational schools**”, the government aims at supporting their interconnections with the corporate sphere of the economy and in particular encouraging the involvement of employers to provide practical training places for initial vocational school students. Vocational schools would remain responsible for providing theoretical training, but would collaborate with local employers in the provision of practical training. However, so far the limited possibility provided by the Act 366/99 Coll. of Income Tax to recognise VET expenditures as tax deductible expenditures has not proved a sufficient incentive **to stimulate employers to become involved in the provision of practical training.**

Lifelong learning (LLL)

- As a result of the work of a tripartite body, a new Concept for Further Training has been recently approved by government resolution (3 July 2002) and will now be submitted to parliament. The Concept deals predominantly with non-formal adult education that does not lead to a formal qualification but rather focuses on creating opportunities for individuals to participate in lifelong learning.
- Following the national consultation on the Commission’s Memorandum on Lifelong Learning¹⁵, a working group was established in April 2002 by the MoE to assist in the preparation of a Lifelong Learning Concept for Slovakia for 2002 to 2010. The working group members are nominated representatives of sections and departments in the MoE. Its work will be guided by the recommendations from the European Commission’s Communication on Lifelong Learning which fall within the competence of the MoE, e.g. recognition and valuing of learning, including informal and non-formal, reviewing the gathering of relevant data and making recommendations for its improvement. The paper should include an action plan and implementation strategy. The issue of funding for lifelong learning would still need to be given adequate priority within the concept paper. It is important that the work of this group takes a comprehensive approach by integrating and developing further the work reflected in the recently approved Concept on Further Training mentioned above.
- **Government policy concerning VET and LLL** has also been developed within the context of the National Action Plan of Employment (NAPE) for 2002 and 2003 with the following objectives and implementation schedule:
2002
 - to increase interest in lifelong learning not only among the unemployed but also among those threatened by unemployment and employed people;

¹⁴ The SIOV and the NIE

¹⁵ Recommendations and conclusions arising from the consultation process are included in Annex 5.

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- to create a network of institutions providing lifelong learning in addition to existing and functioning schools and specialised education institutions;
- to support the establishment of new institutions, such as popular universities, distance learning and virtual learning centres and local educational centres;
- to strengthen cooperation between firms, enterprises and the self-employed and vocational schools in order to provide for lifelong learning opportunities which would meet local requirements and respond to labour market needs;
- to encourage employers to provide continuing training opportunities for their employees; and
- to enhance the flexibility of institutions providing lifelong learning in responding to labour market needs by monitoring current competence and the skill needs necessary for integration in the labour market (i.e. ICT skills, language skills, etc).

2003

- to consider the possibility of drafting a single law on lifelong learning and a law on the establishment of the National Distance Learning Centre; and,
- to create a database for establishing information systems on the provision of vocational education, qualifications, continuing training, acquiring new skills, etc. within the context of lifelong learning.

While the proposed reforms aim at providing for a more homogeneous framework for IVET and CVT within the context of lifelong learning and increasing the responsiveness of the VET system to the needs of the labour market, there remains a considerable divide between the formulation of policy and its implementation. Both policy statements need clearly established implementation strategies specifying objectives with measurable outputs and associated

allocation of resources and involving the relevant stakeholders (the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family, regional offices, regional self-governing administration bodies, Federation of Employers' Associations, Trade Union Confederation etc.).

2.1.3 RESOURCES (FINANCIAL, HUMAN AND PHYSICAL)

Financial resources

The continuing decline in public expenditure on education, as indicated in the table below, gives serious cause for concern and, unless reversed, must cast doubt on the implementation of many of the major policy issues discussed above.

Public expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP at 4.0% (2000)¹⁶ is less than the Czech Republic (4.5%), Hungary (5.4%), Poland (5.0%) and the average for the EU 15 (5.1%).¹⁷ The 2000 figure also represents a continuing decline since 1995 when expenditure was at 5.0% of GDP. Rough estimations on the expenditure per student indicate an increase approximately in line with inflation. In 1995 the cost per student was 17,704 SK and in 2000 it was 25,065 SK. Over the same period inflation rose by 39%. This would suggest that the decline in expenditure as a percentage of GDP might partly be linked to the demographic decline in the school age population. (The number of students in basic schools declined substantially from 724,919 in 1989 to 626,645 in 2001. In grammar schools there was an increase over the same period from 51,531 to 86,239 and a lower increase in students enrolling in SSS from 80,545 to 101,690, while students at SVS declined significantly from 155,240 to 106,775.)¹⁸

A notable exception in the above trend has been the serious decline in the expenditure per university student which in 1998

¹⁶ For a breakdown of public expenditure on education please see Annex 4.

¹⁷ Eurostat, provisional figures.

¹⁸ *Education System in Slovakia*, Ministry of Education, Bratislava 2002.

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represented only 38% of the respective expenditure in 1990¹⁹ and this despite the significant increase of tertiary education students over the same period.

Nevertheless, expenditure on education as a percentage of the state budget (14.6%, 2000) is higher than all other future member states in Central and Eastern Europe with the exception of Slovenia (24.8%), Latvia (16.9%) and Lithuania (33.3%).

Financing of initial VET

Vocational schools are financed essentially from the state budget channelled through

state regional offices.²⁰ Until the introduction of allocation formulas in the mid-1990s and finally the new law on financing primary schools, secondary schools and educational establishments, there was often the case of schools in regional urban centres receiving disproportionate sums to the detriment of rural schools. The new law includes complex allocation formulas,²¹ which were developed by the Ministry of Education. Due the change, making per class funding rather than per capita funding the prevailing variable, there is the likelihood that small rural schools will benefit at the cost of larger urban schools.

1990 - 2001 Educational expenditure- specialised indices

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	1999 + MH,MI MD	2000	2000+ MH,MI MD
1*	14.20	17.60	19.60	19.20	19.30	26.10	26.20	30.80	32.00	34.20	35.80	36.36	38.13
2*	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	98.30	98.66	98.32	98.60	98.56	98.30	98.40	96.90	97.04
3*	5.10	5.51	5.90	5.20	4.38	5.05	4.55	4.71	4.46	4.39	4.59	3.97	4.17
4*	1.90	2.00	2.20	1.89	1.61	1.97	1.92	1.83	1.73	1.76	1.76	1.19	1.19
5*	0.50	0.18	0.19	0.15	0.13	0.17	0.17	0.19	0.17	0.16	0.16	0.15	0.15
6*	0.59	0.73	0.92	0.89	0.74	0.94	0.61	0.91	0.84	0.79	0.86	0.71	0.79
7*	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
8*	0.97	0.95	0.97	0.826	0.65	0.78	0.74	0.77	0.75	0.7	0.87	0.66	0.76

Source: Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education.

Notes:

1* Total education expenditure in current prices (bill. SKa)).

2* Central government education exp. in % of total education exp.b)).

3* Total education expenditure in % of GDPa)).

4* ISCED 0-2 education expenditure in % of GDPc)).

5* ISCED 3 general education expenditure in % of GDPc)).

6* ISCED 3 vocational education expenditure in % of GDPc)).

7* ISCED 4 education expenditure in % of GDP.

8* ISCED 5+ education expenditure in % of GDPd)).

a) Inclusive extrabudgetary sources.

b) In 1990 - 1993, central government education expenditures are rounded up to 100% due to lacking more precise data.

c) Without special schools, church-affiliated schools and private schools.

d) Overall higher education institution expenditures inclusive R_ D and social services (e.g. accommodation and catering).

MH – Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic (health schools).

MI – Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic (police schools).

MD – Ministry of Defence of the Slovak Republic (military schools).

¹⁹ *The Millenium* (sic), Ministry of Education, ISBN 80-89018-36-X.

²⁰ After 1 July 2002, self-governing authorities replacing state administration offices. Part of the state budget allocation for education is channelled through the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Defence to fund vocational schools under their respective line management (1.77 billion SK in 2000).

²¹ The number of teaching and non-teaching staff are determined by the number of students, classes, facilities and educational programme. The allocation of funds is based on the number of classes, which have maximum and minimum sizes, rather than the number of students in a school.

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As noted above, government policy is to amalgamate secondary specialised schools with secondary vocational schools. At the moment the SSS are “budget” schools while the SVS are “contributory” schools, i.e. they receive a contribution from the state budget which has to be supplemented with own generated revenue to come to terms with their needs (see below). As “budget” schools, the SSS receive an allocation from the central budget based on expenditure in the previous year. The state allocation covers wages, including the contribution of 0.6% of employment costs to the social fund.²² Current costs are calculated according to the formulas mentioned above, but ultimately depend on the availability of money in the central budget. With the respect to obligatory budgetary rules, the school principal has full responsibility for the administration of the sum allocated to the school, but in practice he or she is constrained by the fact that the allocation barely covers the costs of salaries and utilities. There is little or no money to renew infrastructure with the consequence that school and workshop equipment is largely obsolete.²³

While budget schools are allowed to make extra-budgetary income, they have no incentive for doing so, as they would not be allowed to retain the income. In order to get around this, a number of budget schools (but contributory schools as well) have set up NGOs which can make additional income and donate it back to the school.

Since fiscal year 2001 it has been possible to make a contribution of 1% of income tax directly to state-registered NGOs, many of which are included amongst those set up by schools. The contribution can be deducted from the individual’s tax bill.

“Contributory” schools are required to cofinance their operational costs. Unofficial

estimations bring this cofinancing part up to one-third of total costs. Staff salaries and the contribution to the social fund are covered by the central budget. Additional income is generated through renting of venues and partly by the sale of goods produced by students in school workshops and sold on the domestic market.²⁴

When the integration of the SSS and the SVS is completed, they will fall into the contributory category. This may result in increased pressure on the school system to place more emphasis, for survival reasons, on the income raising aspects of their activities. Notwithstanding the obvious financial motivations from the state’s side to promote this commercial part of school activities, it is not clear whether sufficient reflection has been given to the impact such an approach may have on the quality of their core education provision activities.

Private schools receive subsidies from the state budget amounting to 70% of costs, with the possibility of being fully funded when not charging fees and sticking to the core curriculum approved by the MoE. The subsidy is reduced by a further 10% if the core curriculum is not followed in its entirety. This is viewed as a constraint on a school’s flexibility to respond to local labour market needs.

As religious schools do not charge fees and declared to teach to the national core curriculum, they are financed as state schools.

Enterprises are not involved in the funding of IVET and have little involvement in its provision (see 2.2 below).

Financing of continuing vocational training (CVT)

As mentioned above, an amendment to the act on further education was proposed by the Ministry of Education in 2001, which

²² According to Act No 152/1994, the Social Fund may be used to subsidise food offered at the work place, transport to and from the workplace and cultural events. It can also cover the cost of training of employees, but it is rarely used for this purpose as the fund is not large enough to support training. Source: Employment and Labour Market in the Slovak Republic, October 1999.

²³ The national Infovek programme has supplied schools with modern computers and internet connections.

²⁴ According to the information collected during the field visits, raw materials are purchased by the schools which are required to pay a tax of 29% on profits. There was also the understanding that students receive a very small reward for this type of work.

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would have introduced a 1% levy on companies' payroll to support CVT and lifelong learning opportunities. However, the proposal was opposed by the Ministry of Finance, on the ground that the government could not increase the tax burden on enterprises. As a consequence there is no system for involving enterprises in the funding of CVT. There are indications that it is usually larger companies that provide training for their own employees.²⁵

The sources of funding for CVT according to research carried out by the Research Institute of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (RILSAF) in 1999 (see CVT below) are diverse but ill-defined. The Ministry of Education makes a considerable contribution through the provision of CVT through the formal education system. Employers, particularly large employers, make a contribution through the training of their own employees and individuals also constitute a significant source of finance.

The public employment services make a growing contribution through the retraining of the unemployed and in making interventions in enterprises in difficulty. For example, where an employer provides training opportunities for his or her employees, 50% of the total costs of the provision of training may be reimbursed by the district labour office in cases where the training will preclude collective dismissals or where employment is guaranteed for a further twelve months.

Financing of training for the unemployed

The National Labour Office is responsible for the collection and administration of unemployment insurance, which is used to fund active and passive labour market measures. Unemployment insurance is levied at the rate of 3.75% of wages, of which 1% is the employees' contribution and 2.75% the employers'. Self-employed contribute at a fixed rate of 3% of income.

In 2000, 62 million SK (€ 1.4 million) was spent on training programmes for the unemployed. This represented a 15.3% decrease compared to 1999. However, this trend has been reversed since then. In 2001, 197 million SK (€ 4.7 million) was spent on retraining programmes. This amounted to 8.8% of all spending on active employment measures. The increase is reflected in the number of registered unemployed actually following training (24,558 registered unemployed were included in training programmes, which is more than four times as many as in 2000). While this represents a considerable shift from passive to active measures, when expressed as the percentage of GDP allocated to active labour market measures (0.23% of which € 1.4 million was spent on training), it is evident that the intervention is far from adequate, although almost the same as the Czech Republic (0.22%).²⁶ In the same year 2000, Hungary (a country which also has a much lower unemployment rate than Slovakia) spent of 0.39% GDP on active employment measures while the figure for Germany was 1.23% and France 1.36%.

Human resources

Throughout the period of transition, the social status and living standards of teachers have been in decline. In 2000 average monthly wages in the education sector amounted to 8,890 SK (€ 211) which is considerably below the national average, 11,430 SK (€ 272). When teachers' salaries are disaggregated from those of all staff working in education establishments we find that primary schoolteachers earn approximately 93% of the national average, while grammar schoolteachers earn approximately 106%. However, this figure should also be set against the average wage of graduates from higher education institutions, which is estimated at 170% of the national average.

As a consequence a large number of graduates of preservice teacher training do not enter the profession,²⁷ but seek employment in the private sector.

²⁵ As the Slovak Republic did not take part in the CVTS2, there is no reliable or comparable data on the provision of or participation in CVT supported by companies.

²⁶ However, the unemployment rate in the Czech Republic is much lower at 9%.

²⁷ Reported by a representative from a preservice training institute during the field visits.

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Of equal concern is the fact that, according to the Millennium document, a large number of experienced teachers are leaving the profession and unqualified teachers (or qualified teachers but without a qualification in the given subject) are teaching up to 35% of the timetable in basic and secondary schools.²⁸

Graduates of teacher training programmes face further disincentives to entering the profession in so far as it is very difficult to gain a teaching position in the place of their usual residence. New teachers are usually offered posts in less attractive rural areas, but they are given no assistance in travel costs or in the costs of accommodation.²⁹

The qualifications required of a graduate wishing to enter the teaching profession are specified in a Ministry of Education decree (No 41/1996). It was subsequently amended in 2000 and 2002. Graduates from preservice teacher training institutions in universities may enter the teaching profession as general and subject teachers. Other university graduates must have accomplished supplementary pedagogical studies (which may be a parallel preservice or in-service course) for being fully qualified. Such studies can be offered by universities as a two-year course.

