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**„Identifying Barriers in Promoting the European Standards and Guidelines  
for Quality Assurance at Institutional Level“**

**IBAR**

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**IBAR**  
**Quality and Access**  
**Slovak Comparative Study**  
**Work Package 6**

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## **Introduction**

The research realized as a part of the IBAR project has been focused on analysis of the access policy at public HEIs in Slovakia with specific accent on different cohorts of the students. The research sample was identical with the WP 5, i.e. the same four HEIs represented a global complete of 20 public, 3 state and 10 private HEIs which currently creating a network of higher education in Slovakia.

The following HEIs participated in the WP 6 research:

- Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra (UKF)
- Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica (UMB)
- University of Žilina (ZU)
- Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Bratislava (VSVU)

## **Institutional Policy Context**

Access to study at higher education institutions is guaranteed for all persons being interested regardless their age, social status, religion, nationality and sexual orientation by the Law No. 131/2002 on the Higher Education Institutions. Study is open to the following target groups:

- all persons interested in the bachelor study who have achieved full education at secondary schools or secondary vocational schools
- all persons interested in master study who have graduated a bachelor study in the appropriate or similar study program
- all persons interested in doctoral study who have graduated a master study in the appropriate or similar study program.

Concept of access is not exactly specified in any national or institutional policy documents. We can allege, a lack of policy in this area causes that Slovak HEIs haven't initiated a real exploring process focused on correlation of access and quality in education. Existing governmental subsidy system incites a tendency to receive the highest possible number of students within individual HEIs (mainly the private ones).

Access is also affected by the students' interest in the individual study fields. Interest in a field of arts is very high. Process of enrolment is based on the strict criteria (excellent results achieved in secondary schools study combined with an excellent score in entrance tests). The different situation is in the fields of natural and technical sciences. Low amount of interested students and tendency of HEIs to accept their maximum number cause implementation of the principles based on "open access" without applying of entrance tests or evaluation the secondary schools results.

Access is influenced by increasing competition in the Slovak HEI sector as well as by up - growing number of new HEIs (mainly the private ones which prefer financing of education by form of the students tuition fees).



Financial subsidy of HEIs from governmental resources is currently more oriented in support of the research activities than educational ones. Financial support of HEIs education gradually decreases.

Access to study for cohorts of physically or socially disabled students is supported by financial tools (forms of scholarship/pension or school fees decrease). It is guaranteed by national as well as institutional policies.

Access to education of students from minorities is guaranteed by two core laws - Law of the legal code on usage of languages of ethnic minorities, No. 184/1999 and Law No. 245/2008 on education. Their access is also supported by the European Charter of Regional and Minority Languages ratified by the Slovak Government, which enables minorities or ethnic groups to be educated in their mother tongues. In spite of the access guarantees following on a valid legislation, we can identify many challenges in this area. Provision of full-value access to education for Roma minority belongs to the largest ones. The issue of Roma education is very complex and affected by many impacts. Its solving significantly exceeds a framework of access to the HEI education.

Access to HE is primarily derives in the legislation of the Slovak Republic ( Constitution , Law no. 131/2002 on Higher Education ), which determine conditions of equal access for all applicants to HEIs . Moreover, national policy pays a special attention to access of some cohorts (especially marginalized groups) . Basic principles of social policy of HEIs is determined in the Decree of Ministry of Education, Science , Research and Sport Nr . 102/2006 on social scholarships. The Ministry delegates the admission requirements on admission to individual HEIs to allow a reduction in tuition fees for some cohorts of students (e.g. disadvantaged ones). Special cohort is represented by the ethnic minorities. Rules valid in this area are determined by two main laws - Law on the Use of Minority Languages No. 184/1999 and Act. 245/2008 on Education and Training.

The basic philosophy of access to education at Slovak HEIs lies in the transparency of the admission procedure to select the appropriate applicants relevant to requirements of individual study programs. All the conditions and criteria for admission are designed to prevent a discrimination of any cohort of students. Information on admission procedures are published on the HEIs websites and are also disseminated by other communication channels (e.g. print publications, newsletters brochures of the Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education, flyers and other promotional materials issued by the university or any of its parts, regional radio and television programs, promotional events such as fairs or presentation events, personal meetings , social networking - especially Facebook and Twitter, promotional meetings). Applicants or students who feel that their rights or interests were endangered due to non-compliance of the principle of equal treatment have a claim to use a legal protection by law No . 365/2004 on Equal Treatment in Certain Areas and Protection against Discrimination (the " Antidiscrimination Act " ).

