

System of early education/care and professionalisation in the **Slovak Republic**

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List of abbreviations
KG – kindergarten (materská škola)
SKG – special kindergarten (špeciálna materská škola)
DDC – day care centers (detské jasle)
PS – primary school (základná škola)
SPS – special primary school (špeciálna základná škola)
LTC – Leisure time Centers (centrá voľného času)
SCCH – school club for children (školský klub detí)
SN - School in nature (škola v prírode)
SNCH – special needs children
AC – Accreditation Commission
ŠÚ SR – Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic
ÚIPŠ – Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education
NC SR – National Council of the Slovak Republic
ME SR – Ministry of Education of the SR
SR – the Slovak Republic

I. Contextual data

Demographic features impacting on ECEC

The Slovak Republic was founded on January 1, 1993 and since May 2003 has been a member state of the European Union. The area of the republic is 49 034 km² and as of December 31, 2005 there were 5 389 180 inhabitants. The demographic development of Slovakia follows similar trends as other „old“ EU member states. Societal changes after the November 1989 revolution have resulted in higher unemployment of women and persons with lower skill levels (this was an unknown phenomenon during the communist regime and the population was not prepared for it. Other changes included a reduction in the number of births, an increase in the number of one-parent families, long-distance travel (or emigration) of parents for work, an increase in first-marriage age, higher incidence of cohabitation without marriage, and an increasing age of women at first birth. The average age of women at first marriage as well as the average age at first birth is 25.3 years.

The character of families also changed due to an increase in the rate of divorce and cohabitation without marriage. Whereas in the year 1980 there were approximately 11 incomplete families with children for every 100 complete families, in the year 2001 the number of incomplete families with children increased to 21.5. There has also been a notable increase in the divorce rate; in 1995 there were 32.7 divorces for 100 concluded marriages and in the year 2004 the number of divorces grew to 39¹. Due to the fact that the number of people that prefer cohabitation without marriage is on the rise, the number of children born outside marriage has increased. The overview of children born and their family situation is provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Live-births by legitimacy and birth order of marital live-births (in persons) - Absolute data

Indicator	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Total live-births	61427	60123	59111	57582	56223	55151	51136	50841	51713	53747	54430
of which: Marital	53680	51877	50374	48982	46914	45234	41180	39988	39786	40555	40407
Natural increase per 1000 persons	2.2	2.1	1.6	1.1	1.0	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.2	0.9	0.8
Birth order of marital live-births											
1	26604	25786	25559	25274	25143	19813	17478	17263	17029	18051	19813
2	20582	19768	19401	18961	18194	15410	14371	13875	13956	13833	15410
3	8 343	8 108	7 765	7 325	6 926	5 392	4 990	4 783	4 735	4 764	5 392
4	3 241	3 483	3 325	2 942	2 889	2 131	1 946	1 816	1 774	1 681	2 131
5+	2 657	2 978	3 061	3 080	3 071	2 336	2 246	2 120	2 146	2 099	2 336

Source: www.statistic.sk

¹ www.enviroportal.sk/dpsir/dpsir_kapitola.php?id_kap=6118rod=&id_indik=617.

Table 2 presents the development in the number of children of pre-school age since 1995.

Table 2. Selected age groups – inhabitants in the SR¹

Year ²	Total population	of which: Children							
		Age 0	Age 1	Age 2	Age 3	Age 4	Age 5	Age 6	Age 7
1995	5 367 790	60 843	65 650	72 502	73 651	77 423	77 324	77 496	80 727
1996	5 378 932	59 594	60 762	65 623	72 487	73 665	77 423	77 329	77 498
1997	5 387 650	58 675	59 516	60 738	65 612	72 483	73 647	77 413	77 335
1998	5 393 382	57 157	58 586	59 499	60 693	65 578	72 488	73 636	77 403
1999	5 398 657	55 831	57 064	58 574	59 466	60 695	65 569	72 488	73 636
2000	5 402 547	54 741	55 758	57 043	58 556	59 464	60 697	65 552	72 476
2001	5 378 951	50 861	53 924	55 632	56 386	57 845	59 967	61 038	65 833
2002	5 379 161	50 519	50 805	53 919	55 635	56 395	57 858	59 961	61 035
2003	5 380 053	51 384	50 459	50 804	53 905	55 651	56 403	57 863	59 970
2004	5 384 822	53 453	51 355	50 458	50 803	53 914	55 642	56 400	57 878
2005	5 389 180	54 110	53 386	51 353	50 472	50 822	53 936	55 644	56 400

Notes:

1. To 31. December of the year.

2. Estimate (= 2/3 5 years old children and 1/3 6 years old children).

Source: ŠÚ SR, ÚIPS

Migration patterns are noticeable especially through the migration of one parent for work to distant cities, and the problem of registration of people working abroad persists. Moving one's whole nuclear family closer to the place of work is unusual in the SR, largely due to problems with finding suitable accommodation. Total internal migration of population (see Table 3).

Table 3. Total of internal migration of population

Year	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Internal migration	78466	80188	82513	84757	78965	76898	79881	89606	84215	85020	87170

Source: ŠÚ SR

Numbers of international migration (Table 4) show the increasing trends in this type of migration.

Table 4. International migration

Year	Immigrants	Emigrants
1995	3 055	213
1996	2 477	222
1997	2 303	572
1998	2 052	746
1999	2 072	618

2000	2 274	811
2001	2 023	1 011
2002	2 312	1 411
2003	2 603	1 194
2004	4 460	1 586
2005	5 276	1 873

Source: ŠÚ SR

Statistics on parental / maternal employment of children from birth up to compulsory school age, including full-time/part-time patterns

Women make up 51.4 % of the inhabitants of Slovakia and are an important component of the labour market. Traditional forms of work with full-time contracts are preferred in the country. The results of a sample of employed people in Slovakia in the third quarter of 2005 show that 97 % of Slovak employees work on a full-time basis, whereas only 4 % of women and 2 % of men work on a reduced, part-time basis. Neither are part-time jobs are wide-spread among women with small children in Slovakia². Table 5 provides an overview of employment according to working hours.

Table 5. Employed by working time (average numbers in thousand persons)

Year	Number of employed			of which: Women		
	Full-time job	Part-time job	Total	Full-time job	Part-time job	Total
1995	1 913.8	54.9	2 006.7	847.3	41.5	917.4
1996	1 993.9	55.4	2 082.5	887.9	42.4	955.2
1997	2 018.0	47.9	2 065.8	914.1	36.8	950.8
1998	1 998.5	47.8	2 046.2	910.7	36.1	946.8
1999	1 923.3	41.6	1 965.0	893.7	29.3	923.0
2000	1 891.1	39.9	1 931.0	888.3	28.8	917.0
2001	1 897.6	45.8	1 943.4	895.0	33.2	928.3
2002	1 903.1	37.7	1 940.9	895.8	25.9	921.8
2003	1 898.9	48.7	1 947.6	889.5	35.0	924.5
2004	1 850.7	53.5	1 904.2	865.2	38.1	903.3
2005	1 877.2	51.8	1 929.0	871.4	37.1	908.5

Source: ŠÚ SR

From July 1, 2003 maternal and parental leave is regulated by § 166 of the Labour Code – the Act No. 311/2001 of the Coll. In connection with childbirth and care of a child woman has the right to maternity leave and a man has the right to parental leave.