One school principal, interviewed during the field visits, claimed that preservice teacher training institutions maintain close contacts with schools. However, preservice training remains mainly theoretical with insufficient delivery of practical training. This is partly linked to the lack of interest from the side of experienced schoolteachers (when available) to cooperate with universities as mentors of student teachers.

VET school vocational subject teachers must be university graduates with a supplementary teaching qualification. Practical training instructors must, at a minimum, be graduates of secondary VET schools with three years practical experience. In addition, they are required to follow supplementary teacher training provided by methodological centres or universities.

In their first year as a teacher new teachers are assisted by a mentor, a senior teacher appointed by the school principal.³⁰ After five years' practice, teachers are required to enter the "first qualification exam" as a prerequisite to promotion and improved remuneration. However, teachers of vocational subjects with an engineer's diploma are given exemption from this requirement and receive automatic promotion after five years' service. Similarly, teachers of general subjects who hold a doctoral qualification are given exemption from the first qualification exam.

The four regional methodological centres, the National Institute for Education, higher education institutions and marginally other sectoral institutions or ministries with line responsibilities for VET schools, i.e. the Ministries of Health, Interior, Defence and Justice are authorised to administer the in-service qualification examinations.

Beyond this formal in-service training structure, provided in preparation for the "qualification exam", there is little provision of in-service training and equally little evidence of classroom based training.³¹ This is particularly true for VET teachers and trainers for whom almost no in-service training provision is made by national authorities, although, exceptionally such training has been provided as part of Phare-funded VET reform programmes.

²⁸ *The Millennium*, p. 113, Ministry of Education, ISBN 80-89018-36-X.

²⁹ A notable development in this respect has been a newly introduced possibility for teacher graduates to apply for and get access to low interest (4%) housing loan – which can be alternatively used also for continuing training purposes. Nevertheless, currently there are no available resources for this purpose. This arrangement might be at risk in the future given the tight pressure on public expenditure.

³⁰ The principal can extend the period of mentoring beyond one year, but this rarely happens.

³¹ Data provided by the Eurostat LFS 2002 indicate that the Slovak Republic has the lowest share (less than 5%) among the future member states of teachers who have received education and training during the four weeks previous to the survey (source: European Report on quality indicators of LLL, European Commission, June 2002).

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However, this has had little impact beyond those schools directly participating in the programmes.

School administrators, i.e. principals and deputy principals are teachers who have been promoted through the system. They are appointed by the school founders (i.e. predominantly the regional self-governing administration since 1 July 2002), and are required to have had at least five years experience in a school, to have passed the in-service qualifications mentioned above and to have followed an in-service course in leadership.

Other career pathways lead to the position of methodologist with responsibility for organising in-service training or curriculum development at the National Institute for Education or SIOV or to a position in the School Inspectorate. Candidates for these posts must have a set number of years experience in a school and to have passed all the obligatory in-service examinations.

Student/teacher ratios are low (see Annex 1) and suggest that there is a suboptimal use of resources. In particular, the ratio in specialised secondary schools (7.7) and tertiary education (7.71) and to some extent in grammar schools (11.2 in 2001) are very low compared to other OECD countries (OECD country mean: 14.6 at secondary level).

The Ministry of Education has established tripartite rationalisation committees³² to recommend the amalgamation or closure of schools and programmes that are beyond requirements. The Ministry of Education reports a saving of 88 million SK as a result of the rationalisation process so far. Information recently released by the Ministry of Education refers to a decrease in the number of schools in the secondary school network (grammar, secondary specialised, secondary vocational and integrated schools) from 893 in school year 2001/02 to 821 in 2002/03.

At the same time, the number of vocational schools affiliated to secondary vocational schools and preparing students for low-skilled occupations tends to grow over the past years (passing from 43 in the school year 1998/99 to 92 in 2002/03).

On the other hand, in the basic school network there was a reduction of 41 schools between academic years 2000 and 2001 and a further 21 schools are to be closed by 2003.

According to the MoE, there is still an overcapacity in the school network and further closures are inevitable. This may be facilitated by the transfer of management responsibilities to the regional self-governing bodies, which came in force in July 2002, although there is a potential conflict of interest, as noted above. In ten cases, schools of the same type were proposed to be merged. With regards to VET, as has been noted above, 39 SSS and SVS are to be merged. In some instances, this process of rationalisation was initially (until 2001) constrained by the conflicting interests of sectoral ministries that fought to keep schools under their authority open.

Physical resources

As noted above, the budget allocation for schools barely covers the costs of staff salaries and essential utilities and therefore there is very little money available for the renovation of school buildings or equipment. As a consequence, school workshops are generally equipped with obsolete infrastructure. Those schools that have participated in internationally funded reform programmes have benefited from the provision of up-to-date training equipment, but they are in a small minority.

The "Infovek" project, funded through the MoE, has the objectives of linking all basic and secondary schools to the internet by 2010 and of upgrading the capacity of teachers to work within an ICT environment. The project should be further supported. All secondary school leavers

³² The rationalisation committees include representatives of the Confederation of Trade Unions, the Education and Science Employees Union, the Federation of Employers' Associations and Unions, the Slovak Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Slovak Trade Association and the National Labour Office.

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with an ISCED 3A qualification should be computer literate (see 2.2.1 below).

As a result of the Infovek project, schools are gradually being equipped with computers and access to the internet. However, teachers with ICT skills are difficult to retain in the teaching profession and consequently computer equipment is at risk of being underused. The Infovek project includes a teacher-training component in order to address this situation.

Schools may also benefit from the provision of computer and other equipment through donations made by parents or organisations to school affiliated NGOs.

2.1.4 STRUCTURE AND ORGANISATION OF VET AND LLL

While the secondary formal education system has changed little since the beginning of the transition period, as noted above, the basic law covering basic and secondary education has been extensively amended since then. The Ministry of Education has manifested its will to

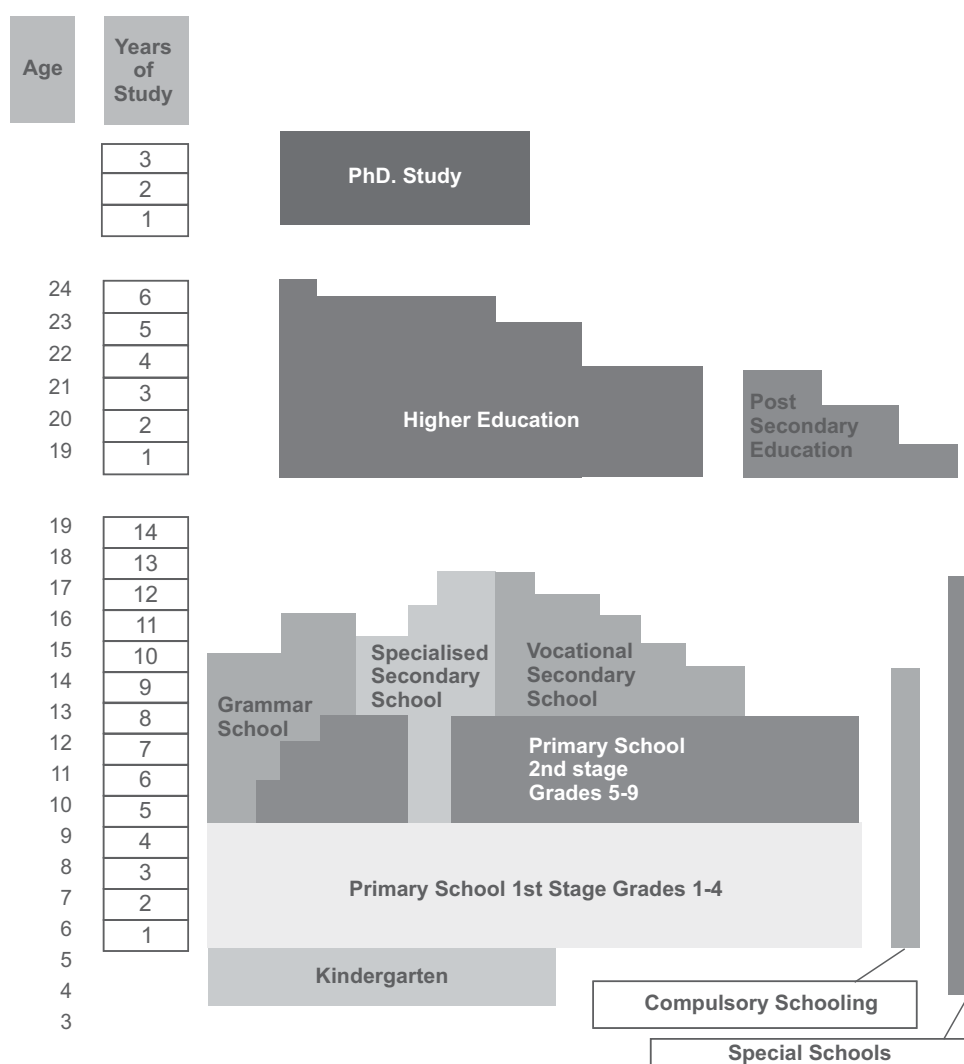
introduce substantial reforms incorporated in the draft act and based on the Millennium Project (see above), but the future of the reforms depends on political developments following the elections in September 2002.

As a result of industrial reconstruction, closures, privatisation and the growth of SMEs the formerly very close links between schools and industry no longer exist and most practical training takes place in inadequate and, in many cases, obsolete school workshops. Where companies do provide training places, it is on an ad hoc basis, relying on personal contacts. (Data on the provision of in-company practical training can be found in Annex 3). The Ministry of Education is aware of the need for the provision of practical training by companies,³³ but at present there are no arrangements to encourage companies to do so.

The education system is currently structured as follows:

³³ In November 2001 the government approved the document "*Principles of transformation of secondary apprenticeship schools in order to support interconnections with the corporate sphere of the economy in relation to public administration reform*".

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Source: Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic.

Pre-primary, primary and secondary education

Kindergarten (KG)

Preschool education is voluntary. It is funded through state subsidies and parental contributions. Since the onset of transition the curriculum has been substantially liberalised and allows for greater parental involvement and greater creativity on the part of the teacher. Programmes are consequently more learner-centred and make a considerable contribution to the child's preparation for compulsory education and lifelong learning. The service is provided for children from three to six years of age (exceptionally

even two years old). They are taught in groups of a similar age in half-day or full-day alternatives. During the socialist period 90% of children of preschool age enrolled in kindergartens. This percentage dropped to 70% in the mid-1990s but is now gradually returning to 90%. Due to the severe population decline, there are sufficient places despite a reduction in the number of facilities.

Experimentally, free places were provided for children from disadvantaged families, predominantly Roma families, in the final year of kindergarten in an attempt to enhance their performance in basic, and subsequently, secondary education. While the experiment proved to be successful, it was discontinued due to a lack of funding.³⁴ However, a zero year is being

³⁴ Reported by the Office of the Plenipotentiary of Roma.

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introduced in basic schools to provide the same service on an experimental basis. An amendment to the education law providing for mandatory financing of interventions aimed at socially disadvantaged children was submitted to parliament in June 2002.

Basic schools (BS - ISCED 1-2)

Basic schools comprise the elementary stage (grades 1-4) and the lower secondary stage (grades 5-9). About 40% of basic schools have 100 students or less. One-third of all basic schools are restricted to providing elementary education only, usually in classes with pupils of more than one grade. They are typical of rural areas and/or ethnically mixed regions, often providing instruction in minority languages. Students in such schools later have to travel to the nearest fully organised basic school providing lower secondary grades in order to complete their basic education.

Instruction is usually provided by class teachers in the elementary grades³⁵ and by subject teachers in the lower secondary grades. An introduction to VET with limited practical training may be provided within one specialised subject. Nevertheless, this subject is considered rather marginal, with low status and has no influence on further VET certification.

Children enter basic school upon reaching the age of six. It is possible to enrol before or after six on the advice of a counsellor and the wishes of the parents. The final decision is based on a psychological testing system, which is invoked at every decision point in the education system.³⁶

Since the academic year 1998/99 most students leave the basic school after completion of the 9th grade, i.e. at the age of 15. Some students may leave earlier, e.g. students electing to enter the longer form of grammar school (i.e. on completion of the 4th, or 8th grade of basic education

and, exceptionally at the 5th or 6th grade, see below), and some may stay longer, e.g. low achievers who after having repeated some grades may leave school without managing to complete the 9th grade.

Using the Slovak legislative terminology, basic school graduates have reached a level of "basic education".

A large number of children from disadvantaged Romany families, despite their normal mental ability, are taught in special basic schools, i.e. schools which are designed for children with special needs (mentally or physically disabled) and teach a reduced curriculum which precludes the students from entering mainstream secondary education. Physically disabled graduates from special basic schools proceed within special secondary (grammar, specialised or vocational) schools. Mentally disabled continue in non-secondary special schools. In some cases, graduates from special basic schools may be eligible at least for entering vocational schools leading to an ISCED 2C qualification (see below).

On completing basic education a student may select one of three main pathways: academic programmes offered by **grammar schools** leading to an ISCED 3A qualification; **specialised vocational programmes** offered by the SSS leading to an ISCED 3A qualification, **vocational programmes** offered by SVS leading to an ISCED 3C or 3A qualification. Once again, selection is guided by an entrance examination set by the secondary school,³⁷ which includes psychological testing and advice from counsellors. A marginal fourth pathway leading to an ISCED 2C qualification is offered by SVS and affiliated vocational schools for low achievers who have failed to complete grade 9 at mainstream basic school or for special basic school-leavers.

³⁵ There are also subject specialists in some elementary grades, particularly for arts, physical training and languages.

³⁶ The testing system will be discussed in greater detail in the section on the contribution of education to social inclusion within the education system.

³⁷ In urban grammar and secondary specialised schools applications are highly competitive and schools are in a position to select only the best students. It is easier to gain a grammar school place in rural areas.

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On an experimental basis, a number of schools have organised enrolment of students in SSS and SVS in unstreamed groups. The decision as to which branch of the school a student would ultimately follow is made by teachers, with no external moderation, on the basis of student performance after one, two or three years.

In the academic year 2000 23% of the age group entered the general education branch (grammar school), compared to 19% in 1995. Of these 58% were females and 42% males. In the same year 55% of the age group entered secondary specialised schools leading to *maturita* (51%, 1995) and of these 52% were female and 48% male. 22% entered the secondary vocational schools leading to a certificate (30%, 1995) of which 37% were females and 63% males.

Grammar schools (GS – ISCED 3A)

Grammar schools provide a general education aimed at developing theoretical knowledge and academic skills in preparation for university studies. It lasts at least four years and ends with a school-leaving examination, the *maturita*, which is a prerequisite for admission into higher education.