## **Research methods**

The basic methodological tools used for the research data collection were as follows:



- analysis of the external policy documents as well as analysis of the internal policy documents of the individual HEIs focused on access or process of recruitment of the persons interested in HEIs study from the determined cohorts
- enquiries filled by specific respondents
- semi - structured interview with specific respondents.

The research sample of the external policy documents was as follows:

- Law No. 131/2002 on the Higher Education Institutions
- Ordinance of the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic No. 102/2006 on social benefits of students of Higher Education Institutions
- Law of the legal code on usage of languages of ethnic minorities, No. 184/1999
- Law No. 245/2008 on education
- Law No. 365/2004 on an equal treatment and protection against discrimination
- Long term policy document for the educational, research, science, art and other creative activities of HEIs valid until 2014
- Basic Principles of the Policies of the Slovak Republic Government on Integration of Roma Communities, Government Resolution, No. 278/2003
- Conception of Development of Upbringing and Education in the Slovak Republic for the next 15-20 years: Project Millennium
- Equal Access to Quality Education for Roma, EU Monitoring and Advocacy Program of the Open Society Institute; 2007  
[http://www.eumap.org/topics/minority/reports/roma\\_education/reports/](http://www.eumap.org/topics/minority/reports/roma_education/reports/).

The sample of analysed internal HEIs policy documents was as follows:

- By-laws of the individual HEIs
- long term policy documents
- internal prescriptions focused on the enrolment procedures
- study guides
- guidelines concerning students scholarships and benefits
- internal guidelines concerning tuition fees
- reports about pedagogical activity.

Enquiries as the tool for the relevant data collection were used in case of three target groups. A special version has been prepared for each of them. Content of all enquiry sheets used on the national level corresponded with the enquiry samples prepared and approved by the international consortium of the IBAR project.



The following three target groups of interrogation have been specified:

1. Management of the HEIs – represented by vice-rectors responsible for study affairs
2. Management of individual faculties – represented by deans, vice-deans responsible for study affairs (responsible for the internal as well as the external study forms) and chosen employees of the Study Affairs Offices
3. Students with the accent on the individual student cohorts – this target group was represented by students without certain affiliation to the accessed cohorts as well as by students representing the individual cohorts. The following representatives of the cohorts have been involved in the process of interrogation:
  - elderly students
  - physically disabled students
  - socially disabled students
  - students from ethnic minorities
  - foreign students.

All students represented both study degrees – master as well as bachelor one. The PhD. students were not included. Students representing diversified study programs have been specified on the basis of a random choice.

The semi-structured interview was used to add and clarify the research data. Its content was interfaced with the questions being used in enquiry sheets as well as the information outputs were identified on the basis of the student enquiries. Employees of Study Affairs Offices, resp. vice-rectors for study affairs became to be the respondents of semi-structured interviews.



## Findings

### Field No. 1

#### Policy on access of the HEIs education

##### *Q1: What is the institutional policy on access?*

According to the Law No. 131/2002, study at the HEIs in Slovakia is open to the following target groups:

- all persons interested in the bachelor study who have achieved full education at secondary schools or secondary vocational schools
- all persons interested in master study who have graduated a bachelor study in the appropriate or similar study program
- all persons interested in doctoral study who have graduated a master study in the appropriate or similar study program.

The law also provides study programs that are open to all persons being interested regardless their age, social status, religion, nationality, sexual orientation and in the majority study programs being aside from their physical abilities (in some cases, because of the study program requirements on a good physical condition, cohorts of physically disabled people have some limits in access to study). Conditions and criteria of study are being published by all HEIs. Requirements are equal for all interested persons, disabled students inclusively.

The process of students' acceptance is affected by the acceptance conditions included in the accreditation documents of the appropriate study program. They are officially approved by the Accreditation Commission. The other criteria concerning the student acceptance regarding of their skills and eligibilities are defined by the individual faculties, resp. departments. Verification of applicant capabilities as well as achievement of the entrance conditions are realized in two possible ways:

- examination (in case of physically disabled applicants they can require a special form of its execution considering their disabilities)
- appraisal of the applicants' results achieved within the previous education.

