

SURVEY OF LEARNING STRUCTURES AND HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEMS IN EUROPE

SLOVENIA

Overall structure of higher education and various types of higher education institutions

Information on the overall legislation on higher education, differences between state and private institutions in status and regulations.

In December 1993 the Slovenian National Assembly adopted the *Higher Education Act (HEA)* as the result of which, after the former disintegration of higher education, began a comprehensive restructuring of higher education institutions.

HEA has introduced many changes in relation to the situation in the past. It grants higher education institutions autonomy in all academic matters, stipulates certain framing conditions for their operation, especially their financing, and regulates certain matters concerning status and curricula which are directly or indirectly related to the quality of higher education and international comparability. For the first time in the national history, the new legislation offered an opportunity to set up-on the basis of a special accreditation procedure-independent (free-standing) higher education institutions besides state universities. Study programs of the former two-year colleges were abolished and new three-year professional higher education programs were introduced in addition to the four- to six-year university ones. A possibility was given to start doctoral studies immediately after graduation provided that certain conditions were met, that is without first obtaining *magisterij*.

The *HEA* provides for a pluralisation of higher education institutions and introduces at least indirect competition among them. There have been hypothetical discussions of restructuring the present two universities into three or more, but attention has also been drawn to the negative side of such a project and, at most, a gradual approach to its implementation has been advised. It seems that the pluralisation of the system will to some extent be influenced more by the establishment of non-state institutions of higher education. The act stipulates that faculties and art academies established by the state must operate within one or other (state) university, whose bodies and procedures guarantee their academic level and quality. Only the university is a legal person; faculties have lost that status. Professional colleges (*Visoke strokovne šole*; professional higher education institutions) operate either as independent higher education institutions or within one of the universities. Schools (of the faculty or art academy type) which are not set up by the state are also allowed to operate independently (free-standing). They can become associate members of state universities, thus adhering to the latter's academic norms. In the new system of higher education professional colleges and private institutions are intended primarily to encourage the economic sector in co-operation with local communities, in addition to the state, to facilitate conditions for the creation of study, research and development programs. All these should fundamentally increase access to higher education for an increasingly large number of candidates, and should contribute to more job opportunities.

At the end of 1999 the National Assembly adopted the *Higher Education Amendment Act*. The changes and additions were built on the assessment of past achievements and the needs of the higher education system, and are related to the introduction of greater democracy in higher education. The Amendment Act changes the composition of the senates of higher education institutions so that not only full professors but also all the academic and academic support staff are represented by the senate. It introduces a new system

of integrated (lump sum) funding. The transition from the secondary school level to higher education is liberalised. The *poklicna matura* examination (a type of vocational final examination) makes it possible for graduates of technical secondary schools to enrol in university type and not only professional type of programmes if they pass a *matura* examination in an additional subject.

Private higher education institutions are those that are not established by the State. Private higher education institutions may be established by national and foreign natural and legal persons and can also perform public service in higher education (on the basis of a concession). A concession for public service in higher education is granted by decree of the Government on the basis of public tender. According to the Higher Education Act, private faculties, academies of art and higher professional education institutions may be set up as freestanding institutions of higher education and must be legal entities. Freestanding institutions of higher education may join a university as affiliated members. The legislation also allows private universities to be established.

Is it a unitary system (based on only one type of institutions: universities) or a binary system (in a binary system, higher education comprises, next to universities, one or more other types of higher education systems) ?

Basic information on the various types of institutions and their status (types of qualifications offered, degree/diploma awarding power, research obligations etc.)

Higher education has a binary structure: academically oriented university type of studies and professional type of studies which include practical training conducted in co-operation with companies and state and local administration.. Faculties and art academies, which are members of universities, and single faculties established as private institutions, offer both types of programmes, while professional colleges provide only the professional type of programmes. They may also organise credential study programmes leading to the award of certificates and study programmes leading to *specializacija*. A professional college may perform research and/or art activities if so provided by its charter.

Study programs are adopted by the senates of faculties, art academies and professional colleges after a prior consent obtained from the university senate. The programs of free-standing higher education institutions are adopted by their senates after a prior consent of the Council for Higher Education of the Republic of Slovenia. Students may transfer between programs under certain conditions.