As noted above, parents may elect for their children to enter the so-called long-form grammar school, which is of six or eight years' duration. Long-form grammar schools are designed for exceptionally gifted children. Currently they accept those children whose parents wish to avoid entrance exams after basic school graduation and/or prefer the academic environment provided by the grammar school. However, the long-form grammar school is coming under criticism despite its increasing popularity among parents. Currently, about 4-8% of each age group is enrolled in this form of study, often in private or church-affiliated schools offering quality foreign language teaching, sometimes even bilingual education. Official bilingual grammar schools, designed in cooperation with the partner country and based on interstate

agreements add an extra year to the programme to allow for intensive language study.

Graduates of all forms of grammar school with the *maturita* examination are designated as having reached a level of "full secondary general education".

Secondary specialised schools (SSS – ISCED 3A, rarely ISCED 3C)

SSS represents the first secondary VET stream. These schools prepare students for higher education mainly in technical universities and/or for professions requiring a good quality general and professional education with a firm grounding in theory. They usually specialise in technology (in its official name they are called secondary industrial schools with their indicated specialisation, e.g. "of machinery", "construction", etc.),³⁸ and offer four-year courses leading to the *maturita*.

Some SSS are designated academies (e.g. academy of trade, academy of hotel trade, etc.) and offer five-year courses.

Conservatories are a special case, close to non-university tertiary education, offering six-year programmes leading to the absolutorium (*maturita* after four years) or in the case of dance conservatories eight-year courses leading to the absolutorium, both an ISCED 5B equivalent qualification.

In addition to the *maturita* course, SSS may offer post-secondary non-tertiary programmes leading to absolutorium. In rare cases, SSS also offer ISCED 3C courses culminating in a final exam which does not entitle the graduate to admission to higher education.

SSS graduates possessing the *maturita* certificate have reached the level of "full secondary vocational education", SSS students graduating with a certificate have reached the level of "secondary vocational education", and graduates with an absolutorium diploma have reached the level equivalent to "higher professional education".

³⁸ Other specialisations include agriculture, economics, forestry, health care, library studies and preschool teacher training.

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Secondary vocational schools (SVS – ISCED 3C and ISCED 3A) (VS – ISCED 2C)

SVS offer three-year courses leading to a certificate of apprenticeship or four-year (exceptionally five-year) courses leading to the *maturita* and a certificate of apprenticeship.

The certificate of apprenticeship is not sufficient for entry into tertiary education. However, due to the low absorption capacity of the labour market and the higher social status of the *maturita* school-leaving certificate, many certificate graduates apply for a two-year follow-up course leading to the *maturita* examination.

SVS graduates with a certificate of apprenticeship are designated as having reached a level of “secondary vocational education”. SVS graduates with *maturita* are designated as having reached the level of “full secondary vocational education”.

Secondary vocational school students graduating with the *maturita* can apply for higher education. The percentage of SVS students in this category is gradually increasing, currently over 46% of the SVS school population. However, in comparison to grammar schools and secondary specialised schools, their education is much more practical and they are usually not sufficiently prepared for the admission examinations for technical universities. There is an equally high drop-out rate of those SVS graduates who do gain entry to higher education. However, the new higher education act making provision for establishing tertiary institutions offering non-university programmes, together with the envisaged creation of integrated of SVS and SSS, are developments which are expected to facilitate the progression pathways to higher education of VET graduates.

Vocational training leading to a workers' certificate for low-skilled professions is provided by secondary vocational schools. In the academic year 2002 there were 92 vocational schools which are designed to prepare pupils with learning difficulties. Students at this level typically do not complete the full nine grades at basic school. Thus, the vocational school may

also provide a pathway for leavers of the special basic schools (see above).

Private and church-affiliated schools represent about a quarter of the total number of secondary grammar schools and only 10% of the total number of SSS and 4% of SVS. They are concentrated in urban areas and are highly selective in their enrolment. The non-state sector is very popular with parents with increasing disposable incomes.

As described, it would appear that since the outset of the transition process a decade ago, several steps have been taken to reinforce vertical and horizontal mobility within the Slovak education system. However major constraints remain. Among them the following could be included: (a) the highly selective testing (including psychological tests) system for getting into grammar and specialised secondary schools; (b) the inadequate preparation provided by SVS as regards the required conditions for entrance to and study at higher education level, given that their priority focus is to prepare young people to enter the labour market; (c) the insufficient results achieved so far in modernising the content of education in particular by rebalancing the academic and practical oriented training in the different streams; (d) the educational marginalisation of Roma children who, as a result of psychological testing, are often categorised as having severe learning difficulties and are therefore consigned to special schools.

Drop-outs

Official data show a long-term rising trend in the number of pupils failing in basic schools (half of whom come from socially disadvantaged families, including Roma). As regards secondary education, the school drop-out rate in Slovakia is low as indicated in the following table. However, the figures for students in secondary vocational streams that do not lead to the *maturita* exam show an increased rate of drop-outs in this category. This may be further compounded by the apparently high rate of absenteeism in this branch of education.

Drop-outs from education 1998/99

Specifications	General Education			Sec. VET with mat. exam			Sec. VET with qual.			Total Sec. VET		
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
	Number of drop-outs in a given year	986	1,218	2,204	2,742	1,823	4,565	2,594	1,535	4,129	5,336	3,358
Drop-out rates in a given year (%)	3.80	3.41	3.57	3.54	2.06	2.75	5.45	5.69	5.54	4.27	2.91	3.61

Source: Institute of Information and Prognoses in Education.

Drop-outs from education 1999/2000

Years	General Education			Sec. VET with mat. exam			Sec. VET with qual.			Total Sec. VET		
	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total	Males	Females	Total
	Number of drop-outs for a given year	318	505	823	2,999	2,083	5,082	1,602	1,169	2,771	4,601	3,252
Drop-out rates in a given year (%)	1.33	1.57	1.47	4.30	2.63	3.41	4.39	5.57	4.82	4.33	3.24	3.80

Source: IPE, tabled by the Slovak National Observatory of VET/European Training Foundation.

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Drop-outs fall into two main categories:

- Those who drop out from higher status schools/programmes preparing for *maturita* to continue in lower status schools/programmes leading to a certificate of apprenticeship. This is obviously a result of high study requirements set by the former category of schools.
- Those who drop out from the secondary education system to enter the labour market prematurely or, more commonly, the grey economy.³⁹ This mainly concerns students from socially disadvantaged families (very often of Roma origin)⁴⁰ who, due to a lack of appropriate motivation (aggravated by their inability to cope with the standard curriculum) or for economic reasons, are pushed to leave the school system early. The benefits system provides an additional non-intentional "incentive" to disaffected students to leave early in so far as they become eligible for payments of approximately € 40 per month.

Assessment and certification

Current assessment/certification mechanisms are school driven within the framework stipulated by the Ministry of Education. The framework provides for both written and oral exams and a five-point scale with one indicating excellence. However, despite the moderating function of the MoE, there is little control over the maintenance of homogenous standards and a consequent lack of equivalencies between schools since assessment procedures are essentially subjective and often lacking in reliability and validity. This situation is reported to be linked to the tendency of some schools to "soften" the performance standards required from students and this for different reasons (e.g. decline of quality is associated with the decrease of the

student population, absence of experienced teachers, etc).

It is partially in recognition of this situation that the new concept of the *maturita* exam will be introduced in 2005 as noted above. The exam is proposed to comprise two parts: internal, managed by the school-based examination committee, and external, managed by a national examination committee (with the participation of the social partners) and based on standardised tests.

The lack of institutions and experts with experience in educational output measurement remains a weak point in the Slovak education system. Until the end of 1999 school inspection was the responsibility of the regional and district offices, but since 1 January 2000 an independent State School Inspection has taken on that role. It has a primarily regulatory function and limited competence in playing a quality assessment role.⁴¹

Higher education

At present, there are 23 higher education institutions, including two military academies and one police academy. Seven are traditional universities, four are technical universities, three are art and music academies and there is one university of economics, one university of veterinary medicine, one university of management and one agricultural university. The School of Management in Trencin is the first private university to be established in the Slovak Republic. The provision of higher education is considerably below the demand. There has been a 75% increase in university enrolment since 1990 and 27% of the 18-year-old population entered a tertiary institution in 2001. The trend is for this figure to increase over the next few years while the number of universities has remained almost the same.

³⁹ Evidence suggests that low achievers excluded from school by school principals constitute a rather small group as schools are reluctant to reduce the number of their students at a time when, in the context of the population decline, they have to fight to attract new students in order to survive.

⁴⁰ As noted above, some in this group do not enrol in secondary education and are therefore not captured by the concept of drop-out. This group is dealt with under early school-leavers, see below.

⁴¹ According to Act 301/1999, one of the tasks of the State Inspection is to prepare an annual report on the situation and standard of the upbringing and education in schools and educational establishments in the Slovak Republic.

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Until 2002, all higher education institutions had the same legal standing and social function. They used to provide not only higher education, but also research and artistic activities.

The new law on higher education, which came into effect in 2002 aims at providing for a more flexible and responsive system. Non-university and non-research-based higher education should be allowed. The law removes the status of a legal entity from individual faculties to the university as a whole with the objective of allowing for coherent university-wide policies and easier student mobility between fields of study.

Continuing training (CVT)

During the socialist period there was a strong tradition in the provision of CVT in training centres attached to different industries. With the restructuring of industry during the period of transition the provision of CVT was greatly reduced and there was little interest on both the demand and supply sides. However, as the economy began to grow again from 1993 the demand for CVT has grown substantially and, in response, supply has also grown rapidly.

According to data available, there are approximately 3,500 providers in the continuing training market. These include schools, universities, institutions managed by sectoral ministries and training providers operating in the private and NGO sectors. In the latter category, the Academy of Education, a non-profit organisation, has branches throughout the country and offers training over a wide range of disciplines. The academy sees itself as one of the main conduits for promoting an environment for lifelong learning. In 2001 it reported a total of 71,904 participants in courses offered.

There are no hard reliable data on participation rates in other institutions as the response rate to surveys launched by the Slovak Institute of Information and Prognosis is very low. However, estimates suggest that, in 1999, secondary schools were the main providers with a market

share of 27%, followed closely by private training providers (26%). Universities had a market share of 16%, but this figure is expected to be substantially reduced following the new legislation on higher education mentioned above. The remainder of the market was taken by training institutions attached to state administration authorities (9%), civic associations (5%), cooperatives and professional organisations (4%).

A limited research study conducted by the Research Institute of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (RILSAF) in 1999 on courses offered by training institutions indicates that the most popular field of study was computer literacy (approximately 66% of the institutions within the survey), foreign languages, professional upgrading, accounting and finance, communication skills and various aspects of entrepreneurship.

According to research conducted by the Management Partners Group (MPG) in 1999 in which 100 companies with more than 50 employees were surveyed, support for training in the open market was provided by 81% of the companies while 57% made provision for in-house training. In the research conducted by RILSAF, mentioned above, it was estimated that one out of every three employees followed training provided by their employer. However, training appeared to be concentrated on senior management.

The MPG research concluded that CVT is not perceived by the management of enterprises as a strategic tool that may contribute to the efficiency of a company. 70% of the companies surveyed did not have a human resource development plan and 40% of the managers stated that HRD was only of marginal interest to them. 15% stated that the professional development of their employees was of no relevance to them.

With a view to responding to the concerns on the quality of CVT, the Commission for Accreditation of institutions providing continuing training was set up in 1991. Originally established under the auspices of the Ministry of Labour, it came under the

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authority of the Ministry of Education in 1997. Between 1991 and 2001, 1,452 training institutions were given accreditation to offer 12,000 training activities.

In order to receive accreditation of the respective educational activity, an institution must provide documented evidence to the commission on the following:

- the organisational structure of the institution, its personnel, its target clientele and its professional competence;
- the teaching staff to be assigned to each course offered by the institution;
- classrooms, teaching materials and equipment; and
- the curriculum and syllabus, the target competencies of graduates, the assessment procedures, training methodology and balance between theoretical and practical training.

Following a positive assessment of these criteria the commission gave a recommendation to the Ministry of Education which then issues an accreditation acknowledgement to the institution. The accreditation is valid for five years, but the performance of a training institution is monitored by the Ministry of Education, which may disqualify any institution which fails to maintain the assessed standards.

According to the legislation in force only accredited training providers may apply to Labour Offices to receive funding to organise training for unemployed.

The Further Education Institute Association in the Slovak Republic (AIVD), a non-profit NGO has a total of 73 members, 15% of which are institutions attached to school departments in formal education, 44% are private education institutions and 36% are other institutions such as education departments of ministries, etc. Its influence is limited by its small "market share", but it is one of the institutions which is consulted by the Ministry of Education in developing a structure for further education.

Adult (part-time) education within the formal education system

In the academic year 2000 a total of 9,077 adults followed part-time courses within the formal education system leading to an ISCED 3A or 3C qualification. Of these, 68% followed vocational programmes leading to the *maturita* (ISCED 3A), 17% followed general programmes leading to the *maturita* and 15% followed vocational programmes leading to an ISCED 3C qualification. 57% of those following general programmes were women, while 58% of those following vocational programmes leading to the *maturita* were men. However, 65% of those following vocational programmes leading to an ISCED 3C qualification (and from there to the labour market) were women.

In the same year 43,097 adults were following part-time education leading to an ISCED 5A qualification. Of these 57% were women. A smaller number followed education programmes leading to ISCED 4 qualification and of these 68% were women.

Vocational guidance and counselling

Slovakia has a long tradition in the provision of guidance and counselling services. Currently, school-based guidance and counselling receives no specific direct financial support.

A guidance and counselling service is provided by school counsellors both in the schools and at counselling facilities located in local administrative centres. School counsellors are teachers, usually without any special pre-service training in guidance and counselling,⁴² who are selected by school directors from amongst experienced teachers. They provide the service whenever asked by parents, students or other teachers. Some schools have appointed school psychologists who contribute to VGC; this is very rare due to the lack of supply and funding. More often trained psychologists are engaged on a part-time basis.

⁴² Once selected they can follow in-service training in guidance and counselling at no cost to themselves.

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There are eight regional and 79 district Pedagogical and Psychological Counselling Centres (PPCC) responsible for the provision of consultation to students, parents and teachers. They provide psychological diagnostics and submit proposals for improving the psychological and social development of children. They also provide a remedial service for children identified as having special needs. They also have a role in providing VGC through assessing the relevance of school profiles to the situation on the labour market. However, market intelligence is very weak and consequently this function is not performed adequately.

The service of school counsellors and counselling centres is backed by three institutions managed by the MoE: the Research Institute of Child Psychology, the National Institute for Education and the State Institute of Vocational Education and Training. The Research Institute of Child Psychology has been traditionally responsible for methodological and professional assistance to the guidance and counselling service and for coordinating the service on behalf of the MoE. However, in the face of an increasing demand for career guidance and counselling conditioned by the changed situation in the labour market, the research institute has proved to be lacking in capacity to provide adequate support services. Since 1999 the National Institute for Education has been given a remit to provide assistance to Special PPCCs and the State Institute of Vocational Education and Training has been given a similar responsibility concerning the provision of guidance and counselling in VET schools. In this capacity both institutions work in cooperation with Methodological Centres (regional in-service teacher training centres).