Maternity leave takes 28 weeks. If 2 or more children are born or the mother is a single woman, her maternity leave is 37 weeks. Maternity leave connected with childbirth may not be shorter than 14 weeks and may not be finished or interrupted earlier than 6

² The results of a sample of employed people in Slovakia in the third quarter of 2005. Bratislava : ŠÚ SR, 2006.

weeks from the childbirth. A man has the same right for parental leave from the day of childbirth.

An employer is obliged to allow parental leave to women and men at request. This parental leave takes a maximum of 3 years of the child's age. In the case where child the chronically ill or his/her health requires needs special care, the parental leave can be up to the 6 years of the child age.

Financial support for families with children:

- 540 SKK per child/month (from September 1, 2004);
- 4 230 SKK per month (from September 1, 2005).

According to the data of the Statistical Office of the SR, only a very limited number of men use the opportunity to take parental leave. The numbers of men and women on parental leave are provided in Table 6.

Table 6. Average number of people on parental leave (in thousands)

Year	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Number of people on maternity leave	54,7	60,6	54,8	56,1	54,9	49,8	48,4	53,8
of which:								
Males	0,7	0,4	0,4	1,1	0,8	0,4	0,4	0,1
Females	54,0	60,2	54,4	55,1	54,1	49,5	48,0	53,6

Source: www. statistics.sk – časť Slovstat

Social issues, e.g. child health, child poverty rates

The respect of the right of children to healthcare is provided through a system of compulsory health insurance for all the citizens of Slovakia. Children are protected from infectious diseases such as tuberculosis, polio, rubeola, parotitis, morbili, and hepatitis B by vaccinations. Before the first year of age, 92 % of children are vaccinated against TB, 99 % against diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus (DPT3) and 99 % against polio.

Another means of supporting the health of children are subsidies provided for school needs by the state.

In recent years, the Slovak labour market has been dominated by relatively pronounced trends; growing numbers of economically active population, stagnating employment, and high and regionally differing unemployment rates. About 12 % of the labour force is officially registered as unemployed.

The unemployed account for approximately 90 % of recipients of social assistance benefits in material distress. Most persons at risk of material distress, which is a certain parallel to material poverty, live in regions with the highest unemployment rates. 11.7 % of Slovakia's population was in material need in 2001³.

Despite its long history, poverty in Slovakia still remains a new policy issue. Even though definitions and policies are missing and poverty indices are unsatisfactorily monitored, the development of the main factors, in particular unemployment rates, would suggest that poverty in SR has grown since 1996⁴. However, awareness is also growing in SR

³ Recipients of social assistance benefits, including dependents.

⁴ Reliable data, which may be used to document the income situation of households, are collected at long and irregular intervals. The last Microcensus was undertaken in 1996, preventing a more updated analysis.

that poverty and social exclusion are not only consequences of insufficient or missing income but that they result from effects of multiple factors reflecting dimensions such as education, health, housing, social contacts, etc.

However, the share of inhabitants living at extremely low-income levels is substantially higher compared with neighbouring countries. These pockets of poverty are thought to significantly overlap with isolated and segregated Roma colonies.

Due to cumulated handicaps, long-term and permanent unemployment among the Roma is rather widespread, and isolation from the labour market is then transferred to the following generations with negative consequences for the education of young children.

Unemployment is a consequence of a whole complex of problems. Most experts agree that the major reasons include:

- inefficient social protection system;
- insufficient education of a portion of the labour force;
- barriers on the part of business environment;
- low mobility of labour and an inflexible housing market;
- other (e.g., passivity, tolerance of informal activities).

Despite the relative growth of the number of children enrolled in KGs, the absolute number of children has dropped as a result of demographic trends by 8.5 thousand.

The Act on Financing primary and secondary schools has been effective since January 2002. The Act also regulates the entitlement of private and church schools for contributions from the State Budget, introducing equal conditions compared with state (public) schools.

In general there have been widely developed provision of meals for all children in KGs. School catering makes up a separate closed system within the education sector. Its objective is to offer meals, which meet biological, energetic, and hygienic requirements. System of catering facilities at the same time creates conditions for the culture, dining manners and the social habits.

Table 7. Evaluation of the catering facilities

Type of facility	Total number of catering facilities	meeting all requirements	of which in %		
			small shortcomings without impact on health	shortcomings that may affect health negatively	grave shortcomings threatening health
Day care centers	46	73.91	21.73	4.36	-
Kindergartens	2 534	50.75	34.67	12.67	1.91
Kindergartens & DCC	5	80.00	20.00	-	-
Special kindergartens	3	66.66	33.34	-	-

Source: State Health Institute, Bratislava, 2001. In National Human Development Report Slovak Republic 2001 – 2002, Chapter Education, p. 25.

The School Milk Program was implemented in 1999. The general objective of the program is to improve the health condition of the population and to strengthen prevention of civilisation diseases.

The main objective of the project Health Promoting Schools within the field of primary prevention has been raising health awareness of children from the earliest age possible, and then leading their parents to live healthy lifestyles. Several KG have been involved in the subproject Healthy Kindergarten. The objective of these activities has been to create favourable preconditions for correct mental, physical, social, and emotional development of pre-school age children. In addition, KGs of a new orientation have started appearing; e. g., facilities that care for autistic children, as well as integration centers and day care centers for children who suffer from various diseases.

Apart from the aforementioned conditions, health of children and adolescents is also influenced by the work/rest cycle and the hygienic situation in schools.

Table 8. Evaluation of the hygienic standard in schools

Type of schools	Total number of schools	Meeting all requirements	of which in %		
			Small shortcomings without impact on health	Shortcomings that may affect health negatively	Grave shortcomings threatening health
Kindergartens	3 287	48.95	38.39	10.61	1.95
Special kindergartens	13	61.54	38.46	-	-

Source: State Health Institute, Bratislava, 2001. In National Human Development Report Slovak Republic 2001 – 2002, Chapter Education, p. 26.

Activities of leisure time centers, school facilities, and civil associations have to be considered as part of preventive health promotion of children and adolescents. Programs and projects subsidized from public resources include:

- protective activities - primary prevention in children and youth against negative influences and the creation of conditions for integration of those with health-related handicaps;
- supportive activities - support of the provision of information and publishing activities, for work with children and youth;
- holiday and leisure-time activities - support of leisure-time and other events mainly during holidays;
- training and creative activities – creative and group activities and development of other amateur activities for children and youth.

In general, the social situation of the inhabitants of SR is influenced by their employment and the overall situation on the labour market, which is closely related to the education level of job seekers. In 2005, only 13.5 % of the people within the 15-64 age group with PS education was employed.