It is possible to combine both ways.

The Slovak HEIs promote the calls for applications containing information about deadlines, entrance conditions, terms and ways of examinations. If the entrance examination asks for the verification of some eligibilities, resp. talent of the applicants, the content framework of the entrance examination is published as well. The HEIs publish all information in the terms determined by the law:



- until September 20 of the academic year anticipating the academic year in which study will start. It is valid for the case of the bachelor programs or the joined MA programs without Bc. / MA degrees division.
- two months before the last day assessed for submitting of the applications at the latest. It is valid for other programs' degrees (two-year MA programs, PhD. programs).

The above mentioned information is published on the HEIs web pages and are available to all applicants in the Slovak language. In case a study program is realized in foreign language, information is also published in the appropriate language. Faculties are obliged to publish information concerning an expected number of the applicants accepted for the appropriate study program by law.

The majority of the HEIs administrate applications in the electronic form. Except of the information for applicants, the HEIs also publish different internal documents on their web pages – i.e. directives about fees, study and scholarship guidelines, and information about accommodation and catering, library services, leisure time opportunities for students, health care information, etc.

Foreign students who meet the conditions for a study acceptance can attend the HEIs based on their By-law. Students are obliged to assure their financial self - sufficiency within their study period as far as the international governmental agreements don't determine other rules. The HEIs prepare the offer of study programs and courses, application forms as well as contact information in English for foreign applicants / students.

HEIs dispose with the special coordinators for the applicants with health disabilities.

The applicants or students who feel their rights or interests assessed by law have been violated because of non-equal treatment can ask for a legal protection based on the Law No. 365/2004 (The „antidiscrimination“ law on an equal treatment and protection against discrimination). It is possible to take into consideration the applicants or students' relevancy to the disabled cohorts within the procedure adjudicating their requests submitted in the case of their non - acceptance at the appropriate HEI.

The third degree of study is considered to the most open form for different cohorts of applicants (majority of all study programs is open to foreign applicants).



## ***Q2: How institutional policy responds to the national one?***

The institutional policy in the access area is significantly affected by the national policy and the valid legislation documents as well. It is oriented to the support of some cohorts of students, physically and socially disabled mainly.

The main document obligatory for all HEIs is the Law No. 131/2002 on the Higher Education Institutions. The law enables the HEIs to establish the special funds for physically disabled students. Some HEIs use the opportunities to afford a special subsidy to the physically disabled students based on their own requests.

The Slovak Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport has delegated a decision concerning preferences of some applicant / student cohorts (e.g. cohorts with disabilities) to the individual HEIs. They can use some financial tools to prefer some cohorts based on e.g. school fees decrease.

In case of foreign applicants/students, the HEIs are governed by the Law No. 131/2002 (§ 6) as well as by the international agreements and programs.

The main principles of social policy of the Slovak HEIs are governed by the Announcement of the Slovak Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport No. 102/2006 on the Student Social Benefits.

The national access policy is reflected in the document „Long-term policy in educational, research, developmental and other creative activities till 2014“ which has been prepared by the Slovak Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport. Support of the internationalization of the process of education as well as social support of students by the student loans or subsidy accommodation in the student dormitories are expressed in the above mentioned policy document. The global document oriented to the national policy for disabled students doesn't exist.

National policy emphasizes the access to education of minorities. The national legislation concerning the rights of minorities is regularized by two main laws - Law of the Legal Code on Usage of Languages of Ethnic Minorities, No. 184/1999 and Law No. 245/2008 on Education. Except of them, the European Charter of Regional and Minority Languages ratified by the Slovak Government, enables minorities or ethnic groups to be educated in their mother tongues.

Based on the census results in 2011, 9.7 % of Slovak inhabitants were professed to the Hungarian minority, 1.7 % to Roma, 0.8% to Czech, 0.4% to Ruthenium, 0.2% to Ukrainian and 0.1% to German minorities. All of the above mentioned minorities obtained the right to be educated in their mother tongue in 1989.