Within the Phare VET reform programme in the Slovak Republic 94.03, a new subject "Introduction into the world of labour" was experimentally taught. In 2000 a very supportive programme introducing students into the "World of Labour" was prepared as a result of cooperation between the Open

Society Foundation and the Vocational Information Resource Centre of the Research Institute of Labour, Social Affairs and Family. A set of 16 booklets provides for information about 600 professions from 19 sectors. These booklets delivered in regional and district labour offices, district libraries and other institutions providing counselling services could serve as valuable for both schools within the education system and counsellors within their service.

A new Leonardo project promoted by the State Institute for Vocational Education (SIOV) should equally assist the improvement of VCG.

Further guidance and counselling services, offered by the Public Employment Service, are discussed in chapter 3.

2.2 RESPONSIVENESS OF THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM TO THE NEEDS OF THE LABOUR MARKET AND THE INDIVIDUAL

The responsiveness of the VET system to the needs of the labour market is constrained by the lack of systematic labour market intelligence in Slovakia. Detailed educational statistics on VET schools and students are produced and there are reliable data on the inflow and outflow of unemployed in 79 district labour offices, but there is no reliable information on employers' development intentions, future job openings or on the skills and competencies required by the labour market. As a consequence of this lack of market intelligence the development of core skills, competence-based qualifications and skills upgrading in the school system are driven by input standards rather than output standards which are in line with labour market requirements. This situation contributes to the continuing mismatch between the skills developed in VET schools and the emerging new requirements of the labour market.⁴³

⁴³ The above statement on the skill mismatch should be read in conjunction with the current limited labour demand especially in highly skilled jobs.

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This lack of responsiveness is reflected in the larger number of drop-outs from VET schools as well as the high unemployment rate amongst school-leavers, particularly those graduating from vocational schools.

It is of concern that in real terms there has been a 1.4% decrease in the number of people in the 15-24 age group attaining ISCED 3 qualifications between 1998 and 2001 and a 1.3% increase in the same group attaining only ISCED 2 qualifications over the same period. Of those in the latter group, 39% do not participate in further education and therefore should be considered as early school-leavers. These figures run counter to the objective of increasing the educational attainment level of the population.

2.2.1 CURRICULUM DESIGN/DEVELOPMENT

Two institutions operate at national level as advisory and developmental bodies:

- **The National Institute for Education** has responsibility for developing curricula and assessment tools for basic and general education in grammar schools and for general subjects in both categories of vocational schools in cooperation with SIOV.
- **The State Institute of Vocational Education (SIOV)** has responsibility for developing curricula and assessment tools for IVET in secondary specialised schools and secondary vocational schools. The SIOV also advises the Ministry of Education on proposals submitted by schools concerning curriculum innovations.

The State Institute of Vocational Education and Training is responsible for the management and supervision of the development of educational profiles at the national level. As already mentioned (Executive Summary, section 3(b)) SIOV is assisted by expert commissions founded on tripartite principles⁴⁴ and serving as advisory and coordination bodies which monitor developments in respective occupations and branches, develop

proposals for adapting the structure of study and training programmes to better reflect market needs. The commissions are also expected to participate in the preparation of occupational profiles, related educational standards, curricula, textbooks, and in the assessment of educational programmes offered in schools.

The curricula developed by the commissions exploit interdisciplinary methodologies in line with those introduced through various Phare and other internationally funded programmes. However, their full application in the classroom is often constrained by the lack of teachers' motivation (linked with their low financial reward), management capacity and adequate know-how in schools to introduce new teaching methodologies involving, for example, project work, team teaching and participatory activities.

Innovations in the classroom are further constrained by the lack of labour market intelligence, referred to above, which could allow the exploitation of the legal possibility of introducing local variants up to 40% of the curriculum to reflect local needs. This problem is further aggravated by the limited involvement of the social partners in the provision of VET at local level. It is hoped that this involvement will be reinforced as a consequence of the administrative and tax reforms that will increase regional self-government competences.

At present, the system remains very focused on a large number of study branches (over 1,000).

In reaction to this situation as noted above, (see section 2.1.2.a) the Ministry of Education prepared a proposal for a National Curriculum Board and plans to start working on curriculum design in cooperation with the National Institute for Education and SIOV, once the Board has been constituted.

A "National Standard of Secondary Vocational Education" (NSSVE) was submitted to MoE at the end of 2000 and after further development was approved by

⁴⁴ But see the discussion on the development of occupational and educational standards below.

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the Council of the Minister for VET in March 2002. The Ministry of Education in July 2002 finally endorsed the NSSVE as the basis for the development of framework educational programmes.

The NSSVE specifies 22 clusters of integrated study and training branches in an attempt to rationalise the overspecialisation.

It has been worked out for three levels of VET and provides the basis for the draft "Basic Educational Programme of Secondary Vocational Education" (BEPSVE). The BEPSVE defines:

- educational levels with standard length education and training;
- key skills;
- the characteristics, achievement standards and content standards of general education; and
- the characteristics, achievement standards and content standards of vocational education.

The National Institute of Education will complete a complementary general education document.

The establishment of the NSSVE is intended to provide a framework laying down the state requirements for training programmes. All occupational profiles and educational standards will, in future, have to be consistent with the NSSVE. However, as noted above, the standards are driven by educational considerations rather than by labour market intelligence and there must be some doubt as to their relevance to labour market needs without a clear specification of occupational profiles. Moreover, without the systematic contribution of social partners, particularly employers, to the validation and the continuing innovation of both standards, the latter risk suffering from lack of applicability and reliability.

The apparent lack of coherence in the followed approach should be viewed in relation to previous and recent developments. From 1996, following the

government resolution to prepare occupational standards and related educational standards, the Research Institute of Labour, Social and Family Affairs (RILSAF) developed occupational profiles for about 470 occupations of the 3,000 occupations registered on the labour market (ISCO-88). Over 300 of these occupational profiles related to VET schools were sent to SIOV for further processing of related educational standards. However, the relevant unit dealing with this task within RISLAF was disbanded in 2001 and the work has been discontinued.

2.2.2 DELIVERY

As noted above, the provision of **practical training places for IVET students** by enterprises is very limited (according to figures available, out of a total 106,755 students in SVS only 11,788 are reported to have followed practical training in private entities in school year 2001/02)⁴⁵ and is usually based on bilateral agreements between a school and a firm arising from traditional contacts or personal relations. In general, currently undercapitalised small firms fighting for survival have little motivation for cooperating with schools. Larger firms, typically with foreign investment, have started to show interest in VET tailored to their needs and it is envisaged that new legislation would promote this.⁴⁶ The Ministry of Education is positive towards revival of affiliation between VET schools and enterprises, which was broken during the transformation period in the 1990s. However, it is not expected that many VET schools will succeed in finding coexistence with enterprises under current financial arrangements and the lack of incentives.

The Regional Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Žilina used to supervise the final exam at SVS on an experimental basis. In the final year of experiment 1998/99, 38 schools with a total of 3,036 students participated. The experiment was positively evaluated and it is expected that when new legislation is introduced it will provide for the **participation of social partners** and

⁴⁵ Source: Slovak Institute of Information and Prognosis of Education.

⁴⁶ Volkswagen has introduced a tailored *maturita* examination for their employees.

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the more active role of social partners in graduation assessments.

Similarly, a Small Business Association is showing an interest in revitalising craft guilds particularly in terms of their involvement in licensing craftsmen and linking the number and quality of new craftsmen to the regional labour market needs. Within the Leonardo da Vinci programme a special project is being implemented which examines the experience of a German-type “foreman exam” and aims at introducing the instrument into VET in Slovakia.

Despite these initiatives involving the social partners, their participation in the development, provision and assessment of VET is not systematic. Employers’ and trade union federations, the Slovak Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Slovak Small Business Chamber, the Slovak Agriculture and Food Chamber, the Slovak Craft Industry Federation, professional associations, guilds and the whole entrepreneurial sphere should play a more significant role in defining standards in graduate profiles and in assessing the output competence of the IVET system. It is significant that of all organisations mentioned, only the Slovak Small Business Chamber has specific legal authorisation to operate within the IVET system in accordance with Act 126/1998 of the Law Code on Slovak Small Business Chamber.

As noted above, social partners are expected to be involved in the development and administration of the external part of the new *maturita* examination to be introduced in 2005.

According to the annual report of the State School Inspection on the status of education in schools and educational establishments in the school year 1999/2000, the most worrying feature threatening the quality of the SSS is the gradual deterioration of the equipment in laboratories and workshops. Describing the SVS network the same report comments on the poor facilities for practical training in general. An SSS visited during the field visits was described as being above average in terms of the quality of its training, despite the fact that its machinery

was not less than 30 years old and therefore obsolete in terms of modern manufacturing processes.

As noted above, funding from the central budget is barely sufficient to cover staff salaries and recurrent expenditure. Consequently very few schools have the resources to make capital investments in new training equipment and enterprises are not motivated to make this contribution to the provision of IVET. The only schools that do have up-to-date equipment are those that have participated in externally funded projects.

There is no recent official data regarding **the ICT infrastructure in schools** (the last data going back to a survey carried out in 1998 show a student/computer ratio of 16 at secondary schools). Partial recent information coming from the Presov region (where, as of 31 January 2002, the student/computer ratio is reported to be 16.9 and 19.2 in SSS and SVS respectively) as well as feedback from the field visits indicate that substantial efforts have still to be made to improve the quality of ICT infrastructure in schools.

Slovakia has declared its interest in the eEurope project and has signed the relevant protocol at the Goteborg summit in 2001. Slovakia also participates in the eEurope+ initiative of future member states. The MoE underlines the importance of establishing ICT in education through its support of the Infovek project. B2B and C2G policies are strengthened through compulsory public sector information policies based on government websites introduced by the Act No 211/2000 on free access to information.

As a result of the Infovek project and contributions from other donors (including parents) almost all secondary schools have some computers of adequate quality, but computer assisted learning remains underdeveloped. There are several reasons for this:

- a lack of digital resources in the Slovak language due to the small market with low purchasing power;

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- a lack of experienced teachers due to severe brain drain of ICT skilled teachers, and inadequate in-service training;
- the high cost of internet access and dial-up costs; and
- for a long period the slowest (but recently improved) internet backbone among central European future member states.

The Infovek project seeks to address all these constraints through:

- developing the technical infrastructure within and between school networks with the aim of connecting all schools by 2005;
- training and upgrading ICT teachers; and
- improving digital/computer assisted resources.

Infovek is managed by a non-profit organisation, Infovek Project Association, backed by IIPE and the Ministry of Education. 266 million SK were approved by parliament for the fiscal year 2002 allowing for the connection of 358 to the network and joining the 491 schools already connected by 2001. There are nine teacher training centres nationwide that are equipped to train teachers in ICT skills.

The number of schools supported by the Infovek project and details of the email and internet connections established can be found in Annex 4.

While the Slovak education system is predominantly student (or parent) demand driven rather than responsive to comprehensively detected needs of the labour market, the lack of financial, material and, increasingly, human resources within the system place a constraint on the quality of the provision. For example, schools in the public sector have difficulty in providing quality foreign language training and ICT training due to the lack of experienced and qualified teachers. Hence the attractiveness of the predominantly private-sector eight-year grammar schools.

The most recent measures to address the raising of overall skills within a coherent and comprehensive policy document are included in the National Action Plan of Employment for 2002 and 2003 (see chapter 3). The effective implementation of these measures will largely depend on securing the necessary resources and addressing the underlying current problem of underfunding.

2.3 CONTRIBUTION OF THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM TO PROMOTING SOCIAL AND LABOUR MARKET INCLUSION

2.3.1 ACCESS AND INCLUSION

Data from the LFS show **low early school-leaving levels** (significantly lower than the EU average that is around 19%). According to data of the Q4 2001, the number of those in the age group 18-24 having attained up to ISCED 2 and not attending further education were 41,041 representing 6.3% of the whole population aged 18-24.

Almost 33,000 of this group were either unemployed or economically inactive. It is very likely that members of the Roma community represent a large percentage among these categories, particularly the economically inactive.

A particular source of concern is the **high youth unemployment**, which has been increasing since 1998. Unemployment amongst the 15 to 19 age group stood at 10% in 1998, 13.5% in 1999, 12.5% in 2000 and 12% in 2001. In the 20-24 age group the rates are even higher and increasing: in 1998 the figure was 13% and in 2001, 23%. Those most vulnerable to unemployment within this category are those with lower qualifications at ISCED 2 or 3C. Together they constitute 60% of the total unemployed.

The low levels of attainment amongst the youth unemployed needs to be seen in the context of the relatively low (although progressively rising) educational attainment

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level of the labour force as a whole with almost 40% having achieved lower secondary education or less in 2000.

In these circumstances there is a deficit of short-term measures to address this problem, other than through the creation of short-term job opportunities which have no impact on the long-term unemployed. The issue is not addressed in the Slovak Progress Report and, while it is addressed in the NAPE in terms of general targets and objectives, there is no clear allocation of resources to meet those objectives.

In Slovakia, the issue of social and labour market exclusion is essentially one, which relates to the **Roma community**. It is difficult to get accurate data in this area, as it is illegal to collect data on ethnic minorities. Moreover, large numbers of the Roma community do not declare themselves as such, but claim to have Hungarian or Slovak nationality. The last quoted census (2001) reports that 89,920 people or 1.7% of the population officially declared themselves as Roma. According to estimates of the urban and communal offices of the state administration from 1989, however, there were as many as 253,943 Roma living in Slovakia, thus constituting 4.8% of the population. Since these statistics do not include Roma who have a standard of living comparable to that of the majority population, Roma political and cultural activists estimate that the number of Roma in Slovakia is even higher, citing a figure of 350,000 to 400,000.

As in many other countries, the difficulty in drawing an accurate picture of the problem is exacerbated by societal and institutional attitudes, which interpret information on minority communities from the viewpoint of the majority population.

At the national level attempts are being made to address the issue of Roma's social exclusion. In April 2002, the government of the Slovak Republic approved a strategy seeking to address the problems of housing, education and employment of the Roma in a comprehensive manner. At the same time, the counter-discriminatory provisions with

regards to access to employment were strengthened in the Labour Code, which entered into force on 1 April 2002. An office of the Plenipotentiary of the Roma has been established with a remit to promote the interests of the Roma community and to participate in targeted interventions to increase their participation rates in the labour market and the education system. The office is funded by central government and its operating budget has increased year by year. In 2002, 50 million SK (€ 1.1 million) has been made available from the state budget. In addition, there are financial contributions from sectoral ministries.

A policy paper on "education and upbringing of Roma children and pupils" was prepared by the MoE in 2000 but the first financial support for its implementation is expected to come from the state budget in 2003.

As noted above, the Ministry of Education also supports the proposal to introduce a "zero" year in basic schools targeted at disadvantaged groups to enhance their performance in the school system. Following the successful implementation of the proposal on a pilot basis, the recently adopted Act 408/2002 envisages the introduction of preparatory "zero" classes as well as recruitment of assistant teachers among the Roma community.