The courses are organised at two levels. At undergraduate level students obtain a *diploma* leading to a first university degree or leading to a first professional degree. Within the national degree structure these two types are at the same degree level. At post-graduate level students get either the second professional degree of *specializacija*, or the academic degree of either *magisterij znanosti* (comparable to master) or *doktorat znanosti* (comparable to a Ph.D.). Applicants with professional undergraduate degrees may enrol in specialist programmes; those with university degrees may be admitted to any of the three types of post-graduate programmes.

Open/distance learning (ODL) activities; ODL institutions and their status.

The first activities related to the introduction of distance education in Slovenia started in the period 1991-1993. In 1994 the first programme was delivered in DE mode (the programme of Business School within the Faculty of Economics) and Slovenia joined the Phare Multi-country Programme in Distance Education. Within Phare Programme the Faculty of Economics was granted the status of national co-ordinator (National Contact Point - NCP). The mission and objectives of the NCP is to assure the conditions for development of DE at national level, to link different partners in DE field and to act as a resource centre for DE which enables the exchange of experience and cases of good practice in DE field.

In Slovenia, specialised institutions for development and delivery of distance education do not exist. All DE courses are being developed and implemented within traditional higher education institutions.

Faculty of Economics at University of Ljubljana is at present the only higher education institution in Slovenia delivering the whole degree/accredited DE programme of High Business School with more than 1300 students enrolled. Other faculties also started with experimental development of DE courses. The HE institutions in Slovenia, which deal with experimental development of DE courses or implementing projects connected with development of DE are:

- University of Maribor (Faculty of Organisational Sciences, Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science, Faculty of Education, Faculty of Mechanical Engineering)
- University of Ljubljana (Faculty of Electrical Engineering, Faculty of Civil Engineering and Geodesy, University College for Public Administration, Faculty of Mathematics and Physics)
- free-standing professional HE institutions (The College for Management, Koper).

Apart from higher education institutions, there are other institutions embarking on DE development at the level of primary and secondary education (National Educational Institute, Open Society Foundation etc.). The network of centres for continuing education delivering DE is expanding. The private sector took on board DE as an up-to-date mode of education for training purposes. According to the evidence held by the NCP, there are more than sixty institutions in Slovenia keen on the development of DE.

Main developments expected/proposed.

Structure of higher education degrees/qualifications
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Is it the degree system a one-tier or a two-tier system and what types of doctoral qualifications exists? (a one tier-system is based on extensive curricula leading up to master's level without an intermediary degree at the bachelor's level; in a 2-tier system, there is an undergraduate level leading to the bachelor and a postgraduate level comprising the master's and doctorate levels).

The degree system is a two-tier system.

Information on the main types of higher education degrees/qualifications awarded and official duration of study programmes (e.g. in years or ECTS credits). Indicate possible progress from one stage to another and indicate the level of qualifications according to national standards (both ordinary programmes and ODL qualifications).

The basic admission requirement for a **university type of study programmes** is a *matura* exam. University study programmes last between four and six years and end with the *diploma* exam. A successful student receives a *diploma* with a professional title naming the field of study. A university *diploma* enables students to start work or to continue their studies at post-graduate level.

The admission requirement for **professional type of study programmes** is either a *matura* exam or final exam or *poklicna matura* after completing a four-year secondary technical education programme. Professional type of study programmes last in principle three, exceptionally four years, include practical training and end with the *diploma* exam. A successful student receives a *diploma* with a professional title naming the field of study. Students can enter the labour market or continue their study at the post-graduate level leading to a specialist degree – *specializacija* or even magisterij.

Under certain conditions, the transfer between professional type and university type of study is possible in both directions. Candidates transferring to university type of study must have passed a *matura* exam or have achieved a sufficiently high average grade (GPA of at least 8).

At the **post-graduate level** study programmes lead to degrees: *specializacija*, *magisterij* and *doktorat znanosti*.

The admission requirements for **post-graduate study programmes leading to *specializacija*** is either a university degree or professional higher education degree. These programmes last between one and two years and end with the defence of a thesis. A student who has successfully defended a thesis gains a *specializacija* degree with the professional title of *specialist* in a specific field of study. *Specializacija* leads to employment in a certain profession.

The admission requirement for **post-graduate study programmes leading to *magisterij*** is a university degree or in some cases professional higher education degree. These programmes last for two years and end with the defence of a thesis. A student who has successfully defended a thesis gains the academic title of *magister znanosti* (Master) in a specific field of study. *Magisterij* leads either to employment or to doctoral study.