The biggest challenge on access to education concerns the Roma minority. It represents a complex issue exceeding a framework of the HEIs education. Only 0, 19% from Roma minority achieved an education at the HEIs in 2001 (1, 20% of them obtained the education at the secondary schools, 45, 5% of them have finished the elementary schools only). Even though the access to the education of the mentioned minority is supported by the law, people of the Roma minority don't achieve the appropriate education. Segregation of Roma children within the process of education and their placement into the special schools for mentally or physically disabled children belong among the main cases reflecting a current situation. Unfortunately it is very often realized on the basis of their parents' requirement. This fact makes significant barriers on the access to the higher education of



Roma minority. An application of Roma mother tongue as an official language for educational process, lack of Roma teachers and assistants present the other issues. As the most significant barriers on the access have been identified the following ones:

- lack of motivation to be educated, negative examples in Roma families
- inconvenient educational methods which don't reflect cultural and value diversities of Roma people
- lack of teachers capable to reflect a multicultural environment
- lack of activities preparing Roma children to understand education in Slovak language
- cultural tradition affecting educational opportunities (e.g. 15 years old women get married under influence of their parents, what means finishing of their education).

The HEIs don't put a significant accent to prepare a special institutional policy on access of this cohort. The main reason is a fact the minorities represent a very weak percentage of a global amount of their students, except of two cases:

- the Faculty of Central European Studies of UKF is especially focused on Hungarian minority. Majority of the accredited study programs is educated in Hungarian language.
- two special departments of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Health Care of UKF (The Roma Institute and the Roma Research, Education and Consulting Centre) are focused on development of education of Roma teachers, Roma cultural and social workers as well as research focused on Roma minorities.

The most frequent forms of the institutional policy application to the access of the different student cohorts are as follow:

- appraisal of the applicants or students' relevancy to the cohorts in case of their
- non-acceptance at the appropriate HEI
- existence of special coordinators for physically disabled students at HEIs or coordinators for other special cohorts of students
- existence of special officers caring on foreign students
- provision of subsidy accommodation based on relevancy to certain cohorts
- offer of social benefits and extraordinary scholarships
- offer of the LLP programs for retired persons or for persons in the pre-retirement age.

The HEIs also take care of disabled access to buildings for physically disabled students. Some of them don't have the opportunities to provide it within all classrooms or other educational areas. Building of less barrier infrastructure belongs to the most important challenges of the HEIs.



## Filed No 2

### Information about applicants/students/alumni and cohorts.

#### *Q1: What data are collected about the study programs and in which kinds of documents they are published?*

Publishing of all information concerning the study programs and process of entrance on the HEIs web pages or on the portal of all HEIs ([www.portalvs.sk](http://www.portalvs.sk)) belong to the routine procedures. The HEIs also promote their offer of study programs in printed versions – e.g. in the information bulletins published by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport or in the educational system of the Institute of Information and Prognosis. They also promote information about the study in different information materials – brochures, leaflets or within the realization of own public promo events. The daily print media, regional and national radio as well as TV broadcastings or personal presentations within secondary schools are being used to disseminate the study opportunities. The social internet networks – e.g. Facebook and Twitter became to be the new phenomena affecting information process.

The following data are published about the accredited study programs:

- title of the study program
- study degree
- form of study
- fees for study (in case of the external form)
- general information about entrance procedures, fees for entrance procedures
- conditions of the students acceptance
- terms of entrance examination
- thesis for entrance examination
- expected number of the accepted applicants
- procedure of the application submission
- deadline for submitting of applications
- contact data.

In some cases, the information concerning profile of alumni, recommended study plan, list of recommended publications for the appropriate study program, contact information about coordinator for some cohorts of students (mainly for physically and socially disabled ones) are published as well. In general, the above mentioned information is provided by officers of the appropriate Study Affairs Offices based on request of applicants.

If the applicants are interested in a different term of entrance examination, the appropriate HEI is able to admit their requests. They also accept requirements concerning a special care that needs to be provided within the examination process to the physically disabled applicants.



Some Slovak HEIs publish information concerning study programs and courses for foreign students in English on their web pages (e.g. fees, application, FAQ, etc.).

***Q2: What kind of data about the applicants are collected and in which documents are published?***

All application forms are recorded to the Academic Information System in which data are registered in electronic form within the appropriate academic year. The data are thereafter archived in a paper form by law. The application forms of applicants who become students of the HEIs are included in a personal document of student.