The Presov Methodological Centre has a nationwide remit to research and promote education for the Roma community.

Most national interventions in the field of employment are targeted at reintegrating Roma men and, more successfully, women into the labour market. Such interventions may involve an element of training, e.g. training Roma to become teaching assistants in predominantly Roma schools, but others only involve socially beneficial work programmes, e.g. extending basic utilities to Roma communities. The Office of the Plenipotentiary reports successful initiatives in which teaching assistants have worked with Roma mothers in the home, involving them in the education of their children at the preschool level.

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The Phare projects are also making a valuable contribution to alleviating the conditions of Roma communities. A project designed to improve the educational and cultural life of Roma in the Spis region was completed in 2001. The ongoing Programme of Tolerance to Minorities covers training activities for workers in public and state administrations and promotes public information campaigns in the media and trains teachers for working with Roma students. A project designed to improve the situation of the Roma people in the Slovak Republic promotes mutual tolerance between Roma and non-Roma communities and seeks to improve the education system in its response to Roma students. A further project to support the Roma minority in the area of education seeks to improve the quality of preschool and basic education for Roma communities and to establish community centres.

While the interventions funded by the Phare and other international programmes are positively assessed, it is acknowledged that their impact has been of limited character in terms of the number of beneficiaries and their ultimate sustainability.

Notwithstanding steps taken, the continued exclusion of the Roma community from mainstream education is extremely worrying. Roma children are routinely consigned to special schools on the basis of language of instruction of psychological tests which, as limited Slovak/Hungarian speakers, they fail. An interlocutor from Presov University met during the field visits, estimates that up to 80% of the Roma children in special schools have been misplaced. However, once assigned to a special school, a student can only be reintegrated into the mainstream following the recommendation of a special commission. This rarely occurs.

The number of declared Roma children in mainstream secondary education is small. Data from the 1991 census report that out of 75,802 declared Roma children, 37,510 (49.48%) had completed ISCED 2 or less, 3,728 (4.91%) ISCED 3C, 363 (0.46%) ISCED 3A, and 56 (0.07%) ISCED 5+.

The World Bank estimates that the situation has deteriorated over the last decade with very high drop-out rates among basic school Roma students.

With the exception of one SSS in Kosice, which specialises in Roma culture, there are no Roma-oriented schools and no Roma-medium schools.⁴⁷ Some textbooks were published in Roma, but due to differences in dialects, were not accepted by all Roma communities.

A number of local and international NGOs address the issue at national and local level, with local interventions demonstrating a greater immediate impact. The Soros Foundation provides scholarships for Roma students to enrol in higher education institutions. A Roma studies department has been established at a higher education institution in Nitra, but it now has a majority of non-Roma students.

The problem is a very complex one and is further complicated by misunderstandings in both the majority and minority communities. The office of the Plenipotentiary for Roma express the hope that it will be easier to address the issue when regional self-government becomes a reality as regional bodies are confronted with the problem on a daily basis and therefore are more motivated to confront it.

2.4 CONTRIBUTION OF THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM TO PROMOTING ENTREPRENEURSHIP

2.4.1 DESIGN OF ENTREPRENEURIAL SKILLS

A network of simulation training firms operating in the secondary specialised and secondary vocational schools is of fundamental significance for the development of entrepreneurship.

Currently, there are 169 training firms in Slovakia, for which the Slovak Centre for Training Firms (SCTF) was established

⁴⁷ Reported by the Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Roma.

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within the State Institute of Vocational Education and Training. SCTF provides full information support, and simulation of national business services such as contact with the Registry of Businesses, the Trade Licensing Office, and the tax authorities, bank and social and health insurance agencies. In addition to the infrastructure support, SCTF annually organises fairs for training firms and provides for contacts for Slovak training firms with those in nine other countries. The effectiveness of such project-based and experience-based training has been well proven and provides the best possible entrepreneurial training for all segments of the Slovak education/training system. The SCTF intends to expand the project to basic and grammar schools.

Additionally, a new common project of SIOV/SCTF and the National Labour Office expanding this experience and methodology into the training of unemployed is being prepared.

The call for the introduction of a school subject focusing on entrepreneurial development and orientation toward the world of labour would be consistent with the National Programme of Upbringing and Education for the next 20 years. The document calls for the necessary approximation of school to life and a decrease in the information burden in favour of functionality in the content of the curriculum. However, the current curriculum does not make provision for entrepreneurial skills.

2.5 CONTRIBUTION OF THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING SYSTEM TO PROMOTING EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN

2.5.1 COMBATING GENDER STEREOTYPES AND INEQUALITIES

As in other future member states, gender stereotyping is not seen as a key problem in Slovakia and consequently not addressed as such. However, there are

indications of traditional stereotypes influencing both employment and VET practice.

Within recruitment procedures any gender and age discrimination is prohibited by law. Nevertheless, with their current over 20% unemployment rate, young girls and women may experience discrimination in the labour market, which traditionally prefers men to women and middle age workers over youngsters and elderly population.

Women are more vulnerable to long-term unemployment than men and the average earnings of those in work are 74% of those of men. The differential is 79% in the public sector, but 72% in the private sector. Women tend to be employed in low-wage industries, e.g. the garment industry. They are also largely represented in the education sector. At the same time, while there is no constraint on the choice of occupational profile a female or male student elects to follow there are certainly social pressures which influence the choice made.

Significantly, specialised schools for girls were reintroduced to the system in the early 1990s with the intention of offering courses focusing on vocational rather than academic education. There are currently 25 such schools, but eight of them are scheduled for closure under the rationalisation scheme. Their success in preparing girls for the labour market has not been conspicuous as their graduates score high among the total unemployed graduates group.

A project designed to promote equal opportunities in the labour market is being promoted by the government within the framework of the MATRA preaccession programme.

2.6 CONCLUSIONS

Considerable developments have been made in the reform of the VET system in the Slovak Republic over the past ten years and as a result it is beginning to respond more effectively to the needs of

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the labour market. The Millennium Project, adopted by the government in December 2001 provides a roadmap for the future development of the provision of vocational education within the context of lifelong and lifewide learning.

The decentralisation of the management of the education system has the potential of facilitating the responsiveness of VET schools to local labour market needs and of increasing the involvement of social partners in the provision of practical and theoretical training. Financial decentralisation should also allow for a more efficient use of resources, although there is some concern that it may also lead to a fragmentation of the system resulting in further disparities between regions. Nonetheless, this provision can be met by the inclusion of checks and balances in the implementation of the decentralised system.

However, as the MoE is aware, there remain a number of challenges in the further development of the VET system in the Slovak Republic.

The root problem is the lack of financing and the continuing decline in the percentage of GDP allocated to the education system and, within it, the VET system. As a consequence teachers are poorly paid and have a low social status, schools are poorly maintained and there is no provision for investment in new training facilities. The main source for re-equipping obsolete workshops has been Phare and other internationally funded programmes, although individual schools have made efforts to use their own resources to improve facilities and the Infovek project is currently assisting schools in procuring IT equipment and in upgrading teachers' skills in the use of them.

While the policy of the Ministry of Education is to encourage enterprises to collaborate with VET schools in providing practical training places in the workplace, no incentives have yet been offered to enterprises and therefore there is no

systematic involvement of enterprises in the provision of VET. Policy proposals to partially fund initial and continuing VET through contributions from enterprises have not as yet been endorsed and materialised.

The principle of participation of social partners in the development of VET policy, occupational profiles and educational standards is well established in the laws governing the VET system and there is evidence of some involvement of social partners at the national level. However, at the regional, district and school levels the involvement of social partners is less evident. School boards include unspecified representatives of the community, but there is no indication that they should be able to inform the school of local labour market needs or of the employment perspectives of local employer and employee associations. However, there is no reason why representatives of the social partners should not sit on school boards.

The development of new occupational profiles and related educational standards was, for a short period, carried out on parallel tracks under the supervision of two institutions, the RILSAF and the SIOV, respectively. However, in 2001 the work has been continued through the SIOV, but from an educational perspective rather than being informed by labour market needs. There must be some doubt that the standards currently being developed adequately reflect labour market needs.

The lack of coordination between the demand and supply side is accentuated at the school level by the lack of systematic cooperation between the District Labour Offices, enterprises and schools. This is, in part, due to the limited possibilities to appreciate the changing needs of the labour market on the part of the schools,⁴⁸ in part due to the lack of systematic data collection by the DLOs on the labour market and, in part, a lack of confidence on the part of new enterprises in the quality of training within the schools.

⁴⁸ During the field visits VET school directors complained that enterprises no longer gave the schools contracts to train a specified number in a specific occupational profile by a set time, as they had done during the socialist period.

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While the demand and supply of CVT appears to be high, although the data to support this impression are lacking, there is a certain lack of transparency linked with the absence of a system for assessment and certification of CVT. The development of a module-based system of continuing training as envisaged in the National Action Plan for Employment, informed by the work on educational standards currently being developed for schools, could promote the links between formal and non-formal education and training as well as enhance the lifelong access opportunities of the adult population. Steps in this direction have yet to be taken.

The inclusion of socially disadvantaged groups, and specifically the Roma, within the formal education system and the labour force remains a largely intractable problem. While policy initiatives are developing and there are a significant number of well-designed and well-executed interventions, which have beneficial local impact, the overall situation remains critical. Awareness raising and tolerance campaigns among both the majority and minority communities are an essential prerequisite to the implementation of national programmes to combat social exclusion.

3. CAPACITY OF PUBLIC (PES) AND PRIVATE (PRES) EMPLOYMENT SERVICES TO SUPPORT THE AIMS OF THE NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT POLICIES

3.1 THE ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

3.1.1 MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Under the terms of the Employment Act, the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (MoLSAF) has responsibility for the following:

- the development of labour market policy;
- determining the priorities within that policy;
- drafting laws governing the implementation of policy;
- the administration of this part of funds for active labour market measures that come from the state budget; and

- drafting the human resources chapter of the National Development Plan.

In preparation for accession to the EU, the ministry has been given responsibility for the management of the preaccession funding instruments related to human resource development, and for the European Social Fund after accession.

The Public Employment Service (PES) is managed by the National Labour Office (NLO) through its network of regional and district labour offices. The NLO, a public legal institution, was established on 1 January 1997 by Act No 387/1996 on Employment Law. The law gives the NLO responsibility for the administration of the Employment Fund,⁴⁹ the implementation of employment services and management of regional and district labour offices.⁵⁰ The

⁴⁹ The Employment Fund was established in 1993 to finance employment policy. It was initially administered by tripartite, self-governing bodies at national and district levels. The fund was, and continues to be financed by employers' and employees' contributions which are retained in a budget separate from the state budget.

⁵⁰ The creation of the first 38 labour offices goes back to 1991, which gradually augmented by approximately 105 local labour offices with a remit to implement labour market policy.

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NLO replaced the Administration of Employment Services, which was created in 1994 as a budgetary organisation of the MoLSAF to manage the activities of the labour offices.

The NLO consists of self-governing and executive bodies. It is supervised by two self-governing bodies: the board of directors and the supervisory board. The board of directors consists of 15 members equally distributed between government representatives and representatives of employers and employees. With the exception of the head of the board of directors, a position held by the Minister of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, all the members of the board are elected by the National Council (i.e. the parliament) of the Slovak Republic. The board has responsibility for scrutinising and approving key documents prepared by the executive branch of the NLO and regulating, authorising and monitoring the expenditure of the NLO's budget. The board's decisions are binding on the executive.

The supervisory board has nine members: three government representatives, three employers' representatives and three employees' representatives elected by parliament. The supervisory board monitors the performance of the executive branch.

The executive branch of the NLO is headed by the directorate-general at the national level with responsibility for the preparation of policy papers for approval by the board and the management and implementation of labour market policy. It also has responsibility for the management of the eight regional and 79 district labour offices. The director-general appoints the directors of regional and district offices.

The regional labour offices are supervised by the Administration Board of the Regional Labour Office, which is a self-governing body consisting of the chairman and two deputy chairmen of each of the self-governing district committees within the region. As the number of districts within a region varies, so the size of the administration boards varies.

The regional labour offices are responsible for managing and guiding the district labour offices and for the implementation of active labour market measures at the regional level.

The district labour offices (DLOs) are supervised by tripartite administrative committees. The committees comprise nine members, three representatives from local government, three members from employers' associations and three members from employee' associations. They have responsibility for approving the budget for the implementation of local labour market programmes and defining LM policy at the local level.

The DLOs are the key front line implementing agencies of the PES with responsibility for:

- job mediation and the provision of labour market intelligence;
- maintaining and administering the unemployment register at the district level;
- the provision of guidance and counselling services for clients;
- the administration and payment of unemployment benefits;
- arbitrating individual claims within the framework of the law;
- monitoring local labour market needs and making recommendations for responding to those needs;
- implementing active employment measures within the framework of the Employment Act;
- the collection and administration of unemployment insurance payments; and
- ensuring compliance with the Employment Act.

The PES is financed through the **unemployment insurance** which is raised by a levy (unemployment insurance) on employers (2.75% of payroll) and employees (1% of salary). The self-employed make a contribution of 3% of income.

Since 2000 the NLO budget has been augmented by direct contributions from the state budget to fund active employment measures.

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The NLO budget comprises the following sub-funds:

- the **Basic Fund**, used for financing active and passive employment measures (2.2 billion SK/€ 51 million and 4.8 billion SK/€ 109 million respectively in 2001);
- the **Reserve Fund**, used for the temporary financing of emergency unemployment benefits (1.1 billion SK/€ 25 million in 2001);
- The **Administrative Fund**, used to cover the operational and investment costs of the PES (1.5 billion SK/€ 35 million in 2001); and
- The **Guarantee Fund**,⁵¹ used to cover the unpaid wages of employees working in insolvent companies (89 million SK/€ 2 million in 2001).

For further discussion on the deployment of the Employment Fund, see section 3.2 below.

The NLO operates three computerised databases, which are accessible to all regional and district labour offices:

- a national register of the unemployed;
- a national register of unemployment insurance payers; and
- a register of active labour market measures.

The need is felt to improve the policy coordination role of the MoLSAF towards NLO. The NLO feels constrained in its implementation of policy by the need for legislative amendments which could lead to an improvement in its services but which depend on initiatives that have to be taken by the ministry.

3.2 RESOURCE ALLOCATION TO THE PES

3.2.1 FINANCIAL RESOURCES

In 2000, 92% (8.4 billion SK, € 200 million) of the budget managed by the NLO derived from the contribution from the unemployment insurance levy. The remaining 8% derived from diverse sources, e.g. interest from bank deposits, fines imposed on employers failing to employ the statutory number of employees with disabilities, etc.