Due to the fact that the Slovak legislature does not contain a definition of poverty, neither do statistics collected reflect the extent of poverty in the country. For this reason we cannot cite the relevant numbers showing the number of children living in poverty. The act does include concepts such as material need and social need. Poverty as such could therefore be expressed as living below the minimum income, which is a central concept in the sphere of social politics, and from which social care of the state is derived. The Act of Minimum income and the following Act of Social assistance define three levels of minimum income. The amounts of assistance provided by the state are hence de-

terminated through these levels, and according to whether the citizen reached the minimum living income for objective or subjective reasons.

Material need is defined as a situation when a person's income does not reach the minimum living income. Social need is then the state when a person cannot afford to pay for his or her own care and household expenses; primarily due to age, health situation, problems with social integration or through the loss of employment. Data about the number of poor people (people living in material need) can be derived from the information about the recipients of social payments from state. In 2005, the average monthly reported number of recipients of this payment reached 175 746 people; 64 313 of which were families with children.

KGs and PSs serving underprivileged children can obtain special subsidies for their nutritional needs. Parents of these children pay 1-5 SKK per meal (depending upon the decision of the school operator) and the state pays 26 SKK. Other parents pay between 26-36 SKK per child per day, in addition to 2-5 SKK overhead costs (some KG charge as much as 14 SKK per day). The state does not contribute for the meals of the remainder of the children, the only payment made from taxes collected is for overhead costs of pre-school establishments. In the year 2004 a subsidy in the average monthly amount of 80 590 SKK was provided for underprivileged children⁵.

The people most affected by poverty are the unemployed, low-educated, older citizens and incomplete families with children. By the end of 1999, 16.3 % of families in Slovakia were incomplete with children and in material need.

⁵ Report on the social situation of Slovakia, 2005. In www.vlada.gov.sk/infoservice_archiv.

II. Data on provision / early childhood services

Pre-primary education is carried out in pre-primary institutions, that means, in KGs and SKGs and since 2002 also in PSs with KGs. SKGs provide education only for special needs children, who are not able to attend regular KGs because of their impairment. SNCH can attend regular KGs. The latter may be either integrated into regular classes or there are special classes established for them in KGs.

The KGs and SKGs admit as a rule children from two up to six years of age. The 5 years old children and children with postponed school attendance have a priority in admission.

KGs are set up with a diverse length of operation providing either half-day, full-day, weekly or continuous care. A predominant number of KGs are full-day, as a rule from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m., according to parents' needs. Also classes with half-day educational care may be established KGs.

The inclusion in one class is usually conditional upon same age, but occasionally also of a mixed age. The highest number of children in a classroom is determined by their age, type of the pre-school institutions and type of educational care in the given KG.

KGs that run on a half-day or full day basis, may not accommodate more than: 22 children aged 3 to 4 years, 24 children aged 4 to 5 years, 28 children aged 5 years until the beginning of compulsory schooling and 24 children aged 3 to 6 years.

In case that in the classroom there is a child under 3 years of age, the highest number of children in a class is decreased by one. In case that there are 8 children under 3 years enrolled in KG, the children are placed in a separate class which allows maximum number of 20 children. Education of children aged from two to three years is provided alternately by two teachers if the class has 8-14 children, or by three teachers if the number of children in class is between 14 and 20.

The number of children in a KG classroom with weekly and continuous care may not go beyond the following numbers: 15 children aged 3 to 4 years; 18 children aged 4 to 5 years, 25 children aged 6 to 6 years and 15 children aged 3 to 6 years.

If the hygienic rules set out a lower number of children enrolled in KGs class, the lower limit shall be primarily applied as set by the hygienic rules.

For children who are to start the compulsory school attendance in the following year, preparatory classes are set up. Their aim is to secure healthy and all-round development of the child personality, to equalize the differences in development level between the children, to provide for them pre-school education and equal possibilities of preparation for PS entrance.

The number of children with special education needs placed in a KG classroom may not exceed 5, whereas in such a case the maximum number of children per class must be reduced by 2 to 4 children, according to handicap.

In KGs, special classrooms for handicapped children may be created, but there must be at least 6 children and their maximum number may not go beyond 8 children per class. The classrooms are equally established in SKGs. In KGs at the health centre with children suffering from severe handicaps there are eight children at most, in case of mobile children (capable to walk) 15 children at most, in class.

A KG teacher may guide the same class for several successive years or only a class of children of a certain age group.

In the schools of the SR, the school year begins on September 1 and ends on August 31 of the calendar year. According to the number of children, the KG director may, however, interrupt or limit the operation of the KG based on agreement of the founder and

after discussion it with parents. During the summer holidays, operation is interrupted for three weeks at least. The organization of work in KG is defined by internal order of the preschool institution which is approved by the head after prior discussion with parents and the founder.

The education is carried out in the national (Slovak) language, as well as in minority languages. KGs may be established by municipalities, church, private persons and legal entities.

Current statistics

Table 9. Development in number of kindergartens according to the founder

Year	Public	%	Private	%	Church	%	Total
1995	3 309	99.61	11	0.33	2	0.06	3 322
1996	3 311	99.37	16	0.48	5	0.15	3 332
1997	3 310	99.40	15	0.45	5	0.15	3 330
1998	3 307	99.40	14	0.42	6	0.18	3 327
1999	3 290	99.40	11	0.33	9	0.27	3 310
2000	3 241	99.33	10	0.31	12	0.37	3 263
2001	3 217	99.20	12	0.37	14	0.43	3 243
2002	3 206	99.10	12	0.37	17	0.53	3 235
2003	3 180	99.07	11	0.34	19	0.59	3 210
2004	3 000	98.49	16	0.53	30	0.98	3 046
2005	2 887	98.03	24	0.81	34	1.15	2 945
2006	2 849	97.30	40	1.37	39	1.33	2 928

Source: ÚIPŠ

Table 10. Development in number of kindergarten children according to the founder

Year	Public	%	Private	%	Church	%	Total
1995	161 268	99.73	361	0.22	68	0.04	161 697
1996	167 465	99.59	523	0.31	166	0.10	168 154
1997	168 654	99.62	482	0.28	164	0.10	169 300
1998	166 852	99.61	447	0.27	205	0.12	167 504
1999	161 128	99.57	336	0.21	354	0.22	161 818
2000	153 456	99.50	336	0.22	440	0.29	154 232
2001	149 722	99.43	333	0.22	532	0.35	150 587
2002	150 182	99.38	346	0.23	597	0.40	151 125
2003	149 728	99.34	318	0.21	672	0.45	150 718
2004	147 317	98.72	598	0.40	1 317	0.88	149 232
2005	139 516	98.38	777	0.55	1 521	1.07	141 814
2006	136 514	97.50	1 545	1.10	1 955	1.40	140 014

Source: ÚIPŠ

Table 11. Development in share of kindergarten children by age

Year	age 2	age 3	age 4	age 5	age 6 and more	age 3-5	Total
1995	11.62	43.62	55.78	72.02	28.73	57.40	100.00
1996	11.90	46.66	59.99	74.27	32.10	60.60	100.00
1997	11.64	50.45	64.41	78.79	31.55	65.10	100.00
1998	12.45	52.96	67.52	81.46	33.45	68.20	100.00
1999	14.13	54.49	68.77	83.69	33.84	69.50	100.00
2000	14.55	54.19	68.12	83.50	35.10	68.80	100.00
2001	16.26	55.89	68.25	81.40	35.61	68.80	100.00
2002	17.73	57.33	69.71	83.58	36.68	70.40	100.00
2003	18.76	60.09	71.38	84.21	37.29	72.10	100.00
2004	20.58	60.59	73.65	84.69	37.66	73.30	100.00
2005	16.49	59.52	72.76	84.85	36.96	72.65	100.00
2006	15.15	61.79	73.77	84.46	37.67	73.48	100.00