A personal document contains the following data:

- application form containing identification and contact data of student (name, surname, ID number, date of birth, nationality, address, family status, etc. and identification data of the study program, information about the previous educational background, etc.)
- annexes of application form – C.V., copy of diploma, in case of the third level (PhD.) applicants a motivation letter and a working / project plan need to be added
- acceptance, resp. non - acceptance letter.

Personal data contained in the application forms are not assessed to the third persons. Data concerning number of applicants are recorded in the Central Register of Students and published in form of official statistics within Annual Reports. They are also used for different analysis focused on development of quality to reflect the needs of the labor market.

***Q3: What kinds of data about enrollment of students are collected and in which documents are published?***

Data concerning a number of enrolled students are recorded in the Academic Information System and in personal documents of the students. They are registered in the Study Affairs Offices of individual faculties. Personal data of the students can be assessed to the third persons in case of the written personal agreement of the students only. The data are processed in the Central Register of Students and used for Annual Reports. The number of enrolled students with other than Slovak nationality is also registered. Number of foreign students (divided by nationalities) is registered as well. It is not usual to register number of the enrolled disabled students. Data comparing number of enrolled students, applied students and alumni follow as well.

Complex information processed based on the data submitted by the individual HEIs, and focused on sex, age, nationality and a degree of previous education of the students, are published in the official statistics of the Slovak Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport every year.

***Q4: What kinds of data about non-acceptance of the applicants are published and in which documents?***



Data concerning the students who have not completed their study are registered in the Academic Information System and the Central Register of Students yearly. Statistics are published in the Annual Reports of the HEIs and the faculties. The faculties also follow data focused on the students who completed their study before the time (because of the official elimination, changes of study program, etc.) and who interrupted their study. Grounds and decision of the cancellation are registered and archived in the personal documents of students.

***Q5: What kinds of data concerning alumni are collected and in which documents?***

The basic data concerning the alumni are registered based on the individual study programs, degrees and form of study in the Academic Information System and the Central Register. Data concerning alumni who completed their study with very good results (excellent credits, alumni awarded within their study with e.g. Prize of Rector, etc.) are mentioned as well. The data are published in different reports (annual reports of university and individual faculties, reports about pedagogical activities, etc.).

The individual faculties collect contact data about alumni. They are used e.g. for the possible future contact with them. Information about amount of alumni creates a part of application for accreditation of the appropriate study program.

The archived data are as follows:

diploma including all annexes, certificates, student application forms with annexes, decision about the student acceptance to the appropriate study program, all subjects of the students' study plans and achieved credits, title of the diploma work - its annotation, evaluation, defence, etc.

Publications about alumni being provided on the level of HEIs or individual faculties are considered to be the new phenomenon. They are published on the occasion of the important anniversaries, etc.

The HEIs also obtain data concerning the gained alumni positions on labour market after graduation. They are partly used for quality assurance of study programs.

***Q6: Are the collected and registered data processed based on their relevancy to the different cohorts (e.g. physically and socially disabled students, elderly students, students from minorities...)?***

The Slovak HEIs don't put a strong accent on relevancy of students to the individual cohorts in data registration and processing. It is caused by a weak percentage of the students with e.g. disabilities or from minorities within cohorts attending the HEIs (excepting the special study programs for minorities which are attended by a higher percentage of minority students – the Faculty of Central European Studies of UKF offers the study programs tailored to Hungarian students creating their target group).

The stronger accent is put on processing of data concerning the socially disabled and foreign students. Their amount is registered, statistically processed and published within the different reports. (e.g. statistics concerning social benefits, etc.).



## **Filed No. 3**

### **Cohorts – their acceptance and progress**

***Q1: What kinds of tools are used to support the different cohorts (physically and socially disabled students, foreign students, students from minorities) within the entrance examination?***

Physically disabled applicants have provided special conditions for their entrance exams (e.g. longer time for testing, special aids and instruments usage, presence of a special assistant, etc.). If physically disabled applicants ask for changing the form of the entrance exam, the dean or the vice-dean for study affairs can permit it. A relevancy of the appropriate cohort (e.g. cohort of applicants with disabilities) neither affects decision criteria nor decrease of a required level of entrance exam regarding the other cohorts of students.

