



*With the support of the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Union*

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

**IBAR**

Agreement number – 2010 – 4663/001 - 001

**WP8**  
**Quality and Management/Governance**  
National study – Slovakia  
2012

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



## **IBAR**

### **Quality and Governance/Management**

#### **Slovak Comparative Analysis**

#### **Work Package 8**

##### **Research team of UKF Nitra responsible for national comparative study:**

prof. PaedDr. Alena Hašková, CSc.

PhDr. Ľubor Pilárik, PhD.

doc. PaedDr. Marcela Verešová, PhD.

doc. PhDr. Ružena Žilová, PhD.

Mgr. Ľubica Lachká

Mgr. Diana Kanášová

##### **Research team responsible for institutional analysis:**

doc. PaedDr. Marcela Verešová, PhD. - Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra (UKF)

doc. PhDr. Ružena Žilová, PhD. - Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra (UKF)

prof. Ing. Milota Vetráková, PhD. - Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica (UMB)

PhDr. Renáta Švarcová - University of Žilina (ZU)

Mgr. Michaela Pašteková, PhD. - Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Bratislava (VSVU)

## **Introduction**



The submitted report addresses issues of management/governance with respect to quality of education within HEIs in Slovakia. Its aim is to provide information about an institutional quality culture regarding to responsibilities of self-governing bodies as well as in regard of the vertically structured management on level of HEI, faculties, institutes and departments.

The second objective of the report is to identify the key barriers in quality arising from the management/governance processes.

Quality in education is perceived in the presented report in terms of some ESG. It is primarily focused on the three standards. Standard 1.1 (Policy and Procedures for Quality Assurance) which states that HEIs should have provided the QA policies and procedures concerning the study programs and awarding of academic degrees. Standard 1.2 (Approval, Monitoring and Periodic Review of Programs and Awards) which emphasizes that HEIs should have implemented the formal mechanisms for the approval, periodic review and monitoring of their study programs. Standard 1.5 (Learning Resources and Student Support) determines HEIs to provide support of student education with the resources adequate and appropriate for each study program.

Opportunities for sustainable implementation of ESG at HEIs in Slovakia are primarily derived from the national policy and regulations valid in the field of management/governance. They depend on limits determined by national legislation. Even though, it is necessary to pay attention to processes of management/governance, ways of decision making and evaluation mechanisms implemented at various levels of HEIs to provide sustainable quality culture in education.

Themes of management/governance and quality in education are discussed in the following 4 areas:

### **1/ The national context and its influence on management/governance of HEIs**

- Changes at the national level that affect the governance/ management of HEIs.
- Decision-making processes at HEIs.
- Position of the highest governance/management bodies in the processes

### **2/ Management/governance and quality of higher education**

- Influence of structure and processes of management/ governance on quality culture in education
- Mechanisms for approval, review and monitoring of study programs
- Responsibilities and competences of the management, teachers and students

### **3/ Participation of governance authorities in assessing the quality of study programs in regard of:**



- Learning outcomes
- Content of study programs
- Resources to support of students
- Periodic review of study programs

#### **4/ Awareness of decision makers, pedagogues and students with ESG**

- Extent of ESG awareness within the groups of decision makers, pedagogues and students
- How is the ESG impact on curricula perceived from side of decision makers, pedagogues and students
- Evaluating the implementation of ESG
- Barriers in implementation of ESG

### **National policy context**

The highest central government authority in the field of higher education is the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport in Slovak Republic (next Ministry), which creates conditions for the development of higher education within the accredited study programs. The governance of Slovak HEIs is strongly determined by national legislation. It exhaustively defines the HEIs governance bodies, which are the Rector, the Scientific/Art Council (in cases of art HEIs), the Academic Senate and Student Disciplinary Committee. Slovak legislation also defines the scope of the HEIs governance bodies, their duties and powers, membership conditions, terms, composition, rules of procedure... .

The national legislation also defines ways of governance of financial resources and property of HEIs, while a significant portion of funding is based on the number of students as well as scientific research outcomes of teaching and scientific staff.