Despite the increase in unemployment, the percentage of GDP allocated to active labour market measures has declined from 0.30%, 1998 to 0.23%, 2001⁵² (see Annexes to chapter 3, Annex 1). The figure even dropped to 0.06% in 1999. The trend is expected to be reversed in 2002 with a budget allocation for active measures of 3.9 billion SK as opposed to the 2.2 billion SK allocated in 2001. However, even with this budgeted increase, which has still to be confirmed, the allocation is insufficient (as acknowledged also by the Slovak authorities) to adequately meet the needs of the high number of unemployed.

The Administrative Fund, which covers the operational costs of the PES, has grown in successive years, but not at a sufficient rate to compensate for the rate of inflation over the same period. Over 90% of the fund is accounted for by salaries and the administrative costs incurred in providing employment services, including the collection and administration of the unemployment insurance levy, leaving relatively small sums for investment in new technologies.

⁵¹ The state budget also makes a contribution to the Guarantee Fund. The fund was introduced in 2000.

⁵² This compares poorly with Hungary (0.4%), but is equal to the Czech Republic (0.22%), although, the unemployment rates in the Czech Republic or in Hungary are much lower.

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Budget of the PES

	1998		1999		2000		2001	
	Slovak Koruna (million)	Euro (million) as % of GDP	Slovak Koruna (million)	Euro (million) as % of GDP	Slovak Koruna (million)	Euro (million) as % of GDP	Slovak Koruna (million)	Euro (million) as % of GDP
Total expenditure	8,978	229.4 1.16	9,116	206.5 1.1	9,211	216.3 1.0	8,638	199 0.9
of which:								
Administrative Fund	1205	30.8 0.16	1340	30.3 0.2	1444	33.9 0.2	1524	35.1 0.2
of which:								
non-investment costs	1103	28.2 0.14	1170	26.5 0.1	1297	30.5 0.1	1383	31.8 0.1
as % of total fund	92		87		90		91	
investment costs	102	2.6 0.01	170	3.8 0.020	147	3.4 0.016	142	3.3 0.014
investment into IT	25	0.6 0.003	104	2.3 0.012	50	1.2 0.005	53	1.2 0.005

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3.2.2 HUMAN RESOURCES

As of 31 December 2001, the NLO employed 5,062 staff, of which 213 worked in the directorate-general, 326 in the regional labour offices and 4,523 in the district labour offices. As the number of staff is insufficient to carry out all the duties of the employment services a further 333 have been engaged on the basis of public benefit works.

About 68% of the staff (3,521) work directly with the clients of the employment services. Of these, 1,641 are engaged in job mediation and counselling. With the number of registered unemployed reaching 533,652 in December 2001, the ratio of clients to staff was 103:1. However, the ratio of clients to staff working directly with the unemployed was 268:1. This ratio is considerably worse than EU standards, which range between 50:1 and 100:1. The ratio of unemployed to staff working in job mediation and counselling at 325:1 is very high.

Regional disparities are indicated in the following table which confirms that areas of high unemployment consistently and increasingly suffer from the highest ratio of registered unemployed to job mediator.

Region	Average no of registered unemployed per job mediator		
	1998	1999	2000
Banská Bystrica	390	466	391
Bratislava	291	440	396
Kosice	372	454	487
Nitra	352	408	390
Presov	375	483	437
Trencin	319	455	369
Trnava	285	445	345
Zilina	335	420	376

It is clear from these figures that the number of front-line staff in the employment services is inadequate and, even with finely targeted interventions aimed at the reintegration of highly marginalised groups, their response cannot be sufficiently individualised. In recognition of this situation, the government intends to

increase the number of front-line staff by about 4% in 2002. The recently adopted new law on social insurance makes provision for the Social Insurance Agency to take responsibility for the collection of contributions for unemployment insurance as of July 2003, which, when implemented, is expected to release a further 360 staff for front-line duties.⁵³ However, an effective strategy for responding to the needs of the unemployed requires not only increased staff numbers, but also commitment at the political level to well-defined and quantified objectives and staff equipped with the appropriate know-how to cope with the implementation of an individualised approach the unemployed.

Basic standards for District Labour Office staff training were approved by the NLO in 2000 and cover all the positions in the organigram of the public employment services. In-service training is largely provided in-house. In 2001, 370 courses were delivered by internal lecturers, providing 1,133 training days for 4,050 participants. External contractors provided 16 courses, which were delivered by 40 training days for 288 participants. Executive staff were trained in communication skills, interacting with clients and individual or group consulting. Managers were given training in general management skills or in specific skills such as team working, conflict resolution or change management. Both management and executive staff also received training in the legislation relating to the labour market and in IT skills.

In 2001 agreement was reached with three universities for the provision of a Bachelor's degree in social work within the context of the employment services, specifically designed for the employees of the DLOs.

It is not clear whether the in-service training is delivered on the basis of a systematic need analysis accompanied with a structured and regularly reviewed/evaluated training plan. More detailed information on the relationship between the training provided and the change of the work processes in the labour offices would be needed.

⁵³ Slovak Progress Report on the Joint Assessment of Employment Priorities in the Slovak Republic.

The average monthly wage of employees of the PES was increased by almost 10% to 11,282 SK (265 euro) in 2000, and is now just below the national average of 11,430 SK (268 euro).

3.2.3 PHYSICAL RESOURCES

At year-end 2001 the public employment service was equipped with 4,181 computers deployed in 159 local nets. This amounts to approximately one computer for every 1.2 employees. However, the existing computers are old and many are inadequate for current requirements. The directorate-general, the eight regional offices and the 79 district labour offices are linked electronically through the internet, local nets and an intranet. According to the Slovak Progress Report on the JAP the NLO information system has been developed on a decentralised basis and has full functionality at the level of district labour offices.

3.3 COVERAGE OF PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

In 2001 district labour offices were open to their clients for an average of 24.5 hours per week and for approximately six hours per day (operating on a four-day week). This represents an increase on 2000 of 4.5 hours per week.

Enterprises are required by law to provide the DLOs with information regarding all vacancies, but in practice the law is largely ignored. Thus, it is difficult to calculate the PES market share, but it is estimated to be between 15% and 20%. Typically, the vacancies that the DLOs are informed about are for low-skilled, low-paid positions. High-skilled and well-paid jobs are generally brokered through the private employment services or are filled directly by employers.

3.4 RANGE AND QUALITY OF SERVICES

While the central policy objective of the NLO is to shift from an organisation focusing largely on administrative functions⁵⁴ towards a more client-oriented, individualised service for unemployed jobseekers, it may be argued that the realisation of this objective is still constrained by the current legislative framework (expected to change only in July 2003), a lack of financial resources, inadequate technical facilities and a staff that is not yet adequately prepared for the new approach. As noted above, the number of officers employed to provide the new ambitious type of services is inadequate to the needs which suggests that the amount of time spent on individual consultations is fairly limited. Moreover, the new demands being made of front-line officers will require their further considerable reskilling.

Furthermore, a significant proportion of the active-oriented interventions of the NLO has concentrated on promoting measures to reinforce the labour demand (e.g. approximately 16% of the budget allocated for active employment measures in 2001 was used to subsidise public benefit jobs creating employment opportunities – mostly of a temporary character - for 3,520 long-term unemployed, 970 school-leavers and 1,747 people with reduced work capacity) with only a limited part of actions seeking to improve the supply side of the labour market.

The regulatory framework of the NLO provides that the range of its services include job mediation, both nationally and internationally, consultancy services on a group and one-to-one basis, consultations for employers and preventative consultations for school-leavers, guidance and counselling officers in schools, employers and employees under threat of redundancy. The NLO also provides guidance and counselling and medical services, the latter in relation to clients with

⁵⁴ In addition to the implementation of active labour market measures, the DLOs are currently responsible for the collection of the unemployment insurance and the Guarantee Fund and for the distribution of benefits for the unemployed. Legislation currently before Parliament, proposes to divest the PES of this responsibility in 2003. The DLOs are also responsible for inspections relating to the monitoring of active employment measures.

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reduced work capacity, job clubs and self-service access centres.

Job mediation

The NLO reports that 159,021 registered unemployed were placed in employment through the district labour offices in 2001 (the respective number for 2000 was 175,440 registered unemployed).

The NLO signed six bilateral agreements on job mediation for Slovak citizens looking for work opportunities abroad and for foreigners seeking work in the Slovak Republic. In 2001, 12,975 jobs were mediated for Slovak citizens abroad, excluding the Czech Republic and 328 for foreigners, excluding Czechs, wishing to work in the Slovak Republic.

Consultations for employers

Consultations for employers are offered on a one-to-one basis, but primarily as a group activity and cover such topics as:

- employment law;
- the employers' obligation to the labour office;
- staff dismissals;
- permits for overtime work;
- payments of contributions within the unemployment insurance scheme;
- funding possibilities for job creation schemes; and
- information on retraining programmes.

As part of the consultations with employers the DLOs arranged 27 job fairs in 2000.

Preventative consultations for school-leavers

These focus on the need to gain employment as soon as possible after graduation from school or after being made redundant. 55,818 participated in such consultations during 2000.

Guidance and counselling services

Information and consultation centres provide clients on a self-service basis with information on:⁵⁵

- job vacancies;
- occupational profiles and the qualifications required for entry into an occupation;
- opportunities for education and retraining; and
- employment law and employees' rights.

There are 60 job clubs operating in DLOs with the objective of assisting registered unemployed in reintegrating themselves in the labour market and in improving their presentation at job interviews.

Other active labour market measures administered by the DLOs include:

- promotion of job creation schemes;
- support for self-employment opportunities;
- support for employment for those with physical disabilities in sheltered work places; and
- retraining.

In 2001, 21% (109,387) of the registered unemployed participated in active employment measures as specified in the following table:

Participation in employment promotion measures

Employment measure	Number of participants
Programme to support employment of the long-term unemployed	50,363
Programme to support the employment of young people	14,773
Programme of individualised employment services	5,709
Retraining programmes	24,558
Support for creation of job opportunities	12,625
Support for employment of people with disabilities	1,359

Job creation schemes

Under the programme to support the employment of the long-term unemployed DLOs have facilitated the creation of public benefit jobs providing temporary employment opportunities. The DLOs pay

⁵⁵ This service is available in only a small number of the 79 DLOs.

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a monthly wage not exceeding SK 4,537 or 130% of subsistence benefits. The programme focused on areas of high unemployment, i.e. Kosice, Banská Bystrica, Presov and Nitra regions. However, the rate of return to unemployment following these temporary jobs is between 95% and 100%.

Active measures for the young unemployed have included the creation of limited-term jobs for school-leavers who have been registered as unemployed for six months. The DLO pays the employer a subsidy to cover wage and social insurance costs. A second programme provides part-time "work practice" for unemployed school-leavers. The DLO pays a subsidy to the employer of SK 1,000 and SK 500 to the beneficiary.

The majority of the young unemployed were provided with counselling and job-brokering services. Just over one-quarter (approximately 6,500) were successful in finding paid employment during 2001.

Nearly 6,000 registered unemployed participated in individualised projects designed to increase their employability. These long-term projects include counselling services, individualised training plans, job creation schemes and job-brokering and are targeted at the Roma community, the long-term unemployed, women returning to work after child care and the over-fifty age group.

The PES provides support for self-employment opportunities through a small business development programme. 2,434 jobs were supported in 2001 with grants averaging at SK 63,955.

Support for employment for those with physical disabilities is provided in sheltered workshops or workplaces as employees or for the self-employed. 1,359 new jobs were created in 2001 of which 1,251 were for people with reduced work capacity and 108 for people with severely reduced capacities. 355 long-term unemployed and 15 school-leavers gained employment through the scheme in 2001.

In order to maintain jobs in sheltered work places the PES makes a contribution to the operation costs of the facility to a maximum of SK 40,000 (€ 938) per annum per employee.

Retraining

Retraining of the registered unemployed is carried out on the basis of a written agreement between the DLO and the unemployed individual. The costs of training that falls within that agreement and associated costs of travel and subsistence are paid by the DLO. Should the unemployed individual wish to follow training that is not included within the written agreement, they would have to cover the costs of the training from their own resources.

There was a 438% increase in the number of registered unemployed participating in retraining programmes in 2001 compared to 2000 (from 5,622 to 24,558). Programmes were targeted at high-risk groups, e.g. people in the 15-29 age group (52.4%), people with low qualifications (39%) and the long-term unemployed (40%) and in the areas of high unemployment mentioned above. 23% of those who participated in retraining programmes in 2001 found paid employment following the training. Of these 50% found work within one month and, at the other extreme, 4% after six months of the training.

Selection of training providers is made by DLOs without following a standardised open tender procedure but with the use of criteria developed by the Administrative Committee. A minimum prerequisite is that the training provider should have received accreditation from the Ministry of Education in the manner described in chapter 2. The following criteria are also taken into consideration:

- the DLO's previous experience of the institution or, in the absence of such experience, references provided by the institution;
- the institution's success rate measured by the percentage of those retrained finding paid employment;

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- the cost of the training;
- the location and duration of the retraining;
- the quality of the teaching staff;
- the appropriateness of training methodologies;
- the quality of training materials and equipment;
- the relationship between the training institution and potential employers;
- guidance and counselling services offered by the institution;
- the flexibility of the institution and its willingness to cooperate with the DLO; and
- references from previous beneficiaries of retraining.

Evidence from the field visits suggests that due to the concentration of accredited providers in urban areas and in the west of the country, it is not always possible to identify and select trainers with the desired knowledge of the local labour market and of the needs of employers.

In 2001 the NLO's board of directors approved three national retraining programmes. Training providers were selected on the basis of the extent of their geographical representation in Slovakia, the involvement of social partners in the design of training programmes and their responsiveness to strategically important sectors, e.g. information technologies, the car industry.

The NLO is carrying out a project, which intends to develop more rigorous procedures to assess the effectiveness of retraining programmes, applying a system of benchmarking to allow for comparisons to be made between activities using the same criteria.

In addition, in an attempt to improve the methodology for monitoring the success of retraining courses the board of directors of the NLO approved new rules for financing active labour market policies in 2002. The rules stipulate that a specific sum should be allocated to each DLO to investigate the demand side of the employment equation.

3.5 ROLE OF PRIVATE EMPLOYMENT SERVICES (PRES)

As of 31 December 2001, 212 agencies providing job mediation services on a fee-paying basis are registered with the NLO. While registration with the NLO is a legal requirement to operate as a PRES, a number of unregistered personnel agencies and counselling firms also offer job mediation services.

According to NLO data, the market share of the registered PRES is small, providing mediation in only 2% to 3% of officially reported job vacancies. However, the PRES provide "headhunting" services for individual companies, but there are no data on the extent of this activity.

The PRES operate in three main areas: job mediation for jobs in western Europe, primarily for young people, job brokerage for well-qualified individuals who are already in work, but looking for other opportunities and the provision of consultancy services for employers looking for specific skills. They play no role in the provision of training or in job mediation for the unemployed or for those at risk of becoming unemployed.