Source: ÚIPS

- attendance rates / access to home-based day care (whether organised or informal) is not followed by any organisation/institution in the SR; data on home-based day care are not available.
- attendance rates / access to after-school facilities for school-age children: Educational institutions also include school clubs for children (SCCH). School clubs provide education for pupils fulfilling compulsory school attendance in their out of-school time and during school holidays. As most pupils of grades 1-4 attend SCCH (pupils of higher grades use these institutions minimally), the following tables give the number and the ratio of pupils enrolled in SCCH, the number of SCCH and the number of departments in PSs and SPs.

During the school year the role of the SCCH is centered on fulfilling the interests of children and their preparation for school. In the period of holidays its activities are recreation and relaxation.

Table 12. The number of pupils enrolled in the SCCH in primary and special primary school

Year	Total number of primary pupils enrolled in the SCCH	Total number of special primary pupils enrolled in the SCCH	Total % of pupils enrolled in the SCCH from grades 1-4 of PS ¹	Total % of pupils enrolled in the SCCH from grades 0-4 of SPS ¹
1995	135 943	4 518	41.25	43.14
1996	138 223	5 025	43.12	48.14
1997	140 424	4 806	44.57	47.55
1998	140 895	5 193	45.85	50.49
1999	137 435	4 832	45.82	47.07

2000	133 722	5 167	46.01	49.63
2001	129 922	5 130	47.30	49.22
2002	127 931	5 400	49.20	52.30
2003 ²	123 184	5 092	49.91	51.28
2004	125 863	4 914	53.67	50.46
2005	110 618	4 863	48.74	50.93
2006	114 984	4 821	51.83	49.68

Notes:

1. The percentage of pupils enrolled in SCCH is calculated as a percentage of all pupils in grade 1.-4, not as a percentage of all primary students. Therefore, the percentage provided is a approximate.

2. Since the year 2003 pupils in grade 0 are included in the number of pupils grades 1.-4.

Source: ÚIPŠ

From December 1, 2004 the fees are up to 370 SKK per month. SCCH are free for children from families living in poverty.

Table 13. The number of SCCH and the number of departments in the SCCH in primary and special primary school

Year	Number of SCCH		Number of departments in the SCCH	
	Total PS	Total SPS	Total PS	Total SPS
1995	2 005	171	5 656	394
1996	2 028	179	5 764	457
1997	2 052	167	5 874	469
1998	2 077	175	5 978	508
1999	2 091	182	5 876	480
2000	2 089	180	5 700	496
2001	2 085	185	5 662	506
2002	2 084	196	5 487	531
2003 ¹	2 080	200	5 274	514
2004	2 016	192	5 021	458
2005	1 982	202	4 293	472
2006	1 970	195	4 374	440

Note: Since the year 2003 pupils in grade 0 are included in the number of pupils grades 1.-4.

Source: ÚIPŠ

School in nature (SN) has been established and function with the purpose to improve health especially of those children who do not live in a healthy environment.

SN is an educational institution enabling pupils and children from KGs and SKGs aged 5-6 years to stay in the nature, in the environment good for their health, without interrupting school work. These institutions try to improve physical condition of children and strengthen their health.

SN are utilized especially by children from regions where their healthy development is endangered by unsuitable environment, usually once per school year. Children can be

sent there for maximum 12 days, with the permission of their parents or a person responsible for the child.

Educational process of pre-school children follows an official Program for KGs. The time except classes is spent usually outside, depending on the weather. Children concentrate on Ecology, Art Education, Physical Training and recreation activities.

Table 14. Number of kindergartens children in the school in nature

Year	Number of children		% from total number of children
	Total	Participated in the school in nature	
1995	161 697	7 947	4.91
1996	168 154	8 427	5.01
1997	169 300	8 677	5.13
1998	167 504	8 981	5.36
1999	161 818	8 742	5.40
2000	154 232	7 797	5.06
2001	150 587	8 021	5.33
2002	151 125	8 042	5.32
2003	150 718	7 072	4.69
2004	149 232	7 036	4.71
2005	141 814	7 444	5.25

Source: ÚIPŠ

The educational process in school in nature is spread over six days a week (the working week as well as teaching obligation at all schools last five days), while for pupils fulfilling compulsory school attendance at the first level it lasts four lessons a day and for pupils of the second level of PS five lessons. A lesson lasts 40 minutes (at regular schools 45 minutes). The expenditures are paid from the budget of the responsible organization, and partly by parents or the person responsible for the child, or other sources.

Table 15. Number of primary school pupils in the school in nature

Year	Number of pupils		% from total number of pupils
	Total in grades 1-4 ¹	Participated in the school in nature ²	
1995	329 559	61 512	18.66
1996	320 560	66 462	20.73
1997	315 053	68 475	21.73
1998	307 263	67 891	22.10
1999	299 963	69 531	23.18
2000	290 653	64 119	22.06
2001	274 684	60 294	21.95
2002	260 022	56 180	21.61
2003 ²	246 811	51 455	20.85

2004	234 521	51 282	21.87
2005	226 964	51 184	22.55

Notes:

1. The number of pupils that took part in SN is a sum for all grades. Separate data for pupils in grades 1.-4. is not collected.
2. Since the year 2003 pupils in grade 0 are included in the number of pupils' grades 1.-4.

Source: ÚIPŠ

Leisure time Centers (LTC) rank among educational institutions that provide creation of conditions for special-interest and recreational activities of children and the youth, participate in the improvement and development of abilities of young people in their leisure time.

The statistic does not contain the age of children in LTCs. To illustrate we show that at present (to November 1, 2006), 184 centres were in operation in the SR, in the activities of which 1 328 internal and 1 845 external workers participate. Throughout the school year, approximately 76 737 of 15 year-old pupils – members – actively participate in regular activities in circles, where they improve their knowledge and skills in the fields of science and technology, sports and arts. During the summer in school year 2005/06 about 22 025 youngest children up to the age of 15 spent their holidays in 663 summer camps.

LTCs offer a wide range of special-interest activities, provide extra space for talented children and youth as well as for children with health impairments, they organize various district, regional and nation-wide activities, competitions, shows, and they cooperate in favour of children also with other subjects in their surroundings.

Governance, regulation, administration and inspection of services

After 1990, the existing education acts and other legislative documents required adopting or amending. By enacting the Act of the NC SR No. 279/1993 of the Coll. on educational institutions as amended by later provisions, KG as educational facilities remained in the system of education and their pedagogical function was greatly accentuated. In connection with the above Act, the Decree of the Ministry of Education and Science of the SR No. 353/1994 of the Coll. on Pre-school institutions was passed in December 1994 to be amended in 1997 and 2004 (by Decrees No. 81/1997 and No. 540/2004 of the Coll.). The Decree regulates the details on institution, dissolution and organisation of KG and SKG, on admission and enrolment of children in the pre-school institutions, the attendance, the child health care and security, operation, documentation and on contributions for covering the costs.