Slovak national legislation delegates to HEIs the responsibilities for „the establishment and implementation of study programs." Every curriculum has to be accredited based on law declaration which is in the scope of the Minister of Education, Science Research and Sport and the Accreditation Commission, which is advisory body of the Government. It reflects the capacity of the appropriate HEI to carry out the study program.

An important factor affecting the establishment and implementation of study programs is a document “National System of Study Fields” , given by the national legislation and prepared by the Ministry. HEIs are obliged to prepare and realize the study programs based on the document. Each study program has exhaustively specified the so - called „core”, i.e. description of study field. It consists of disciplines/subjects , which have to be included in every study program to obtain legal accreditation for its implementation. Core subjects of study program must achieve at least 3/5 credits within the bachelor degree and 1/2 within MA degree. Changes of obligatory subjects within the study field is in the scope of the

Ministry. The Accreditation Commission as an advisory body of Government comments on the proposed changes.



Theme of quality in education is included to the national policy document „Long-term policy in education, research, development, artistic and other creative activities for field of higher education valid till 2014“, which states that "the current system of QA in higher education is based on the criteria established and implemented by the Accreditation Commission, which fills a role of an advisory body of Slovak Government“.

The national legislation also defines the internal mechanisms for internal quality assurance at HEIs (e.g. the obligatory annual assessment provided by the Scientific Councils of HEIs, anonymous questionnaire survey focused on evaluation of study programs realized by the students). Only a few HEIs have developed own internal rules and systems for monitoring and improving the quality of their activities based on Standards and Recommendations for Quality Assurance in European Higher Education Area.

The Ministry formulates, in response to the context of quality in education, its aim *„to have created and actively used the tools for detecting deficiencies in higher education, to monitor students' progress in education as well as to monitor innovation methods and content of education by changing needs of students and employers“*. Ministry also specifies a fact that *„Ministry will adjust and tighten criteria for the accreditation of HEIs based on increasing emphasis on their research excellence to condition the accreditation of study programs upon the existing system of QA in higher education, accreditation of university activities and their evaluation should follow the internal QA tools. “*

The national governance authorities, which represent the HEIs in relation to the Ministry, are the Council of HEIs, Student Higher Education Council and the Slovak Rectors' Conference.

Implementation of ESG on level of individual HEI is strictly affected by national policy on management and governance which defines the space and limits. IBAR research focused on management and self-governance in regard of quality assurance processes covered four main areas :

1. National context and its impact on management and governance of HEIs.

- Affection of national legislation on management/governance of HEIs ,

- Description of decision making processes in HEIs ,

- Managerial/governmental positions of the HEIs bodies.

2. Governance and executive management, their relation to QA processes.



- The impact of management/governance processes on QA of education,
- Mechanisms for approval , review and monitoring of study programs,
- Responsibilities and competence of representatives of management, teachers and university students.

### 3 Participation of governance authorities in QA of study programs in regard of:

- Learning outcomes,
- Study Curricula,
- Resources to support students ,
- Periodic revision of study programs.

### 4. Level of awareness of decision-makers , pedagogues and students on ESG.

- Level of awareness of decision makers, pedagogues and students on ESG.
- ESG impact on the curricula of study programs ,
- Evaluation of the implementation of ESG,
- Barriers in implementing of ESG .

During a realization of the project IBAR, several legislative changes put in place to tackle problems occurring in quality of education and its assurance ( changes to Law no. 131/2002 on Higher Education, guidelines of Ministry of Education on bibliographic registration and classification of publication and artistic activities and responses , 2011 , 2013 draft criteria used by the Accreditation Commission , 2012; draft decree of Ministry of Education on the central register of Publication Activity and central

registries artistic activity , 2012; changes in Decree no. 6/2005 Coll process of obtaining scientific - pedagogical titles and artistic- educational titles Associate Professor and Professor , 2012 , the Governmental Regulation amending and supplementing Government Ordinance no. 104/2003, Accreditation Commission 2012 , 2013 ; draft decree of Ministry of Education on register on fields of study, curriculum register and HEIs register... .