There is currently little cooperation between the public and private employment services as their respective market niches are quite distinct. In addition to its registration role, the NLO also monitors their performance, ensuring compliance with the law. However, there is an intention to develop closer links with the private service in the future with the possibility of outsourcing some of the job mediation and counselling services currently provided by the public employment service.

3.6 REFORM OF THE PES

The development of the PES since the beginning of the transition period is discussed in 3.1.1 above. Since it began operations in 1997, the NLO, through its self-governing bodies, has evaluated its

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activities and developed an “activation strategy” proposal for making its services more client-oriented and responsive to the needs of the labour market. The full implementation of this strategy is envisaged to start in 2003. Its major declared goal is to shift the priority to the financing of activities leading to the increased employability of the unemployed, thereby improving the supply side to the labour market. Direct support to the demand side, i.e. job creation schemes, should be reassessed and reduced.

In 2001 and 2002 some significant preparatory steps have been taken in the implementation of this strategy with:

- a new legislative proposal (mentioned above) aiming at facilitating the process of streamlining NLO responsibilities by removing from its remit those activities which are not central to its core business (collection and distribution of unemployment benefits);
- the gradual identification of quantifiable indicators of achievement, following consultations with the staff of regional and district labour offices, and prioritised in accordance with active labour market policies; and
- on the basis of experience gained in the past few years, a project approach to PES activities is being promoted; in 2001 projects focusing on monitoring and evaluation were initiated with the assistance of Dutch and Slovak partners with the objective of analysing the effectiveness of various active employment measures.

The focus of projects in 2002 is on supporting the employment of young people and on the development of individualised employment services. While launched at the national level, the projects give rise to numerous local projects managed by the DLOs.

In accordance with the National Action Plan for Employment 2002 - 2003 (in particular its measures 5.1, 5.6, 9, 12, 14, 16), the NLO Activation Strategy sets a number of ambitious targets to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of its functions (such as the increase of staff and

technology support for job mediation and consulting services; development and enhancement of the national information system on job opportunities; promoting the efficient monitoring system to monitor employers' requirements for qualifications and the qualification structure of the registered unemployed; development of a monitoring and control system in the field of quality and success rate of clients of the agencies providing retraining; development of a model system of public employment services provision for the disabled clients; introducing an internal performance certification procedure for all NLO levels). However, there are not as yet concrete indications on the progress made as regards the adoption of the appropriate methods and means (in particular financial ones) to achieve those targets, especially within the envisaged tight timetable of implementation.

In terms of the accession process, the NLO is concerned to approximate the PES to European standards by complying with standard planning and programming procedures (the National Action Plan for Employment developed through the project approach mentioned above), and by improving the quality of the services provided by the PES, particularly in the area of job mediation and counselling.

To achieve these aims the NLO will need to increase its capacity to develop an employment strategy with a four to five-year horizon. More fundamentally, the MoLSAF will have to consider the introduction of new legislation on the administration of the PES to bring it into line with EU member state norms. For example, current legislation strictly limits the amount of money in the Administrative Fund, i.e. the fund from which the NLO finances its operations. Consequently the NLO has no latitude to increase its staff or upgrade its IT infrastructure in response to the increasing number of clients. Similarly, the current Employment Act does not include job mediation and counselling in the prescribed list of active labour market measures and consequently these activities cannot be financed from the Basic Fund, the instrument used for active measures.

3. CAPACITY OF PUBLIC (PES) AND PRIVATE (PRES) EMPLOYMENT SERVICES TO SUPPORT THE AIMS OF THE NATIONAL EMPLOYMENT POLICIES

3.7 SUPPORT FOR IMPLEMENTING THE EES

While considerable progress has been made as is evidenced in the JAP, further challenges exist. The most immediate are the need to prepare for participation in the EQUAL initiative, the Phare programming process and for the administration of the European Social Fund for which the NLO will be one of the key implementing agencies. Further training and development of NLO staff at national and regional level will be necessary in this context.

3.8 CONCLUSIONS

The National Labour Office has a clear perception of the objectives of the public employment service both in terms of the immediate domestic problem and in terms of the challenges presented by accession to the EU and the single market. However, it is constrained in implementing a strategy for meeting these objectives by the legal restrictions imposed by the current Employment Act and the absence of new legislation that would release it from activities which detract from the service it could provide to its clients.

The public employment service is seriously underfunded and understaffed. The progress made in the development of a comprehensive activation plan for NLO has yet to be coupled with the working out of operational procedures and commitment of necessary resources if the district labour offices are to meet their central objective of providing individualised services to particularly vulnerable groups within the

unemployed, e.g. the youth unemployed with low qualifications, the long-term unemployed and women wishing to re-enter the labour market. Despite these difficulties, the National Labour Office has initiated an ambitious training programme for DLO staff in order to increase the capacity of the public employment service.

While there is a gradual shift from passive to active employment measures, passive measures still predominate as is inevitable in a time of high unemployment. However, within the active measures there is a disturbing tendency towards short-term job creation schemes, which, while providing immediate amelioration in unemployment figures, are notably unsuccessful in achieving a long-term solution. The NLO is aware of this deficiency and is actively promoting the creation of self-employment opportunities and in improving the employability of registered unemployed through retraining, activities, which are more effective in the long term.

The relationship between the public and private employment services is typically the regulatory function that the NLO has over private providers. For the most part there is little opportunity for collaboration as their respective clientele are different. The public service deals with the unemployed and in brokering low-paid jobs while the private service deals with employed jobseekers and headhunting for senior posts. However, the public service is entertaining the possibility of outsourcing some of its job mediation and guidance and counselling services to the private sector, which could lead to constructive collaboration between the two sectors.

4. OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

4

The strategic proposals and targets put forward by the National Programme for *Upbringing and Education for the next 15-20 years in the Slovak Republic* (such as raising the state budget for education and training to 6% of GDP, increasing the proportion of students in upper secondary general education, establishing the *maturita* school-leaving examination as the predominant form of completion of secondary education, increasing the admission and participation rates in tertiary education) reflect the outcomes of a long policy preparation process. The new draft Law on Upbringing and Education (School Act) which was submitted to the parliament by the previous government represents an attempt to put in place the framework for translating the policy goals into practice. However, the future of the envisaged reforms will depend on the readiness and commitment of the newly elected government to developing a balanced and realistic implementation strategy. Easing the financial constraints as well as enhancing the institutional cooperation between all relevant stakeholders seem to be important pillars of such a strategy.

Notwithstanding the pending decisions to take forward the above road map for the comprehensive change of the education and training system in Slovakia, there have been numerous positive initiatives over the past few years with the aim of reinforcing the responsiveness of the system to the new social and economic aspirations and needs in the country.

Among such noticeable developments the following should be reported:

- the expansion of the compulsory schooling period to 10 years;
- the transfer of the management responsibilities for the education system from the state to regional and municipal self-governing administration as of July 2002;
- the application of the principle of self-administration of the school system through the setting up of consultative regional/municipal and school education boards;
- the recent (April 2002) entry into force of the Higher Education Act, which establishes the higher non-university education stream (level ISCED 5B);

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- the further consolidation of the stakeholders' participation in the governance of the VET system through the creation of the advisory Council of the Minister of Education of the SR for vocational education matters; in addition, social partners are represented in expert commissions which are entrusted with the task to deliver advice on the content related aspects of VET;
- the elaboration and approval of a National Standard of secondary vocational education which sets out the key requirements for training programmes (in terms of duration, content and achievement standards) and is meant to provide the framework for streamlining the current high number of narrowly defined study specialisations; and
- the establishment of the State School Inspection as an independent body.

It needs also to be stressed that the above developments have taken place in a context of a growing proportion of students participating in secondary education programmes which give access to higher education as well as of the correlated significant increase of participation in tertiary education.

Yet, the important socio-economic challenges ahead (namely, combating unemployment and raising the employment rate, completing successfully the ongoing restructuring process while in parallel tackling the related regional and social disparities problem) make imperative the working out of a comprehensive action plan to address the current skill deficits and mismatches.

The following are some of the key areas in which sustained efforts still need to be made:

- Redressing the declining percentage of GDP invested in education and training which has had serious negative effects in terms of maintaining/upgrading of technical equipment in schools as well as of teachers' remuneration. As regards the latter, it has remained lower than the national average and has been
- one of the causes of the outflow of qualified teachers to other professions, with the result that a high proportion of teaching posts are taken up by unqualified teachers.
- The low student/teacher ratio in particular in specialised secondary schools as well as the decreasing enrolments in secondary vocational schools indicate the potential for a more effective use/allocation of scarce available resources. The process of rationalisation of the school network launched by the Ministry of Education has already brought some initial results and needs to be pursued further.
 - The steady increase over the past years of students participating in tertiary education needs to be further reinforced if the growing social demand for this level of studies is to be satisfied and if the country is to address its considerable deficit in terms of the low percentage of active population with higher education qualifications.
 - The process of curricula reform and development of associated educational standards in secondary vocational education needs to be driven in a more systematic way by closer coordination and partnership between education and labour market institutions together with social partners.
 - The offer of in-service opportunities for teachers needs to be reinforced with a focus on the renewal of their pedagogic skills. At the same time there is awareness that both preservice and continuing teacher training have to become more practice oriented with reduction of its still dominant abstract theoretical character.
 - The efficient implementation of concrete public policy measures to facilitate the transition from school to work (and vice versa) is still missing, in particular as regards potential incentives to strengthen the links between enterprises and schools (boost the in-company practical training placements for students) as well as to encourage the engagement of individuals in lifelong learning.
 - Despite the absence of reliable statistical data on the demand and supply of CVT, all available evidence

4. OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

points to the existence of a growing market in this area. However, targeted policy action is needed to address the important gaps in terms of quality of training provision and access to continuing training for specific groups such as low skilled, workers in small enterprises, the unemployed, the Roma community, etc.

- Concrete steps have yet to be taken for the development of a module-based system of continuing training as envisaged in the National Action Plan for Employment. This development should take place in synergy with the work on educational standards currently being developed for schools, in order to promote the links between formal and non-formal education and training as well as enhance the lifelong access opportunities of the adult population.
- The continued exclusion of the Roma community from mainstream education is a major source of concern. So far - with the notable exceptions of the establishment of a dedicated Government Office of the Plenipotentiary for the Roma or the recent legislative embedding of preparatory "zero" classes for socially disadvantaged children - the attempts aimed at addressing the educational or employment disadvantage of the Roma population have been made mainly through small-scale projects and brought limited results in terms of the number of beneficiaries and their ultimate sustainability. The implementation of the policy priorities identified by the previous government and aiming to address the housing, employment and education problems of the Roma community in comprehensive manner would require a continued commitment from the new government to securing the appropriate funds from the state budget in 2003 and onwards.
- Active labour market measures in general and retraining for unemployed in particular are not sufficiently developed: they represented 0.17 of GDP in 2000 and 0.23% in 2001; in 2001 out of the total LM policy expenditures (around 7 billion SK) 32% were devoted to active labour market

measures (the same ratio was 29.5% in 1998, 7% in 1999 and 20% in 2000). The part of retraining within LM expenditure was very modest (around 197 million SK in 2001) whereas retraining expenditures represented 9% of active LM costs in 2001 (7% in 1998, 15.5% in 1999 and 4% in 2000). The trend is expected to be reversed in 2002 with budget allocation for active measures of 3.9 billion SK in 2002 as opposed to the 2.2 billion SK allocated in 2001. There are certain constraints deriving from the legislation currently in force with regard to financing vocational guidance and counselling through the budget for active labour market measures. Furthermore, a significant proportion of the active-oriented interventions has concentrated on promoting measures to reinforce the labour demand with only a limited part of actions seeking to improve the supply side of the labour market.

- A positive development to be reported is the adoption by the Government of the National Action Plan for Employment (NAPE) for 2002 - 2003, which identifies several quantitative targets, which are in accordance with the JAP priorities. Particular attention should be paid to, the links/consistency between the measures envisaged in the NAPE and other related policies (in particular budgetary policy). As is the case in other countries, the commitment of the Ministry of Finance to the employment policy objectives needs to be ensured. Consequently the successful implementation of the NAPE depends on the progress of the work as regards:
 - a) the definition of the methods and time schedule for implementation of the different measures; and
 - b) the quantification of financial means for implementation of measures available from the state budget and preaccession funds/EU programme. In this respect, the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family of SR is charged with preparing the proposal of NAPE budgetary programme for 2003, which will be part of the state budget for the year 2003.

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- While the central policy objective of the public employment service (National Labour Office) is to shift from an organisation focusing largely on administrative functions towards a more client-oriented, individualised service for unemployed jobseekers, it may be argued that the realisation of this objective is still constrained by the current legislative framework (expected to change only in July 2003), a lack of financial resources, inadequate technical facilities and a staff that is not yet adequately prepared for the new approach. In addition, the total number of NLO staff is judged by NLO management as insufficient. Possible alternatives which are put forward refer
 - to freeing capacities by getting rid of what is considered to be “non-core” activities (collection-management of contributions); or reforming the organisational structures (regional capacities to be transferred to field activities in the districts).
- The progress made in the development of a comprehensive activation plan for the NLO has yet to be coupled with the working out of operational procedures and commitment of necessary resources if the district labour offices are to meet their central objective of providing individualised services to particularly vulnerable groups within the unemployed.

ANNEXES

ANNEX 1

Basic data of education statistics from the Institute of Information and Prognoses in Education:

Basic schools: 1989 – 2001 basic indices

Year	Schools	Classes	Pupils	Teachers	Pupils/ teachers	Pupils/ classes
1989	2,302	27,559	724,919	36,242	20.0	26.3
1990	2,358	28,390	721,687	37,244	19.4	25.4
1991	2,415	28,942	716,416	37,812	18.9	24.8
1992	2,472	29,207	704,119	39,867	17.7	24.1
1993	2,483	28,518	690,189	38,874	17.8	24.2
1994	2,481	28,224	675,813	38,813	17.4	23.9
1995	2,485	28,285	661,082	39,224	16.9	23.4
1996	2,493	28,059	644,902	39,213	16.4	23.0
1997	2,482	28,432	645,941	39,530	16.3	22.7
1998	2,484	28,918	647,877	40,482	16.0	22.4
1999	2,471	29,773	671,706	43,466	15.5	22.6
2000	2,447	29,093	650,966	42,174	15.4	22.4
2001	2,406	28,539	626,645	41,983	14.9	22.0

Source: Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education.

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Grammar schools: 1989 – 2001 basic indices

Year	Schools	Classes	Pupils	Graduates	Teachers	Pupils/ teachers	Pupils/ classes
1989	128	1,638	51,531	10,463	4,228	12.2	31.5
1990	132	1,720	55,336	11,422	4,280	12.9	32.2
1991	147	1,861	59,172	12,419	4,768	12.4	31.8
1992	166	2,014	63,522	12,996	5,378	11.8	31.5
1993	176	2,169	68,006	13,720	5,549	12.3	31.4
1994	184	2,306	72,072	15,279	5,929	12.2	31.3
1995	190	2,445	76,380	15,051	6,515	11.7	31.2
1996	196	2,538	79,376	16,216	6,766	11.7	31.3
1997	198	2,583	80,116	15,988	7,016	11.4	31.0
1998	205	2,646	80,669	15,772	7,153	11.3	30.5
1999	209	2,609	76,662	15,421	7,165	10.7	29.4
2000	212	2,741	80,615	15,754	7,260	10.5	29.4
2001	217	2,916	86,239	13,995	7,672	11.2	29.6

Source: Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education.