The effect of the above Decree by 2004 consisted of, for example, determination of concrete conditions for institution of the state (public) as well as private and church KGs, decrease in number of children in KG groups, integration of SNCH, strengthening the heads' competences. Since November 1, 2004 the amendment to the Decree on pre-primary institutions set up the increase of number of children in classes, the monthly fee for a child in the KG was also raised and introduced also in case of 5-6 year-old children who had previously paid only for meals.

Founders of KGs:

According to the regulations in force, the KGs may be established by municipalities, legal entities and private persons. SKGs are founded by State administration bodies (regi-

onal educational authorities), particularly following the network of schools and school facilities of the ME SR, as well as by legal entities and private persons.

The KG which are not legal entities, can achieve the status of legal entity on the basis of the kindergarten's request and decision by the founder.

In addition, the following generally binding rules refer to pre-school institutions:

The Act No. 552/2003 of the Coll. on the Performance of work in public interest, as amended.

The Act No. 553/2003 of the Coll. on Remuneration of some employees at the work performance in public interest and on the change and supplements to some acts, as amended.

The Act No. 564/2004 of Coll. on Budget determination of tax revenue from incomes of the territorial administration.

The Act No. 596/2003 of the Coll. on State administration and educational self-government and on the change and supplements to some acts, as amended.

The Act No. 597/2003 of Coll. on Financing primary schools, secondary schools and school facilities, as amended.

The Labour Code – the Act No. 311/2001 of the Coll.

The Decree of SR Government No. 238/2004 of the Coll. on the Extent of teaching activity and educational activity of pedagogical staff.

The Decree of the Ministry of Education and Science of the SR No. 121/1994 of the Coll. on Institution, activity and operation of institutions for school catering as amended.

The Decree of the ME SR No. 41/1996 of the Coll. on Professional and educational competence of educational staff, as amended.

The Decree of the ME SR No. 42/1996 of the Coll. on In-service training of educational staff as amended.

The Decree of ME SR No. 137/2005 of the Coll. on the School inspection.

School inspection - fulfils the function of State control over the level of pedagogical management, education and material-technical conditions for teaching at schools. It is carried out by the State School Inspection through school inspectors. On the basis of inspection findings it annually presents to the ME SR a report about the state and level of education at schools. It handles suggestions, complaints and petitions in the field of performance of State administration that is responsible for it and fulfils other tasks.

Self-administration authorities fulfil the function of initializing and counselling bodies that defend public interests and the interests of parents, pupils and educational personnel in the field of education related not only to State administration in education but also to the bodies of municipalities and autonomous regions. The school self-administration is carried out by the school board, municipal school board, territorial school board and the pupils' school board.

School board - based on the selection procedure, proposes a candidate for the appointment to the post of principal, and eventually, gives proposals for his dismissal. The school board gives its opinions on the number of admitted pupils, study fields and trades proposed, on the change of curricula, on the structure of obligatory and optional subjects, on the pedagogical organisational provision of the school operation, on achievements, on the draft budget, on the report of the economic management of the school and on the concept of school development.

Key policies and practices, e.g. official curricula for the years preceding compulsory schooling

Pedagogical work in the KG follows the basic educational document Programme of Education of Children in Kindergartens which is a binding document for KGs.

The aim of education for children of pre-school age is to complete their family education by educational activities, which are aimed at the complex development of child personality in harmony with his/her individual and age needs. Preparation of children for compulsory school attendance is also part of pre-school education. It is a focused process that promotes the education of children in order to prepare them in such a way as to be able upon reaching the age of 6 to continue successfully in their education at the PS.

According to the Programme teachers develop their educational plans with regard to age and individual characteristics of children and KG conditions. The significance of planning in KG rests in intentional and purposeful development of knowledge of the child and in harmonizing all aspects of child personality.

The content of education for children between 2-6 years of age includes: physical development, work education, pro-social education, cognitive development (science, language, math and health) and aesthetic education (music, arts and literature).

These components of education form a certain content framework and a system of knowledge within the Programme. In the implementation of all components of education in different concrete modifications it is necessary to assume activity-focused approach, teaching based on experience and activating methods and forms of work. The content in a pre-school age is of general and binding nature and its concretization and realisation depends on teacher's creativity.

In 2005, the ME SR approved the Development Program of Education for Children with Postponed School Attendance in Kindergartens. This document enforces a number of activities, games, activities and exercises for stimulation of various areas of the child personality development.

The choice and application of methods in pre-school institution depend on educational and teaching tasks, too.

In KGs, children activities are organised as a form of education in which the child acquires knowledge, skills in different educational components. The duration of children activities (in a small groups, whole group or individual) depend on the age and interest of children. Teachers have a discretion in using the methods appropriate for children.

Playing is the most natural activity for children of pre-school age and thus it is also the prevailing method, which rapidly changes at that age.

Key policies and practices - provision for the under threes

The present-day situation in the area of institutionalised educational care of children less than 3 years old in Slovakia can be characterised by “legal vacuum”. In practice, it meant that since 1991 there has been no centralised authority that would be responsible for control over DDC, and that would at the same time state certain requirements for their establishment and organization for professional qualification of their employees, for sanitary standards and that would monitor and evaluate their effectiveness.

Consequently to the present situation, in Slovakia, there is no official statistic about DDC or similar institutions and there is a need of data providing characteristics of the institutionalised care for children under 3 years old.

Local authorities have not been showing particular initiative as far as establishing these financially rather demanding institutions is concerned (e.g. in Bratislava, with approximately half a million inhabitants, there are only 6 DDC. They have been subsidised by a special budget of the city. However, no official data about the current number of private DDCs is available, about those one usually learns from telephone directories, from the internet or simply by “word of mouth”). Based on fragmented information we know of the existence of some private DDCs, child centres (these, however, are not united by a set of spatial, personal and conceptual standards), or maternity centres, which

function rather as socialising centres for mothers on their maternity leaves with small children than institutions providing systematic educational care.

The ME SR reacted to this state of affairs in changing the legal regulations concerning KGs. Therefore nowadays, in accordance with the legislature, it is possible to accept a child to a KG already at the age of 2 (not at 3, as before). However, not even this change represents a complete solution to the situation of those families with children less than 2 years old, in which it is necessary for both parents to be employed; or the situation of single mothers.

Key policies and practices - centre-related quality management / evaluation

In the public school system, the division of responsibilities between the various levels of government is as follows:

Principal of school – is appointed by the founder upon the proposal of the respective school board on the basis of a selection procedure. The extent of his/her rights and duties is set by the Act of the NC SR No. 542/1990 of Coll. on State administration in education and school self-government. He/she is responsible for observing generally binding rules, curricula and syllabi, for professional and pedagogical level of educational work of the school and for the efficient use of the means allocated for the provision of school activity and for economic management of the property. For internal evaluation, the principal of KGs can use evaluation forms elaborated by the State School Inspection or can create own tools.