The most important legislative change presents an amendment to the Higher Education Act ( Act no. 131/2002 ), which entered into force on 1 January 2013 . It is focused precisely on the issues concerning the quality of higher education. The amendment introduced a new obligation for universities to create and implement their own internal systems for quality assurance, which have to cover all the conditions of the relevant parts of the education processes. Under this requirement, management and governance bodies of HEIs became responsible for establishment and implementation of the QA systems. Schools are required to ensure the quality of education in accordance with formal rules and predefined procedures. The emphasis is on a systematic approach, which allows high school early identification of potential problems in the provision of higher education and to take the necessary measures to prevent them or that they can be removed.

## **Methodology**

4 public HEIs served as a source for collecting and analysing of the research data. They represent the complex of 20 public , 3 state and 10 private universities, which make up the existing networks of HEIs in Slovakia.

Specifically, the following universities have been included:

- Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra,
- Matej Bel University in Banska Bystrica
- University of Zilina in Zilina
- Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Bratislava

Content analysis of documents and semi-structured interview were used to obtain the data .

### **Content analysis of documents.**

The following documents were used for the content analysis :

- Regulation of Government on Accreditation Commission No. 104/2003
- Law No. 131/2002 on the Higher Education Institutions
- The set of study fields issued by the Ministry of Education No. 2090/2002
  
- Long term policy document for the educational, research, science, art and other creative activities of HEIs valid until 2014
- The by-laws of HEIs
- Internal regulations of HEIs and internal prescriptions of their organizational units
- Reports on educational activities



## Semi structured interviews

The following representatives have been interviewed within the chosen segments:

- Segment “top management”: members of the Scientific Council, members of Boards, members of the Academic Senate on level of HEIs
- Segment “middle management”: Deans, Vice Deans for education, members of the Scientific Faculty Board and managers of quality on level of faculties
- Segment “lower management”: Heads of Departments, Heads of Offices
- Segment “employees”: teachers, administrative staff, guarantors of study programs and study subjects
- Segment “students”: representatives of Academic Senate

Tab. Composition of survey sample

<i>segment</i>	<i>UKF</i>	<i>UMB</i>	<i>ŽU</i>	<i>VŠVU*</i>
Top management	2	6	14	2
Middle management	10	6	14	0
Lower management	0	7	0	2
Employees	0	14	14	3
Students	12	7	14	18

- VSVU doesn't have established the level of faculties, it misses a segment of middle management

## Findings

### Field No. 1

**An institutional context of governance of HEI.**

a) **What are the main changes in the governance of HEIs in terms of quality at the**





## **national level and how they affect the governance structure and processes within the institutions?**

The most significant changes in governance within the previously valid legislation have been identified in the following areas:

- a) The abolition of state and private HEIs and the creation of new legal forms of public, state, private and foreign HEIs (i.e. HEIs with residence in the territory of another country providing higher education in the Slovak Republic under the laws of Slovak Republic based on authorization issued by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic). The current state system of higher education is composed from 20 public, 3 state, 12 private and 4 foreign HEIs.
- b) Enforcement of the governance of HEIs about the status of public institution.
- c) Extending the scale of academic governance bodies of new ones. In addition to the Academic Senate, the Rector, the Research Council, the University Disciplinary Commission was established on level of HEI as well as faculties. It is composed from pedagogues and students of the appropriate faculty. Its aim is to solve possible offences of students.
- d) Transfer of property from the status “property managed by HEI” to its ownership, in case of public HEIs.
- e) The extension of funding of HEIs from the state budget about the possibility of obtaining additional resources, e.g. including loans.
- f) Legal entity was delegated from levels of faculties to HEI as an institution.
- g) Enforcement of authority of the Academic Senate.
- h) Increasing of number of students’ representation in the Academic Senate (from at least 1/4 to at least 1/3 of total number of members).
- i) Establishment of the Board of Trustees, which promotes the public interest of HEI, particularly in the use of property and funds donated to HEI (Board has 14 members, of whom two are representatives of the university – 1 student, 1 representative of staff - and others are composed from representatives of businesses, local government and central government).
- j) Establishment of three-level higher education, transfer of PhD. study from scientific field to educational area.