The admission requirements for **post-graduate study programmes leading to *doktorat znanosti*** are either a university degree or a *magisterij* degree. Doctoral study programmes after a university *diploma* last for four years. Doctoral study programmes after a *magisterij* degree last for two years. Students who have completed a *magisterij* degree can continue their study for an additional two years to obtain their doctoral degree. Students who have enrolled in four-year doctoral studies can interrupt them and complete their studies at the *magisterij* level instead.

Students who have completed all courses required for graduation are in principle allowed to maintain their student status for another year (exceptionally more), during which they can take the examinations, fulfil other requirements (practical work) and write a diploma paper (thesis).

Information on programmes/qualifications offered in languages other than the national.

Undergraduate study programmes at both universities are delivered in foreign languages only exceptionally (parts of small number of individual study programmes, in cases of Socrates/Erasmus students or visiting scholars). At post-graduate level the instruction in foreign languages is more frequent. In next years the universities plan to increase the extent of instruction in foreign languages.

Information on recognised "international" degrees offered alongside national degrees (e.g. bachelor and master degrees in non-English-speaking countries (see annex for explanations).

Up to now no foreign institution applied to Council for Higher Education for the accreditation of the institution or study programme.

What concerns the non-official, private or international institutions offering foreign/international degrees or qualifications, the Ministry has no list of such institutions at its disposal. However, there is a minimum possibility of the existence of any such institution in Slovenia.

Main developments expected/proposed.

Admission and access systems to higher education
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Describe the general admission requirements for the different types of higher education and any specific requirements for access (admission examinations etc., numerus clausus systems.

The *matura* certificate (*maturitetno spričevalo*) is required for entry to academic higher education (starting in 2001/2002, a vocational *matura* examination - *poklicna matura* and an additional exam at the end of secondary technical education - is an alternative requirement also granting admission to this type of programmes). The final examination certificate (*zaključni izpit, poklicna matura*) after an appropriate 4-year technical education programme (or *matura* certificate) gives access to professionally oriented higher education.

However, some additional requirements and conditions for enrolment may be set up as well. Study programs can define special talents and/or psychological and physical abilities as condition for admission in addition to *matura*. Higher education institutions may also limit admission to state recognised study programs if the number of students pre-registered for enrolment greatly exceeds the number of places available or their capacities (personnel, facilities, equipment, etc.). In last years this is the case primarily in medicine and social sciences (especially economy, business and law). In case of a limited admission, the grade-point average of *matura* or final examination and of the junior and senior year in secondary school is taken into account; grades of individual *matura* or final examination subjects stipulated by the study program, as well as grades of individual subjects taken in the junior and senior year of secondary school, may be considered. A higher education institution shall obtain approval for the numerus clausus from the Government of the Republic of Slovenia, which shall be made public.

Graduate admission requirements are stipulated by the respective study program. In most cases, the most important criterion is the average grade in the graduate period. Participation in research work and work experience may also be required.

Admission of foreign students (rules and procedures).

The same admission requirements apply for foreign and Slovene citizens. Nevertheless, there are some additional requirements for foreigners wishing to study in Slovenia. Studies of foreigners in Slovenia are regulated by special Regulations on Studies of Foreigners and Slovene Nationals without Slovene Citizenship in the Republic of Slovenia. Special regulations refer among others to documents and proofs which must be submitted by a foreign student before the enrolment. Such requirements are: a residence permit for Slovenia, appropriate knowledge of the Slovene language, a medical certificate, a certificate on completion of the appropriate secondary school (or a university degree for graduate studies), paid tuition and health care fees. A preparatory study year can be organised for those applicants who do not fulfil all the admission requirements. Thus foreign students with inappropriate knowledge of Slovene language can attend a one-year School for Slovene organised by the Centre for Slovene as a second language. A certificate of active knowledge of Slovene language is obligatory for undergraduate studies in Slovenia while the knowledge of Slovene is desirable for graduate studies.

Main developments expected/proposed.

National and/or institutional credit systems
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Information on national credit transfer/credit accumulation systems.

Rules and procedures for credit transfer after studies at another national institution or abroad.

Developments in applications of credit systems and credit transfer/accumulation.

At present, there is no credit accumulation or transfer system at the national level. To some extent, both universities use ECTS for the purpose of student exchanges within Socrates/Erasmus programme. Thus the University of Ljubljana already applies ECTS for all post-graduate study programmes while the renewal of undergraduate programmes according to ECTS is underway. When forming a new study programme, the credit system is an obligatory component of the study programme. The University of Maribor, on the other

hand, is introducing the credit accumulation system within the majority of its member institutions. The basis of the system is, however, not the student workload but the contact hours.