Municipality – establishes and dissolves according to the approved school network the PSs, basic schools of art, preschool institutions, school clubs, leisure time centres, school kitchens and school canteens. Upon the proposal of the municipal school board it appoints and recalls the principal of the school the founder of which it is. It drafts the plan and budget for the schools founded, provides the premises and material-technical equipment, educational technology, financial means for the operation and maintenance, investment means from the State budget and its own resources, conditions for children and pupils' catering.

District office – establishes of SKGs, SPS, special secondary schools and special school facilities.

Key policies and practices - child-related assessment

Continuous and systematic evaluation is an essential part of every work. At evaluation the teachers simultaneously verify whether they chose the suitable procedure and methods, or if the demands upon children were unsuitable. Verbal and written evaluation of pupils is used in KGs. Oral evaluation of children is used in his/her daily activity. A positive evaluation is mostly preferred.

A teacher also keeps written records about children. The teacher makes notes on the strengths and weaknesses, knowledge and abilities of the child. These records are then discussed by the teachers of the respective class and take advantage of them in their further educational impact and their individual approach to children.

Teachers also make use of the so-called observation sheets made by them, or as shown in recommended literature. Other evaluation tools are various tests (e. g. school readiness tests, speech development test, creative test, etc.) and portfolios. The evaluations of children are also important for a close cooperation with parents, whom the teachers provide with professional consultations about education of their child and may serve as a

source of information for teacher of PS, which the child will attend later on in his/her future.

Key policies and practices - integration of (im)migrant children

Pre-school age children attend KGs according to the decision of their parents. Children of foreigners – subject of compulsory school attendance are integrated into the school class according to the level of their previous education and Slovak language proficiency.

Schools are obliged to organise basic and advanced courses of Slovak language for foreigners' children.

In 2000 the National Institute for Education developed the Policy on education of migrant parents' children. Data on children in the KG are in the next table.

Table 16. Number of foreigners in kindergartens (without special classes)

Year	Number of admitted children together	In that		Foreigners with the permanent address in the SR	
		Foreigners		Number	%
		Number	%		
1995	161 697	104	0.06	.	x
1996	168 154	98	0.06	.	x
1997	169 300	114	0.07	.	X
1998	167 504	127	0.08	.	x
1999	161 818	151	0.09	.	x
2000	154 232	204	0.13	.	x
2001	150 587	216	0.14	.	x
2002	151 125	191	0.13	.	x
2003	150 718	239	0.16	130	54.39
2004	149 232	250	0.17	138	55.20
2005	141 814	239	0.17	103	43.10
2006	140 014	274	0.20	161	58.76

Note: Foreigners with the permanent address in SR are followed from the year 2003.

Source: ÚIPŠ

After the SR joined EU, the state had to make some changes in its complex migration strategy.

Since 1990, camps for refugees are established. The number of applications for the refugee status determination is provided in next table.

Table 17. Applications for the refugee status determination (RSD) in the SR

Year	RSD applications	Granted asylum	Re-requested cases	Terminated procedure	Pending cases	Granted citizenship
1995	359	68	57	190	75	0
1996	415	129	62	193	106	4
1997	645	65	84	539	63	14
1998	506	49	36	224	260	22
1999	1 320	27	176	1 034	343	2
2000	1 556	11	123	1 366	400	0
2001	8 151	18	130	5 247	2 248	11
2002	9 743	20	309	8 053	6 609	59
2003	10 358	11	531	9 788	2 769	42
2004	11 391	15	1 592	11 586	775	21
2005	3 549	25	827	2 923	542	2
2006	2 871	8	861	1 940	512	4

Source: <http://www.minv.sk/numvsr/STAT/statistika.htm>

Key policies and practices - integration of children with disabilities

The system of special education is established for children who, having been examined by doctors, psychologists, education specialists and according to results of these examinations showing problems in the field of psycho-social and physical development, are not able, even with the help of special compensation and rehabilitation aids, to be educated in regular educational institutions successfully. Parents make final decision about what kind of school the child will be enrolled in (after final diagnosis and recommendation of the specialists).

The specialists who made the decision concerning their involvement into the system of special schools are from the field of health, education, social affairs and family.

After determining the diagnosis the doctor usually recommends the child for further examinations in schools' counselling institutions. The diagnosis is completed with a psychological examination. If the doctors and psychologists come to the conclusion that a child is disabled in the development of psychic, somatic or sensory functions which cause his/her disability to be educated successfully, further examinations follow in special education consulting centres or in logopedical centres. These institutions also offer particular special-education interventions.

Early childhood care is provided by counselling centers for children aged 0-3 years. Starting at the age of three years, some form of preschool institution is recommended - either in special KGs or in regular KGs. Children are sent to SKGs according to the type of their disability. In regular KGs children can be educated either in special classes or they are individually integrated among other healthy children using education counselling and special-pedagogy counselling (see Table 18).

Disabled children who do not attend any pre-school institutions, and their parents, are provided with individual care through counselling centres.

Counselling (logopedical counselling centres, education-psychological counselling centres, special-education counselling centres, children integrating centres) and pre-

school institutions provide more exact examinations. Teams of specialists - doctors, psychologists, special pedagogues give a complex opinion on children. The final special-education diagnosis is given by a special pedagogue after considering all the examinations and special-pedagogical interventions.

The decision about the acceptance into the system of education depends on the director of a school. Education of disabled children is under the monitoring of two sectors (the sector of education and the sector of social affairs and family), which influences the process of disabled children acceptance.

General trend is to integrate children with disabilities, when it is in the best interest of a child.

Table 18. Number of schools, classes, teachers and SNCH in the regular kindergartens

Year	Number of KG integrating SNCH		Number of special classes in KG	Number of SNCH in KG		Number of teachers in special classes
	in special classes	individual integration		in special classes	integrated individually	
1993	46	245	62	689	436	.
1994	38	344	57	680	708	114
1995	34	522	45	534	882	93
1996	37	380	48	527	589	88
1997	25	471	33	375	809	69
1998	25	511	35	366	1 042	71
1999	38	567	54	551	1 266	109
2000	28	544	38	401	1 188	75
2001	29	533	41	366	1 135	79
2002	32	463	45	373	446	85
2003	33	454	47	375	796	97
2004	28	515	40	337	968	78
2005	29	464	37	315	892	77
2006	26	376	34	288	642	68

Source: ÚIPŠ

Key policies and practices - transition practices

Transition from KG to PS is a challenging transition for many children. To make this process more smooth, KG use to cooperate with PSs in their neighborhood. Children are invited to visit their PS; in some cases during the enrollment period KG teachers go together with children and their parents to enroll children in the PS and after September 1 with teacher of children from their former classroom. In general, children are motivated to look forward to school attendance. Parents have free choice of KG and PS for their children (if there are more schools), so children from KG classroom do not necessarily attend the same elementary classroom, except in small municipalities.