- k) Establishment of fees for external study (since 2007).
- l) Obligatory disclosure of information concerning students, staff, the final diploma works, contracts with employees... within central registration of the Ministry.
- m) Extension of study programs of opportunities for the joint degrees programs.

According to the respondents' opinion, the processes of management and governance in higher education institutions were affected from the national level mainly by those parts of the amendment of the Law No. 172/1990 about Higher Education Institutions that are related to administration of HEI. The respondents at level of top management (the level of HEI) marked as a major change a reduction of the autonomy of HEIs and increasing of administrative burden. The other significant changes were identified on level of measures concerning the changes in system of allocation of the state subsidies to HEIs, e.g. the prescription of tuition fees, the establishment of motivation scholarships for external students as well as measures concerning monitoring and assessment the quality of education (e.g. measures to prevent and punish plagiarism, refinement of tendering procedures for positions of professors) as well as the measures to support students with special needs. Respondents from middle management (level of faculties) as the most significant changes identified measures concerning disclosure of working time of teachers and the QA of educational processes.

The impact of changes in governance on structure and processes within HEIs are assessed by the representatives of top and middle management from a positive perspective as well as from a negative one. The respondents expressed that several changes caused a reduction of governance responsibilities of HEIs, resp. their faculties (e.g. the composition of the Academic Senates is prescribed by the Law, the obligation of HEI to pay own employees based on legally prescribed reward regulations, the low competence of HEI for remuneration

of own employees, all HEI financial resources are taken as public ones ...).

As a negative aspect was identified a non-acceptance of the results of the complex accreditation of study programs in regard of allocation of state subsidy. As positive legislative effects were rated the progressive changes in education resulting from an establishment of the National System of Occupations and increasing pressure on QA processes.

**b) How could be generally characterized a decision-making culture in your institution: strongly bottom-up or strongly top -down ?**



HEIs decide about all their activities based on decisions of the academic governance authorities. The Rector manages the work at level of HEI, he/she acts on behalf of it. He/she is subordinated to the Academic Senate. Except the members of the highest HEI management/governance bodies, the other groups (representatives of top, middle and low management as well as organizational units, students, employees...) have the opportunity to participate in the establishment of internal regulations and standards. For these purposes, the different Commissions are created as advisory bodies which contribute to the development of internal documents and standards as well as rules of pedagogical and research activities. Strategic decisions become as the result of consensus. The Rector holds a clear vision of the strategy of HEI, but he/she should not forget to listen to opinions of others (staff, students ...). Rector follows the development priorities concerning the whole HEI, but decisions are made also on the basis of proposals of deans, members of top management (vice rectors...), representatives of students, employees... . Submission of important internal documents for comment belongs to the standard procedures (e.g. important documents are submitted to the representatives of middle and low management, students, other employees...). In accordance to valid legislation, it is obligatory to submit some internal documents to be approved by the appropriate governance authorities of HEI. In recent years, discussion about the stimuli and proposals coming from e.g. heads of departments, pedagogues and even students, become a common practice within the meetings of governing bodies (Rector's and Deans' Colleges, meetings of Academic Senate, Arts Council, meetings of Departments...).

The tasks of employees are realized based on a top-down decision making process, in accordance with the organizational hierarchy of management, they are mostly realized based on delegating. According to the respondents from the top and middle levels of management, the decision-making culture is a process which direction cannot be clearly defined. The access to decision-making culture is different in the various areas. It depends on a particular issue. The representatives of top management (HEI management) have the opinion that the proposals and suggestions come based on "bottom – up" principles and after their discussing with the relevant authorities (different levels of governance/management), they are executed based on the „top-down“ decisions/directions. Employees are not always able to accept the

„top-down“ direction process. It is usually caused by a lack of communication about aims and intents from side of top and middle management. By opinion of representatives of management, it is often caused by misunderstanding of rules of academic freedom as well as the need to express the „continuous opportunistic opinion“. Over a half of respondents from the middle management level (management of faculties) have the opinion that the decision making process is possible to identify as clearly „top-down“.