Academic year/semesters/terms

Information on organisation of the academic year: is it semester or term based ? How are examination periods organised ?

The academic year lasts from 1 October to 30 September and is usually divided into two semesters. Organised courses (lectures, seminars and exercises) usually last from 20 to 30 hours a week, 30 weeks annually. The details on the organisation and schedule of the courses are defined by the statutes of higher education institutions and by academic calendars. The details may be tailored to the needs of part-time students. Lectures can in some cases be arranged at art academies.

Examinations are conducted during the various terms and usually in three sessions: June-July, September and January-February.

Pedagogic units/modules: to what extent are courses/curricula organised in modules.

Only one post-graduate study programme at the University of Maribor and two undergraduate study programmes at the University of Ljubljana are currently organised in modules.

Main developments expected/proposed.

Tuition fee systems

Information on national/regional/local tuition fee systems.

Do higher education institutions have autonomy in these matters?

There are no fees for undergraduate courses in public institutions or in private institutions with a concession. Full-time students in other private higher education institutions, part-time students and post-graduate students pay a fee according to the regulations on fees issued by the Minister. The amount to be paid is defined by the competent bodies of higher education institutions where the Minister's regulations on which costs can be included in the fee and how they are to be calculated have to be taken into account. Higher education institutions can charge certain fees also for regular courses if they offer supplementary services.

Information on differentiated fees depending on level of study, income, nationality, etc.

The State can pay certain social benefits for unemployed students. In the case of part-time students, either they pay a fee on their own or it is paid by their employers. If the part-time course is co-financed by public funds, for example, part-time courses for teachers, the fee is correspondingly lower.

Foreigners studying in Slovenia pay tuition fees. They may be exempted from paying the tuition fees if so stipulated by bilateral or international agreements and contracts or if they are awarded a scholarship of the Slovenian Government or its ministries.

The tuition fee for one year of full-time undergraduate, specialist or master's degree studies are as follows:

	Full-time undergraduate studies	Master's and specialist degree studies
Social sciences and humanities	up to 1,500 USD	up to 2,250 USD
Other disciplines	up to 2,000 USD	up to 3,000 USD

Tuition fees for part-time undergraduate studies are similar to those for full-time undergraduate studies. Annual tuition for doctoral studies amounts to:

	Doctoral studies after a completed master's or specialist degree studies	Doctoral studies without a completed master's or specialist degree studies
Social sciences and humanities	up to 2,250 USD	up to 4,500 USD
Other disciplines	up to 3,000 USD	up to 6,000 USD

Main developments expected/proposed.

At the end of 1999, the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia adopted the Higher Education Amendment Act (Ur.l. RS No. 99/99). The Act entered into force on 24 December 1999. It meets the requirements stemming from the harmonisation process with the European Union. The first amendment puts the citizens of the EU on equal footing with the citizens of the Republic of Slovenia as far as enrolment in higher education institutions is concerned. The second amendment stipulates that tuition fees for full-time studies will not be charged to EU citizens, the same as they are not charged to the citizens of Slovenia. Both stipulations will enter into force upon the accession of the Republic of Slovenia to the European Union.

Student grant systems

Information on national/regional/local grant systems (public, institutional, etc.), including information on taxation.

Full-time undergraduate local students in public institutions or in private institutions with a concession do not pay any tuition fees. Within the framework of scholarship policy more than fifteen thousand students were awarded different kinds of state scholarships in 1997/98 and more than ten thousand got a place in cheap student residence halls while a certain number of students in the last years got a place in private accommodation, partly co-financed by the Ministry. Students also receive food coupons at subsidised prices and are entitled to public transport at reduced prices.

Information on national study abroad grant systems.

Information on national grant systems for foreign students.

There is no special grant system for domestic and foreign students. Grants for domestic and foreign students are available first of all within the framework of bilateral agreements, programs and protocols on co-operation in the field of education, culture and science between Slovenia and foreign countries. At the moment, there are more than thirty bilateral agreements and about twenty programs which provide an opportunity for direct co-operation between educational, cultural and scientific institutions and organisations. Such co-operation includes, among others, also the exchanges of students which receive a scholarship of the host country and are exempted from paying the tuition fees. The official scholarships of the Republic of Slovenia are annually publicly announced.