***Q2: What kinds of tools are used for supporting of progress of the different students cohorts (e.g. physically and socially disabled students, elderly students, students from minorities, foreign students...)?***

Ways of supporting the progress of different cohorts are diversified regarding the individual HEI. Based on our research results we have identified the following ones:

- provision of social benefits. The process of submitting of applications and their approving is considered by the Ordinance of the Slovak Ministry of Education No. 102/2006
- preferential allocating of accommodation in dormitories based on submitting of the students requirements
- building of disabled access mainly in the classrooms
- provision of individual study plans for disabled students based on their requirements
- existence of special coordinators for work with different cohorts of students. The most frequent are coordinators for physically disabled students, officers for social affairs and officers for foreign students
- provision of education of the selected subjects in the minority mother tongues. Some of the faculties with a higher amount of the minority students support education of selected subjects in their mother tongue. Coverage depends on capacity and competences of staff at individual departments. The Faculty of Central European Studies of UKF in Nitra is a specific example of education of the minority students. It has provided majority of the accredited study programs in Hungarian language (Hungarians are the most extensive minority in Slovakia)
- Slovak language courses. Foreign students as well as representatives of minorities can use the opportunity to improve their communication skills in Slovak within special courses. Credits of such the courses can be accounted into their study results. Special Language Centres offer their services to students to improve their competences in Slovak language.
- provision of special services to disabled students. Some disabled students can use special assistance services being offered by some faculties, e.g. translation to a sign language. Their offer is coordinated by special coordinator for physically disabled students.



- decreased school fees. Disabled students have the opportunities to ask for decreasing of tuition fees or their payment based on regular instalments. It is the opportunity for external study students mainly
- provision of e-learning study accessible e.g. for physically disabled or elderly students. It is used by elderly students of external study using an e-learning form of study mainly.

***Q3: Does the support of progress of the different cohorts affect the study programs (in which measure)?***

As we have mentioned before, the ways of the progress support of the different are diversified. They are fully implemented either on levels of HEIs or faculties and don't really affect the study programs.

There are some specific requirements within the study programs at the HEIs which can affect choice of some cohorts (e.g. study programs in Pre- school and elementary pedagogy identify requirements for applicants concerning their verbal, health and motional abilities). As the other example, the study programs oriented in the work with special target groups as minorities or marginalized groups, can be mentioned. They ask for special students competences – e.g. language competences in minority mother tongue, etc.

We can assert, based on our research results, that study programs enabling special support of progress of some students cohorts (e.g. minority) become attractive not only for members of the appropriate minority but for other student cohorts as well.

A special situation was identified in the cohorts of foreign students. They usually don't consider supporting tools of their progress declared in the appropriate study program as the priority. They mainly apply for the study programs offering specific study fields which they can't study at their home universities or which achieve a higher quality of educational process (e.g. in case of fine - art study programs).



## **Field No. 4**

### **Changes in the access and enrollment processes.**

#### ***Q1: What kinds of changes occurred in the study opportunities information regarding of different study programs and cohorts within the last decade?***

Information concerning the study opportunities at HEIs is published on web pages in Slovak and in some cases in English language (publishing of relevant information in English depends on the offer of study programs taught in foreign language). The information is published on the HEIs portal ([www.portalvs.sk](http://www.portalvs.sk)). Other kinds of promo activities informing about study programs are used as well – e.g. promo events Open Doors Day, Fair of study, publishing of information in print media, by posters, leaflets, etc. All these information are available to different cohorts. The HEIs web pages became the most important information media within the last decade. Their positions have been strongly enforced. The HEIs create special sections for some cohorts of students – e.g. physically disabled students (examples of good practice: UMB prepares a special web section for these cohorts from 2010; ZU started to inform about coordinator for physically disabled applicants and students by its web page).

A new way of enrolment used by majority of students consists in the opportunity to submit the electronic application forms. Data concerning applicant's nationality became the optional ones within the application forms as well as the enrolment process. Applicants are not obliged to adduce information concerning their disabilities. Some faculties cancelled a previous obligation to submit medical acknowledgment in the enrolment process. If students don't decide to inform about their health state, the HEI is not informed. This fact causes discrepancy with requirements of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport which asks for reports containing statistics data concerning the amount of disabled students as well as conditions provided for them.