**c) How strong or weak is the top administration at HEI: do they regularly submit their incentives for changes in institutional policy?**



Academic community of HEI creates the base of governance for HEI/ its faculties. It elects and recalls the members of the Academic Senate of the HEI / faculty. The Academic Senate (established on the level of HEI as well as faculties) elects the Rector or Deans (in case of the Faculty Senate). The Senates have a significant presence in the governance/management of HEI / faculties. They are responsible for the quality of education as well as economic management of HEI / faculties/departments. They elect also representatives of HEI / faculties to the Slovak Council of Higher Education. Academic Senates of HEIs / faculties create the working committees focused on different areas which help to meet the Senates' roles (e.g. legal committee, committee for study affairs...). Members of the committees take a responsibility for the materials submitted to the Senates' meeting and make comments or opinions. Establishment of permanent special committees and commissions create the positive preconditions for more active cooperation between the HEI/faculties governance authorities and the executive management to prepare important internal documents (e.g. proposal of budget of HEI / faculties...).

Scientific or Art Councils (in case of art HEI) established on level of HEI or faculties fill an important role at the approval of all key documents and processes related to the quality of education (they approve e.g. curriculum documents incl. evaluation of the adequacy of the curricula in relation to the requirements of the labour market and applying of graduates, personal guarantees of teachers in relation to their professional profiles and achieved qualification ...). Members of Scientific Councils are important experts from other HEIs, research institutions and practices covering the areas in which HEI/ its faculties carry out the educational, research, development, artistic or other creative activities. The number of external members represent at least 1/4 of the total membership of the Scientific Council. Materials for the meetings of Academic Senates and Scientific Councils (level of HEI or faculties) are submitted by Rector or Deans (in case of faculties) or their authorized representatives.

The Disciplinary Commissions (established at level of HEI and also faculties), composed of representatives of students and employees, are focused to discuss disciplinary offenses of students.

The Board of Trustees is a body which implements and enforces the public interest of HEI, particularly in relation to use of property and state financial subsidies. In addition to above mentioned responsibilities, it comments the annual report, long-term strategy and other documents submitted to the Minister, Rector or Chairman of the Academic Senate of HEI. Its role is not aimed at preparing and processing the documents (within the meaning of his own creation), but it plays the role of "opponent" and "approver". The Board often acts as a driver of changes. Duties of the Board of Trustees are determined by the Law No.131/2002 about HEIs. The Board members are nominated and recalled by the Minister of Education, Science, Research and Sport in Slovak Republic.



Changes of the institutional policy respond to external and internal stimuli. Primarily a part of the government represented by the Academic Senate, Board of Directors don't fill a primary role as the key initiators in regard of changes of institutional policies. The main drivers in area of strategic changes are representatives of top management. In case of HEI, it is composed from Rector and Rector's advisory bodies, in particular:

- a) College of Rector, whose members are the Vice-Rectors, Deans, Heads of personnel and legal departments, Chairman of the Academic Senate, Students President of the Academic Senate, President of the Trade Union, and other members as decided by the Rector.
- b) Members of top executive of HEI composed from Rector, Vice-Rectors, bursar, Heads of personnel and legal departments, and other members as decided by the Rector.

In case of faculties, it is composed form Dean of the appropriate faculty and its advisory bodies, especially:

- a) College of Dean including Vice - Deans, Faculty's Secretary, Heads of departments, Directors of institutes and centres.
- b) Members of top executive of faculties composed from Deans, Vice-Deans and Faculty Secretary.

Top management bodies have stronger position in administration processes than governance bodies in all cases. Therefore an initiation of changes and their implementing belong to the dominant duties of representatives of top and middle management (they have decision-making powers, they can take inputs for decision from different resources).