Note: All data without part-time studies.

Teachers - internal and external together; external teachers calculated as persons, not as full-time equivalents.

Secondary specialised schools: 1989 –2001 basic indices

Year	Schools	Classes	Pupils	Graduates	Teachers	Pupils/ teachers	Pupils/ classes
1989	181	2,677	80,545	18,747	7,941	10.1	30.1
1990	184	2,820	87,149	18,296	8,337	10.5	30.9
1991	276	3,076	95,195	19,888	8,997	10.6	30.9
1992	317	3,382	103,793	20,726	10,849	9.6	30.7
1993	342	3,642	111,664	21,662	11,889	9.4	30.7
1994	361	3,824	117,145	24,583	12,357	9.5	30.6
1995	364	3,905	119,853	27,014	13,478	8.9	30.7
1996	367	3,979	121,933	28,928	13,689	8.9	30.6
1997	365	3,879	116,681	29,615	13,970	8.4	30.1
1998	376	3,839	111,191	30,081	14,067	7.9	29.0
1999	379	3,632	99,070	30,242	13,253	7.5	27.3
2000	374	3,699	99,079	31,120	13,117	7.6	26.8
2001	373	3,770	101,690	26,375	13,133	7.7	27.0

Source: Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education.

Notes: Since 2000 including SSS of the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Defence.

All data without part-time studies.

Teachers - internal and external together; external teachers calculated as persons, not as full-time equivalents.

Secondary vocational schools and vocational schools: 1989 –2001 basic indices

Year	Schools	Classes	Pupils	Graduates	Teachers, directors and vice-directors	Teachers	Pupils/ teachers, directors and vice-directors	Pupils/ teachers	Pupils/ classes
1989	311	5,953	155,240	42,898	8,756	7,426	17.7	20.9	26.1
1990	311	5,960	149,981	45,105	8,623	7,302	17.4	20.5	25.2
1991	317	5,851	143,282	50,338	8,374	7,130	17.1	20.1	24.5
1992	344	5,704	139,408	44,567	8,315	7,119	16.8	19.6	24.4
1993	344	5,450	138,465	57,538	8,037	6,876	17.2	20.1	25.4
1994	358	5,338	138,173	41,729	8,121	7,009	17.0	19.7	25.9
1995	357	5,375	139,688	42,043	8,342	7,256	16.7	19.3	26.0
1996	355	5,268	135,696	44,290	8,487	7,458	16.0	18.2	25.8
1997	346	4,998	126,798	44,136	8,377	7,362	15.1	17.2	25.4
1998	349	4,776	117,507	42,275	8,225	7,231	14.3	16.3	24.6
1999	361	4,374	102,522	40,588	7,892	6,916	13.0	14.8	23.4
2000	368	4,491	105,838	36,073	7,383	6,715		15.8	23.6
2001	374	4,475	106,775	35,733	7,697	6,745		15.8	23.9

Source: Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education.

Notes: All data without part-time studies.

Teachers - internal and external together; external teachers calculated as persons, not as full-time equivalents.

ANNEX 2

Summary of secondary schools (grammar schools, secondary specialised schools, secondary vocational schools, integrated secondary schools) vocational schools and centres of practical training in the school year 2002/03

Type of school		Number of schools
Grammar schools	State	158
	Private	17
	Church-affiliated	41
Secondary specialised schools	State	259
	Private	37
	Church-affiliated	4
Secondary vocational schools	State	210
	Private	11
	Church-affiliated	5
Integrated secondary schools	State	79
	Private	0
	Church-affiliated	0
Vocational schools	State	92
	Private	0
	Church-affiliated	0
Centres of practical training	State	53
	Private	4
	Church-affiliated	0

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Type of school		Number of schools
Total	State	851
	Private	69
	Church-affiliated	50
Total		970

Source: Ministry of Education of SR; network of secondary schools (GS, SSS, SVS, ISS), vocational schools and the List of Centres of Practical Training in the Slovak Republic in the School Year 2002/2003, tabled by D.J.

ANNEX 3

Type of practical training centres

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Regional/district office	8	8	7	9	6	4	18
Company	61	55	39	22	12	10	1
Cooperative society	38	34	34	27	24	21	17
Other central institution of state administration	0	0	1	12	17	16	0
Individual entrepreneur	1	0	3	4	6	6	6

ANNEX 4

Number of schools supported from Infovek project funds, as of first quarter 2002

i.e. number schools selected within the Infovek project during 1999 - 2001

	Schools wired to internet	Schools communicating via official mail	Schools with own website	Teachers trained within one training course	Teachers trained within two training courses
Basic schools	232	135	85	166	35
Grammar schools	126	116	104	154	37
Secondary specialised schools	107	95	90	99	10
Secondary vocational schools	61	53	41	54	3
Secondary health schools	6	6	5	7	2
Integrated schools	13	13	11	7	1
Special schools	23	15	8	18	4
Secondary military schools	1	0	1	1	0
Methodological centres	4	4	4	39	0
School computer centres	5	5	5		

Source: Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education, Infovek Project Department.

Notes:

Teachers involve number of teachers from schools supported by the Infovek project.

Category of teachers includes teachers-beginners as well as specialists and network administrators, some teachers-beginners were given the possibility to participate at two training courses.

Each school was equipped with six computers, methodological centres and school computer centres with ten computers.

ANNEX 5

Review of information and statistical data provided by the Secretariat of the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Government for Romany Communities, 18 April 2002:

Population structure by nationality in SR according to the final outcomes of Population and Housing Census (May 2001)

Population total	in persons	in %
	5,379,455	100.0
of which nationality:		
• Slovak	4,614,854	85.8
• Hungarian	520,528	9.7
• Romany	89,920	1.7
• Czech	44,620	0.8
• Moravian	2,348	0.1
• Ruthenian	24,201	0.4
• Ukrainian	10,814	0.2
• German	5,405	0.1
• Polish	2,602	0.04
• Croatian	890	0.02
• Bulgarian	1,179	0.02
• Jewish	218	0.01
• Other	5,350	0.01
• Unknown	54,526	1.1

Source: Statistical Office of SR

ANNEX 6

Analysis of academic failure of basic school pupils in SR

School year	Grade									Total	Number of pupils in basic schools
	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.		
1976/77	2,208	1,021	1,358	1,272	1,086	1,316	872	426	25	9,584	678,383
of which Romany children	1,504	782	946	842	651	650	269	67	3	5,714	44,636
1987/88	2,609	1,309	1,013	1,115	1,716	1,297	837	56	-	9,952	731,729
of which Romany children	1,706	676	464	532	833	532	285	19	-	5,047	42,475
1988/89	2,569	1,397	1,023	1,069	1,769	1,297	838	81	-	10,093	728,421
of which Romany children	1,690	760	512	494	899	532	287	34	-	5,283	42,269
1989/90	2,871	1,276	896	975	1,560	1,258	806	73	-	9,715	724,248
of which Romany children	1,852	681	455	436	876	587	341	12	-	5,240	42,291
1990/91	3,166	1,438	1,071	1,182	1,989	1,687	1,399	166	-	12,098	720,326
of which Romany children	2,148	847	602	668	1,166	890	621	75	-	7,017	42,727

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School year	Grade									Total	Number of pupils in basic schools
	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.		
1995/96	3,704	1,475	1,067	1,100	2,742	2,156	1,926	367	11	14,548	633,522
1996/97	3,529	1,530	1,080	1,124	2,773	2,382	2,281	535	17	15,251	616,383
<i>Since the 1997/98 school year the number of pupils from socially disadvantaged environments who failed academically have also been monitored (marked * in the table)</i>											
1997/98	3,624	1,394	1,071	1,177	2,804	2,306	2,000	923	90	15,389	619,718
<i>of which*</i>	2,538	957	664	728	1,599	1,148	793	303	36	8,766	
1998/99	3,610	1,291	1,018	1,128	2,801	2,219	1,913	1,298	90	15,368	620,683
<i>of which*</i>	2,487	938	745	789	1,596	1,117	783	423	51	8,929	
1999/2000	3,480	1,323	1,011	1,129	2,690	2,407	2,155	1,785	223	16,203	671,706
<i>of which*</i>	2,425	914	671	721	1,460	1,184	893	616	97	8,948	
2000/2001	3,491	1,363	905	1,136	2,621	2,327	1,943	1,852	286	15,924	651,214
<i>of which*</i>	2,482	967	604	756	1,595	1,253	910	707	123	9,397	

Data have been elaborated based on the Summary Reports Škol (MŠ SR) 3a-01 on Pupils Achievement in Basic Schools, which are processed for individual school years by the Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education.

The data processed for a longer period prove that the situation is serious since the numbers of pupils who fail academically in the course of compulsory education increase year after year.

Analysis in the school year 2000/01

Analyses of the reports of pupils achievement at basic schools according to the situation as of 31 August 2001, in comparison with other reports as of 15 September 2000, processed by the State Institute of Information and Prognoses, results in the following:

- At the beginning of the school year there were 651,214 pupils in basic schools. However, there were 649,980 pupils reported in the report on pupils achievement at basic schools, what makes the difference 1,234 pupils.
- Out of 70,476 pupils in the first grade of basic schools in SR, 3,491 pupils (i.e. 4.89 %) failed. Out of the mentioned number of pupils who failed, 2,482 pupils (i.e. 71.94 %) were from socially disadvantaged and family neglected environments.
- Out of the total number of pupils in all grades of basic schools, 2.44 % failed. Out of this number of pupils who failed, 59.01% are from socially disadvantaged and family neglected environments.

Enrolment of Romany children and pupils in different kinds of schools

The table includes statistical data on numbers of children and pupils, who declared Roma nationality, in individual kinds of schools. Data are processed in accordance with the summary reports of the Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education as of 15 September 2001 for the school year 2001/02.

School	Children and pupils with Romany nationality	Total number of pupils in SR by kind of school
Kindergartens	1,079	150,587
Basic schools	4,489	626,645
Grammar schools	9	86,239
Secondary specialised schools	79	91,820
Secondary vocational schools and vocational schools	111	106,775
Special schools	3,176	32,244
Total	8,943	1,094,310

Note: Presented statistical data do not represent the real number of children and pupils of Romany origin.

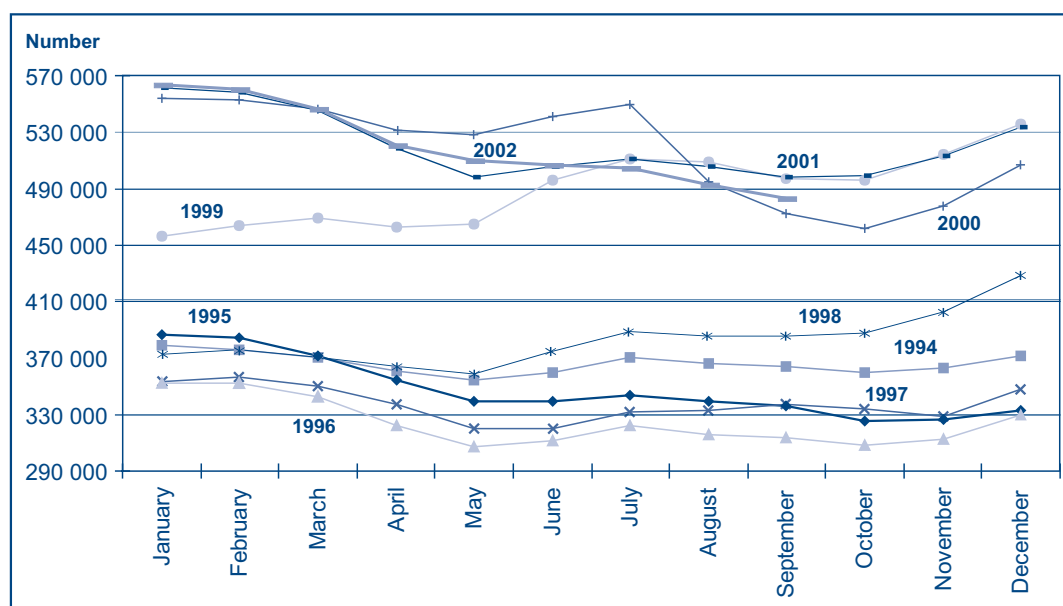
ANNEX 7

Expenditure on active and passive employment measures: 1998 to 2001

	1998			1999			2000			2001		
	Slovak Koruna (million)	Euro (million)	as a % of GDP	Slovak Koruna (million)	Euro (million)	as a % of GDP	Slovak Koruna (million)	Euro (million)	as a % of GDP	Slovak Koruna (million)	Euro (million)	As a % of GDP
Total expenditure	8,978	229	1.2	9,116	206	1.1	9,211	216	1.0	10,588	244	1.1
<i>of which:</i>												
Administrative Fund	1,205	31	0.2	1,340	30	0.2	1,444	34	0.2	1,524	35	0.2
Guarantee Fund	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	15	0.3	0.00	89	2	0.01
Reserve Fund	701	18	0.1	982	22	0.1	1,335	31	0.1	1,103	25	0.1
Basic Fund	7,774	199	1.0	7,766	176	0.9	7,753	182	0.9	7,024	162	0.7
<i>of which:</i>												
active (total)	2,289	58	0.30	474	11	0.06	1,570	37	0.17	2,235	51	0.23
training	167	4	0.02	73	2	0.01	62	1	0.01	197	5	0.02
other	2,122	54	0.27	401	9	0.05	1,508	35	0.17	2,038	47	0.21
passive (total)	5,485	140	0.71	7,292	165	0.87	6,182	145	0.68	4,790	110	0.48
GDP (in SK millions)	775,002			835,721			908,801			989,297		
Euro exchange rate (annual average)	39.1			44.2			42.6			43.4		

ANNEX 8

Registered unemployed (as of end of month)



LIST OF ACRONYMS

CESA	Council of Social and Economic Agreement
CVT	Continuing Vocational Training
DLO	District Labour Office
EES	European Employment Strategy
HEI	Higher Education Institute
IVET	Initial Vocational Education and Training
JAP	Joint Assessment of the Employment Policy Priorities
LLL	Lifelong Learning
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoLSAF	Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family
NAPE	National Action Plan for Employment
NLO	National Labour Office
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PES	Public Employment Service
PRES	Private Employment Services
RILSAF	Research Institute of Labour, Social Affairs and Family
SIOV	State Institute of Vocational Education
SK	Slovak Koruna
SNO	Slovak National Observatory on VET
SR	Slovak Republic
SSS	Secondary Specialised School
SVS	Secondary Vocational School

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