#### ***Q2: How was changed the model of enrollment within the last decade (regarding of the different cohorts, study programs)?***

The model of enrolment was not significantly changed within the last decade. Conditions of enrolment are equal for all student cohorts. If students can't participate in the regular term of enrolment, they can use the complementary one. The other opportunity is to delegate the family member (per procuration). The cohorts of foreign students can find more information on web pages in English language. The physically disabled students can be guided in the enrolment process by their assistant.

The main changes in the enrolment have been caused by IT systems provision to administration of all educational processes. The electronic Academic Information System disseminated and administrated by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport has been implemented at all Slovak HEIs. All students and teachers are obliged to use it (i.e. students have to record all subjects of the appropriate semester into the system; teachers are obliged to enter credits to the system as well). It causes that classic paper indexes are being gradually replaced by printed outputs of the Academic Information System.



***Q3: What is the main reason of changes?***

As we have mentioned before, the main changes which have been realized within the last decade, are focused on enforcing of IT systems to an information process concerning the study opportunities for the different cohorts. A strong accent is put on making all information about study processes public (e.g. process of submitting of application forms, process of enrollment, etc.). The changes are affected directly by changes in institutional policies caused by increasing competition among the HEIs (decreasing number of population and applicants).

***Q4: Do the changes affect the development of institutional QA system?***

The institutional policy documents started to reflect the issue of information equality partly touched upon the access policy. The access is not identified as a special field of the institutional QA system by the time. It becomes a challenge regarding to cohorts of minorities and physically disabled students (proposal from UMB – questions concerning access could be included in the student queries).



## **Field No 5.**

### **Responsibility for provision and monitoring of access**

#### ***Q1: What is a base for responsibilities of provision and monitoring of access?***

Access is declared in the legal norms of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport, and other legislation documents as well as internal policy documents of the HEIs and faculties. Vice-rectors of study affairs in cooperation with vice-deans of study affairs and partly vice-rectors for international relations (regarding of cohorts of foreign students) are responsible for provision and monitoring of access. Officers of the Study Affairs Offices and the Departments for International Relations are responsible for administration of the process. There exist positions of the special officers at the HEIs who have their job description focused on communication and care on physically and socially disabled students. Monitoring of access became a part of the regular staff meetings. They are oriented in evaluation of actual situation in access focused on access and information mainly. Weaknesses and strengths of the process as well as barriers in informing are analyzed. New ways of information process are identified regarding to some cohorts.

## **Field no. 6**

### **Limits and argumentative questions in access and quality**

#### ***Q1: Does your system register any argumentative questions in access and quality?***

The HEIs dispose of the officers responsible to answer the written, electronic and phone questions or appeals. Some HEIs solve the electronic appeals equally to the posted ones. Some of them prefer solving of the appeals sent by the post.

Data concerning quality and access are also processed based on evaluation of the students and alumni queries (annual evaluation of quality realized by students is assessed by the Law No. 131/2002 on the Higher Education Institutions). They are registered and serve as a feedback for individual faculties or departments to improve a quality and access.



## Conclusions

Internal institutional policy of the individual HEIs is directly affected by national legislation securing the equal opportunities of higher education institutions. Applicants have to prove their abilities for the appropriate study program. All conditions and criteria concerning the entrance procedures are published within the process of recruitment. The basic philosophy of access is based on transparent entrance process enabling to choose the most appropriate students for the study programs. The specified conditions and criteria don't discriminate any cohort of students filling requirements of law. Information is preferably published at web pages of the HEIs. They also used other ways for dissemination of information (print media, personal meetings, presentations, social network, promo events etc.). The majority of applicants find the appropriate information on the web pages or the social internet networks. A lack of information about the job opportunities after graduating the appropriate study program was identified by students and applicants as an information disadvantage.

The HEIs administrate educational processes based on the electronic Academic Information System evaluated by majority of students as a progress. New students and cohort of foreign students feel a lack of information about managing of the system, in the foreign languages mainly.

The HEIs profiles don't register special kinds of information regarding of the different student cohorts. They partly follow statistics concerning the socially disabled and foreign students. They also use electronic forms (mainly own web pages and internet social networks) to inform the physically disabled students. It represents a main progress within the last decade.