Not all respondents of semi structured interviews have a detailed knowledge about the

management structure operating within their institution. This problem occurred equally at the level of HEI as well as its faculties. We often met with cases in which many changes could be affected by employees operating at different levels of institutions, but they were not sufficiently familiar with the outputs / decisions made at different levels of management/governance. The feed - back required from side of employees concerning their understanding of approved decisions often misses. The lack of the staff awareness is not always caused by a lack of information disclosure. In some cases it may be caused by a lack of interest of employees of such information, as well as a lack of their interest in overall context of activities realized on level of HEI / faculties.

Data analysis in the case of the Academy of Final Arts and Design indicates more frequent incentives concerning the institutional policy based on „bottom-up“ principles in comparison with other surveyed HEIs. It is affected by two main factors. The first one is that the Academy is quite a small institution not divided into faculties and there are more



opportunities for closer and more frequent communication of the top and middle management representatives with lower organizational units, whether on formal or informal level. The second fact is that the Academy as an institution, is focused on art education. It organizes a variety of cultural and artistic events, which offer a space for frequent personal communication either on level of representatives of top and middle management or among representatives with staff.

## **Field No.2**

### **Governance and quality**

#### **a) To what extent the structure and processes of governance affect a quality culture in your institution?**

All academic governance bodies of HEIs participate in management of quality culture. Their administrative and decision-making powers are clearly defined in the internal regulations of HEIs or faculties, which directly follow the Law No. 131/2002 on HEIs. Scientific Councils/resp. Art Councils of HEIs or its faculties play an important role as governance bodies in development of quality culture. They regularly review the level of educational and scientific activities. They approve the proposed study curricula as well as experts of the State Exams Commissions and PhD. tutors. They also comment the occupation conditions concerning positions of Professors and Associated Professors. They review the criteria of habilitation and inauguration procedures. They approve the nominations for Professors, award the degrees of Associated Professor and Doctor Honoris Causa. They are

responsible for nominations of honorary award Professor Emeritus submitted to Rector or Dean of the appropriate HEI or faculty.

Representation of the external members in the Scientific Council/Art Council contributes to the external influence on internal quality culture as well as to the larger view on established rules/criteria used in assessment of educational and scientific activities. In addition, the external representatives provide a proper balance in objectivity of assessment procedures. Academic Senates (established on level of HEI or faculty) affect the internal quality culture within a process of comment the internal prescriptions/policy documents of HEI. They e.g. create a space enabling a number of representatives of HEI/its faculties to comment Studying Regulations and participate in the process of its improvement based on „good practices“. Regulations have to be approved by the Minister of Education, Science, Research and Sport of Slovak Republic.

The Board of Trustees significantly affects the quality of education mainly based on development of the HEI infrastructure by providing of new technologies or equipment. Its the



most significant duties are focused on the financial affairs (e.g. they approve the use of different financial resources, allocations of budget ...).

Critical views on the current situation in influence of governance bodies on the internal quality culture have been reported in the case of the surveyed HEI, University of Žilina. Based on survey results, it is necessary to provide a fundamental change in the structure and powers of governance bodies the HEI or faculties because their institutes were defined before twenty years and they are currently overcome. New institutes associated with the approval, resp. decision-making powers have been established within the last years. It is necessary include them into the responsibilities of governance authorities and to find a correct way how to extend their decision. Nowadays, there is not identified a clear role and responsibilities of staff at different levels of administration (top/middle management, guarantors, responsible project leaders ...). It doesn't exist a system that accurately describes the possibility of any corrections in the decision making processes.

The decision making process and communication between e.g. representatives of top management who approve the internal documents and the documents' creators miss a feedback. The high quality publication outputs and solved scientific and research tasks insufficiently appreciated. It was identified an insufficient disclosure of positive examples of positive learning outcomes. Lack of knowledge in internal prescriptions/regulations as well as in legislation was identified as a serious issue. It can cause internal chaos in management/governance of HEI.

Access to actual valid internal prescriptions/regulations is taken as non-systematic and inadequate one. As a positive change is perceived the effort for involvement of staff and students to the decision making process based on discussions and evaluation questionnaires within process of QA of education .