In case the child is not able to follow the school requirements, during the first half of the school year it is possible to postpone the school attendance for this child after psycho-

logical examination. Final decision is made by parents. In case they prefer to send the child back to KG, special attention is paid to this child, according individual educational program, developed in cooperation with specialists.

Key policies and practices - cooperation with parents

School and family cooperation and cooperation of school with the wider community of a village or city is based on legislation. Since 1990 there have been introduced new self-governing bodies - school councils and regional school councils. Regional school councils were supposed to help with consideration of parents', teachers' and pupils' interests in the field of education, as an initiative and advisory self-governing body.

Parents' meetings are self-governing institutions which provide cooperation of school and family effectively. These are supposed to gather and deal with opinions and ideas, comments and requirements of parents, concerning education of children at school and school institutions. Through their deputies they can consult the director or teachers.

One of the main goals of parents' meetings is to support school administration, teachers and other specialists in the educational process.

Forms of cooperation between school and parents' meeting, and wider community include:

- participation of school administration and invited teachers in meetings of parents council, which is the highest institution of parents' meetings;
- cooperation in educational activities (participation of parents council deputies in meetings of school pedagogical council, participation in educational committee, boarding committee, class parents' meetings, participation of parents in activities);
- organizing sports, cultural or other activities for children and parents (school musical parties, class parties, school balls, children works exhibitions, free access in school sports centres for children and adults, involving of parents and wider community in organizing of common sports activities, providing of room for leisure-time activities);
- financial and material support of different activities organized by parents' meetings and wider communities.

A summary of the five main issues and trends impacting on early childhood policies and practices

1. To introduce higher education for all KG teachers.
2. To introduce compulsory KG attendance for 5 year old children.
3. To prepare KG staff for creating school education programs.
4. Self-evaluation of KGs (the need for general criteria for self-evaluation).
5. To include KG teachers in the process of further education
6. To shift KG from the Act on school institutions to the School Act.
7. To create legislation for day care centers and family day care centers.
8. To develop network of institutions for children under three years.

III. Data on personnel

Proportion of staff with higher education qualifications in the main forms of provision is not available.

Proportion of trained / untrained staff working in different forms of provision

A general criterion of a qualified teacher is professional qualification, absence of criminal records and moral maturity. KG teachers and educators for school clubs for children have 2 possibilities to acquire their qualification:

- Secondary vocational school with pedagogical orientation – unit curriculum for both professions in 4 years study.
- University education (study fields as: preschool education, pedagogy – specialization preschool education, preschool and elementary pedagogy, special education and every qualified teacher has at the same time qualification for the work in school clubs for children) on Bc. and Mgr. degree.

Review on findings on qualification of teaching in KG demonstrates next table.

Table 19. Finding on teachers qualification

Year of finding	Teachers				Total
	Qualified		Unqualified		
	Number	%	Number	%	
1998	14 967	96.69	513	3.31	15 480
2001	15 629	97.01	481	2.99	16 110
2005	10 650	97.64	257	2.36	10 907

Source: ÚIPŠ

Due to the fact that ratio of qualified teachers with higher education is not available, we can estimate that about 10 % of KG teachers have university education.

Staff/child and adult/child ratios in the main forms of provision

Table 20. Development in number of kindergarten teachers (including headmasters) according to the founder

Year	Public	%	Private	%	Church	%	Total
1995	14 893	99.73	34	0.23	6	0.04	14 933
1996	15 323	99.62	45	0.29	14	0.09	15 382
1997	15 719	99.61	47	0.30	14	0.09	15 780
1998	15 876	99.63	41	0.26	18	0.11	15 935
1999	15 743	99.60	30	0.19	34	0.22	15 807
2000	15 157	99.53	31	0.20	41	0.27	15 229
2001	15 008	99.39	42	0.28	50	0.33	15 100

2002	15 022	99.38	36	0.24	57	0.38	15 115
2003	14 862	99.33	37	0.25	64	0.43	14 963
2004	13 751	98.71	62	0.45	118	0.85	13 931
2005	12 989	98.39	80	0.61	132	1.00	13 201
2006	12 852	97.74	162	1.23	162	1.24	13 149

Source: ÚIPŠ

Table 21. Child-teacher ratio in the kindergarten according to the founder

Year	Public	Private	Church	Total
1995	21.7	21.2	22.7	21.7
1996	21.9	23.2	23.7	21.9
1997	21.5	20.5	23.4	21.5
1998	21.0	21.8	22.8	21.0
1999	20.5	22.4	20.8	20.5
2000	20.2	21.7	21.5	20.3
2001	20.0	15.9	21.3	19.9
2002	20.0	19.2	20.9	20.0
2003	20.1	17.2	21.0	20.1
2004	21.4	19.3	22.3	21.4
2005	21.5	19.4	23.0	21.5
2006	21.3	19.1	24.1	21.3

Note: The average child-teacher ratio in KGs is calculated by dividing the number of children by a number of teachers that is multiplied by two.

Source: ÚIPŠ

In some KG in the regions with higher concentration of Roma inhabitants also teacher assistant can be introduced.

Table 22. Kindergartens in the SR, where teacher assistants operated

Year	2004	2005	2006	
Total number of kindergartens	54	35	34	
- of number of kindergartens provided education to SNCH	in special classes	2	1	2
	individual integration	7	7	7
Total number of classes	151	101	107	
- of which special classes	2	1	2	
Total number of children	3 272	2 140	2 373	
- of which	in special classes	22	10	28
	integrated individually	30	21	33
Total number of teachers	270	170	193	
- of which in special classes	4	1	3	
Total number of teacher assistants	65	44	42	
- of which number of teacher assistants in special classes	-	-	-	

Source: ÚIPŠ

In the KG there are two teachers for a classroom in full day KG, one teacher in half day KG. Teachers are obliged to work with children 28 hours a week (5, 6 hours daily). KGs in SR are predominantly full day, opened between 6 a.m. - 6 p.m., according to the needs of parents. Most of the day there is one teacher in the classroom.

Impact of the Bologna Process on the restructuring of professional study routes

According to the Decree on professional and educational competence of teaching staff KG teachers are required to obtain higher education, at the same time secondary education is accepted.

As a result of the Bologna Process higher education for KG teachers is introduced in Bc., Mgr. and PhD. study fields.

The first level is completed by a state examination and an award of the Bachelor degree. The graduate of the first level may also apply for the Masters study programme. This second level of university training must be completed by each student wishing to receive teaching qualification (preschool pedagogy, teacher training for the elementary classes in combination with preschool pedagogy + special pedagogy). The study is completed by a state examination and acquiring the teaching qualification.

The length of study on Bc. degree is usually 6 semesters, Mgr. degree is an additional 4 semesters and PhD. 6 semesters for internal and max. 10 semesters for external students.

The external evaluation of higher education institutions is an integral part of accreditation. It has been provided for in legislation since March 2003, and carried out by the AC.

Statements by the AC are the basis for decisions taken by the ME SR (e. g., recognition of the right to award a particular degree to graduates in a given study field) and the government.