Support on access of some cohorts (disabled students, minorities, elderly students, etc.) doesn't decrease the quality criteria which are identified for applicants in the individual study programs. **Access is preferably supported by services and benefits for some cohorts.** The supporting tools and services for students from different cohorts are primary oriented in physically and socially disabled students. The forms of services and benefits are as follows:

- appraisal of the applicants or students' relevancy to the cohorts in case of their non - acceptance at the appropriate HEI
- existence of special coordinators for physically disabled students at HEIs or coordinators for other special cohorts of students
- provision of subsidy accommodation based on relevancy to certain cohorts
- offering of social benefits and extraordinary scholarships.

The HEIs also create the special conditions for physically disabled applicants, e.g. within the process of entrance examination which don't affect verification of the applicants capability for the appropriate study program. Supporting tools don't involve all aspects of work with the different cohorts. Applying of human attitude to some cohorts plays very important role as well (mainly regarding of disabled ones).

National policy puts quite a strong accent on internalization of HEI study. In case of foreign applicants/students, the HEIs are govern by the Law No. 131/2002 (§ 6) as well as by the international agreements and programs. Students from abroad have accessible information about study programs taught in English language (on web pages, brochures, information leaflets, etc.). They have available special officers caring on them.



Except of offering of the LLP programs for retired persons or for persons in pre- retirement age we have not registered any special supporting tools for the cohort of elderly students.

National policy makes a strong accent on access to education of minorities. The biggest challenge was identified on access to education concerns the Roma minority. It represents a complex issue exceeding a framework of the HEIs education. Even though an access to education is secured by the law, people of the Roma minority don't achieve the appropriate education in a reality. Among the main causes inducing a current situation belongs a segregation of Roma children within the process of education and their organizing to special schools for mentally or physically disabled children. The HEIs don't put a significant accent to prepare a special institutional policy on access of this cohort. The main reason is a fact the minorities represent a very weak percentage of a global amount of their students. We have registered two exceptions in this field:

- the Faculty of Central European Studies of UKF is especially focused on Hungarian minority. The majority of the accredited study programs is educated in Hungarian language
- two special departments of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Health Care of UKF (the Roma Institute and the Roma Research, Education and Consulting Centre) are focused on development of education of Roma teachers, Roma cultural and social workers as well as realization of the research focused on Roma minorities.

The HEIs prefer institutional policy focused on inclusion. Based on combination of the opinion of the HEIs and faculties managers, as well as students, we can say that study at the Slovak HEIs is accessible to all groups/cohorts of the persons interested in. The HEIs create the appropriate conditions for all cohorts of students in the information as well as supporting areas.

We can summarize that fundamental philosophy of the study access at the Slovak HEIs is based on the transparent entrance process enabling to find the applicants with a good capability for study. All specified conditions and criteria don't discriminate any cohorts of students who fill conditions for study assessed by law.

The results of research findings in the focus on quality and accessibility of higher education study can be summarized as follows :

- Disclosure of information on education and career opportunities at HEIs are rated as substantially sufficient.
- Important source of information on study opportunities for applicants became teachers and counselors at secondary schools as well as the applicants acquaintances and friends studying or studied at the appropriate school.
- Using social networks, particularly Facebook and Twitter became one of the most important sources in regard of information about the study opportunities.
- The most important criteria which students use select their study programs were reported as follows : interest in the study program, job opportunities after graduation in the study program , the opportunity to study in foreign languages , distance from HEI to the place of residence , the reputation of the school , a good reference for the study of the quality of graduates.



- In the case of absence of certain information, the applicants use email or phone to contact the appropriate study department.
- Innovation introduced during the last decade enable the electronic applications. Attest of health condition of applicants are still required as part of the applications for some selected study courses (e.g. teacher of Preschool and Elementary Education).
- Type of information concerning disability is not included in the application forms because of antidiscrimination law, it is up to individual decision of applicants if they will express their special needs on study. On the other hand, the Ministry annually requests HEIs to report numbers of disabled students and conditions of their study.
- Foreign students don't have available applications in English language as well as Academic IT systems don't use English versions.
- The issue of access to education are incorporated in the students questionnaire survey which students annually (based on the Higher Education Act ) fill.
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