Besides, grants for exchanges of students are available also within the framework of regional (CEEPUS) and multilateral programmes (EU programmes).

Main developments expected/proposed.

Recognition and/or accreditation and quality assurance systems
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How are educational institutions recognised/accredited?

How are degrees and educational programmes recognised/accredited?

The responsibility to secure minimum standards (ex-ante control) in higher education lies with the **Council for Higher Education** of the Republic of Slovenia, which is a consultative body of the Government and consists of representatives of universities and freestanding higher education institutions and of other experts. It is authorised to accredit new HE institutions, to evaluate new study programs of universities and to issue opinions on them and to accredit state-approved programs of freestanding higher education institutions. University study and research programs are approved by the senates of university member institutions upon previous consent of the university senate.

Criteria and procedures on accreditation of study programs and higher education institutions are available on the following Internet address:

http://www.mss.edus.si/publikacije/mss/opisi/dev_he/pogl_07.asp

Information on systems of standardisation/benchmarking of institutions or programmes.

There exists no system of standardisation of institutions or programmes.

Is there a quality assurance agency ? Is there an accreditation agency/body ? What are their tasks/responsibilities ?

The Higher Education Quality Assessment Commission (HEQAC) is to monitor and assess the quality and effectiveness of teaching, research, art and professional activities of HE institutions and reports once a year to the senates of HE institutions, the Council for Higher Education and to the Council for Research and Technology of the Republic of Slovenia. The report shall be publicly disseminated. The HEQAC is composed of representatives of all scientific and art disciplines and professional fields and also obtain the advice of students.

Information on institutional activities in the field of accreditation/quality control.

Members of both Slovenian universities prepare annual self-evaluation reports using the Phare Multi-country Programme on Quality Assurance methodology. The reports are presented to and discussed by universities' Quality Assurance Commissions and Senates. Those post-graduate programmes that are

funded by the Ministry of Education and Sport and the Ministry of Science and Technology are obliged to prepare self-evaluation reports and present them publicly.

What concerns the institutional activities in the field of accreditation, members of the University of Ljubljana that deliver study programmes in regulated professions gained the accreditation of international professional associations in the respective fields in order to facilitate the academic and professional recognition.

Main developments expected/proposed.

According to the Order of the Minister of Education and Sport (April 2000) the Diploma Supplement shall become a mandatory part of Diplomas awarded in the 2001/02 academic year at the latest. The Diploma Supplement shall form part of the Diploma awarded upon the completion of a state-approved undergraduate or post-graduate course of studies and shall be issued by higher education institutions in compliance with the law and their constitutions. The Diploma Supplement forms have been designed in compliance with the recommendations of the European Commission, Council of Europe and Cepes/UNESCO.

Procedures and systems for recognition of foreign degrees

Information on national/institutional procedures for the academic and professional recognition of foreign degrees.

Information on the procedure of recognition of foreign degrees and certificates is provided by the ENIC/NARIC.

The Ministry of Education and Sport is responsible for the recognition of primary and secondary schools' certificates while the academic recognition of higher education degrees is the responsibility of competent higher education institutions.

Higher education institutions offering a certain course of studies have the right to recognise that course of studies at the junior college, undergraduate or post-graduate university level completed abroad; they also have the right to recognise respective degrees. Ph.D. degrees are recognised by a competent or related higher education institution having the right to award Ph.D. degrees in the Republic of Slovenia in compliance with the law. If there is no institution of higher education competent for the recognition of an undergraduate university, master's or Ph.D. degree in the Republic of Slovenia, one of universities in Slovenia appoints a committee of experts to make decisions concerning the recognition of such a degree.

In the process of professional recognition, the applicant - after the recognition of a foreign certificate by the competent institution - is granted the right to independently carry out a profession provided that he/she has passed a special (state) examination after a completed period of traineeship in Slovenia. Namely, foreign state examinations are usually not recognised. The decision on whether an individual may actually perform a certain profession is taken by the competent state body.

The contact point for two general EU directives is within the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs.

Main developments expected/proposed.

Legislation in the field of academic and professional recognition is in the process of renewing.

New law on recognition of foreign certificates and degrees will differentiate the procedures of recognition for academic and professional purposes which is not the case in currently valid legislation.

The Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs, in co-operation with other ministries, is preparing a law on professional qualifications and recognition of professional qualifications. A special Office is foreseen, which would serve as an information and contact point for EU directives and as administrative body responsible for procedures on professional recognition and implementation of EU directives and other documents.