In the field of external quality assurance it monitors and independently evaluates the quality of the teaching, research, development, artistic or other creative activities of higher education institutions and contributes to their improvement. It generally assesses the conditions under which such activities are carried out at individual institutions and prepares recommendations for enhancing their work. The AC may inform the public about its findings. The AC carries out accreditation of the individual activities of institutions. It gives its opinion on the capacity of institutions to implement a particular study programme and award the corresponding degree to graduates, as well as to conduct habilitation and professors' nomination procedures, and submit proposals for institution, merger, affiliation, split, dissolution, etc. The AC also carries out regular complex accreditation of all higher education institutions in six-year intervals.

In the course of internal quality assessment, the scientific boards of higher education institutions regularly evaluate (at least once a year) the standard of the institution in terms of educational activity in the fields of science, technology and art. The results of such evaluation are included in a report.

Students are involved in the internal evaluation procedures. According to the Higher Education Act, each student has the right to express him/herself about the quality of teaching and teachers by means of anonymous questionnaires, at least once a year⁶.

⁶ Prepared by: Focus on the Structure of Higher Education in Europe – 2004/05: National Trends in the Bologna Process, p. 190-192. ISSN 1830-5172
In http://www.eurydice.org/ressources/eurydice/pdf/064DN/064_SK_SK.pdf

Unqualified teachers and educators can acquire required qualification via in-service training at existing teaching training faculties.

Central features of curricula in the main institutions of professional education/training

The curricula of secondary schools with pedagogical orientation consists of general and professional subjects and practice in KG and SCCH. At the center of curricula are the mother tongue and literature, psychology, pedagogy, art, music, physics education and its methodology.

University faculties are independent in the creation of their curricula. All programs must be approved by the AC and follow obligatory frameworks for every study field. At the center there are courses on psychology (child development), pedagogy (preschool education), methodology, research in the field of education, drama, education through play, out-of-school pedagogy and programs for SCCH, science and social studies and activities in KG and SCCH. Practice consists of extensions and concrete work with children under auspicious of the teacher. Diploma thesis is usually based on student's empirical research.

The organisation of in-service training and further qualification routes for different professional groups

The aim of in-service training is the continuous deepening, improvement and extension of professional and teaching competence of educational personnel in agreement with latest progressive scientific knowledge, social needs and requirements of pedagogical and professional practice.

There are the following forms of in-service training for KG teachers:

- preparation of head educational personnel,
- specialised innovative courses.

The system of in-service teacher training aims at improvement and development of an optimum ability of teachers for performance of their profession and improvement of their qualifications. Special emphasis is put on updating of knowledge, development of teaching skills, skills and habits, attitudes, qualities in a whole complex corresponding to the present and future requirements for the creative performance of teachers' educational work.

According to the Decree of the ME SR on Professional and pedagogical competence of pedagogical personnel the teaching qualification includes professional and pedagogical competence. According to this decree professional competence refers to a sum of subject professional knowledge, skills, habits achieved by study in higher education institutions and secondary schools. Pedagogical competence refers to knowledge from pedagogy, special pedagogy, psychology, abilities and skills necessary for the performance of educational activities.

The provision of regional practitioner-support services

Regional practitioner-support is offered by methodical-pedagogical centers, pedagogical-psychological counselling and by special education counselling. These institutions give consultations in concrete cases (e.g. behavior problems, speech difficulties) and help to develop individual education plans for SNCH. They also organize workshops and other forms of in-service training for KG teachers and educators.

Children integration centres provide special pedagogy and other professional attendance for the handicapped children of pre-school age and counselling for parents and teachers. Counselling activity for children of pre-school age is provided by pedagogical-psychological counselling as well as special education counselling. KG teachers provide parents with expert consultation on education as well.

Working with children with behaviour problem teachers apply specific educational methods, above all by means of individual treatment and individual activities focused on elimination of the problems in behaviour, eventually, in learning. In relation to the type of the educational problem of the child the teacher chooses the content of activity, method, form and means.

For a better development of some areas of child's personality special supportive and individual programmes are being used, such as development of speech and graphomotor abilities, strengthening the child health through the project of school sustaining health, etc.

In cases of distinctive problems of the educational process the teacher closely cooperates with parents and advisory establishments.

Other forms of support are activities of methodical-pedagogical centers. All institutions organize workshops and other forms of in-service training for KG teachers and educators.

Issues of promotion, pay, professional status and advocacy

According to the Act on Public service the teachers are public employees and their employment is based on the above Act and the Labour Code.

The profession of teacher as a public employee may be entered by any applicant who meets all requirements (personal, academic achievement, qualification) set by this Act, without any limitations and discrimination in respect of gender, race, age, confession or religion, political or other thinking, trade union activity, national or social background, adherence to a nationality or ethnic minority, property, origin or other status.

The basic issues identified in this area include remuneration of teachers. The average wage in education which has most university-educated workers from among all branches of economy, despite partial measures lags behind the average wage in national economy by 10 to 22 %. As a result of remuneration, teachers (often the best ones) leave the teaching profession or, in the effort to provide for their family at least the average standard of living, and often try to find an extra-paid job in addition to teaching.

The employment contract must be concluded in a written form, otherwise it is not valid. Employment may be concluded for tenure position (i.e., without indicating the length of validity of the concluded contract), or for a fixed term (i.e., with indication of the length of validity of the concluded contract). In addition, it is possible to renew employment with an educational worker, holder of pension or invalid pension, who fulfils conditions of professional and educational competence or with an employee who has concluded employment for shorter weekly working hours. The employee with a fixed-term contract should not be advantaged or limited compared to employee with a tenure position.

The teacher may be employed full-time or part-time. The remuneration (salary) is conditional on the teaching workload. The teacher may be simultaneously employed by several employers (he/she may teach in several schools or carry out also other working activities in other institutions). An average income of KG teachers illustrates next table.

Table 23. An average income of kindergarten teachers in the SR

Year	Average income	
	Pedagogical staff	All staff together
1994	5 271	4 735
1995	5 930	5 357
1996	6 034	5 450
1997	7 292	6 580
1998	7 840	7 005
1999	8 092	7 240
2000	8 674	7 752
2001	9 362	8 328
2002	11 161	9 982
2003	12 162	10 917
2004	12 238	11 104
2005	14 088	12 700

Zdroj: ÚIPŠ

Current issues and trends regarding training and workforce policies

Current issues and trends are connected with The Policy of Preschool Education, approved by the Government of the SR (see: www.education.gov.sk). Policy introduced some innovative forms of preschool education, as:

- preparatory classes for 5-6 years old children, allowed parents to be present in the classroom and in combination with home-based preparation for the school attendance,
- individual home-based education in a close KG – parents cooperation.

The prepared changes concerning career advancement of teachers are shown in the Policy of Teachers' Professional Development in Career system. They are based on the consideration that the advancement (salary) of teacher should not ensue not only from the length of teaching experience only but also from the quality of his/her performance.

One of the aims is to substantially increase the societal and financial evaluation of teachers in such a way as to compare it in the future with that in the OECD member states.

According the "Policy" higher education is going to be required – up to the year 2020 all KG teachers will have to reach higher education – Bc. degree as minimum. Exception is given to the teachers, who will be 50 and older in 2020.