### ***Example of good practice in quality culture***

An example of positive influence of the governance body on the quality culture was identified at University of Matej Bell. The Scientific Council initiated the exploration of alumni's opinion on their former HEI based on the inquiries survey. Members of the Council submitted an incentive concerning a division of the content of inquiries to two parts to provide a higher objectiveness of the results: the first part was focused on assessment of educational content based on curricula, the second one was aimed at conditions created by HEI/faculties for successful study.

**b) To what extent have the mechanisms of approval, review and monitoring of study programs increased the control of the top / middle administration authorities over academic staff/director of study programs at your HEI?**



The mechanism for approval, review and monitoring of study programs are realized in accordance with the Law No. 131/2002 on Higher Education Institutions and with the Government Regulation on the Accreditation Commission. The Commission comments the capability of HEI to carry out the study programs authorized HEIs to give the graduate degrees. The criteria which have to be filled up from a side of HEI (e.g. to have guarantors of the study programs and study subjects filling the accreditation criteria as well as enough qualified teaching staff) are quite clearly identified in both above mentioned legal documents. Rectors/ representatives of top management of HEIs (e.g. Vice-Rectors for Education and Research) comment the criteria established by the state Accreditation Commission, used for assessment of HEIs competencies. The final criteria are approved by the Slovak Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport.

Faculty, which submits their study programs for accreditation, processes the accreditation file in the required structure. Its content is prepared on level of the appropriate Department which guarantees the professional background of the submitted study programs. Dean or the designated representative of the faculty is responsible for the formal and content quality of the processed accreditation file. The proposals of study programs for accreditations are approved on the level of the Scientific / Art Councils of the appropriate faculty. Students are invited to participate in the Councils' discussions aimed at proposals of study programs for accreditation.

Accreditation files are monitored by representatives of the HEI top management (Rector and Vice Rectors for Education or Vice Rectors for Research). Afterwards, they are submitted to the Working Group of the Accreditation Commission, which provides a first assessment of capability of HEI to realize the appropriate study programs. Subsequently, the materials are referred to members of the Commission to be commented. A right to realize the study programs is given by the Minister of Education for the approved period. It is assigned

neither for whole time until the next accreditation (it is held every six years) or for a limited time (e.g. in case of accreditation of a new curriculum or respect of the age of guarantor). If conditions in the study programs are changed (e.g. because of leaving of the study program's guarantor), HEI has an obligation to provide the appropriate measures and to announce all changes to the state Accreditation Commission. The rights for the study program can be suspended or cancelled. Therefore, the quality of study programs (mainly aimed at quality of pedagogues) is regularly monitored from side of top/middle management of HEI or faculties. In other cases, the mechanism of review of study programs is based on the initiative of guarantors of study programs or leaders of the appropriate Departments and Institutes, in which the curricula are implemented.

Changes of the study programs content and staff are presented within meetings of Scientific/Art Council of the appropriate Faculty. Council has powers to comment and approve them. Evaluation of the study programs by students is systematically realized by all HEIs (ordered by the Law 131/2002). The main challenges have been identified (depending on the institution) in a lack of systematic approaches to provide a continuous / regular





monitoring of the implemented study programs. A new trend in QA in education, as well as in preparing of accreditation files is based on assessment of successful applying of the alumni on the labour market.

Experience has shown, if the proposals of study programs for accreditation are prepared in high quality, the Scientific /Art Councils approve the material without bigger discussion. These authorities do not perceive their own position as a control one in the process of approving, review and monitoring of study programs specifically with respect to pedagogues, respectively guarantors of the study programs. In the case of Academy of Fine Arts and Design was identified the fact that the duties for the concept of study programs and obligation to evaluate and monitor their implementation are in responsibility of Vice – Rector for education. It is exactly dedicated in the By-Laws of the Academy (Article 18, paragraph 5). Vice-Rector for study intensively communicates either with the Guarantors of the study programs, or with teachers who are involved to prepare the content of the study programs as well as with guarantors of individual study subjects. Vice - Rectors for education collects and prepares the background documents for accreditation files. They also verify ability of teachers to become the guarantors of the study program. They evaluate the extent and quality of their teaching, art and publishing activities. We can conclude that the review, monitoring or implementation of study programs became the tools of active evaluation of the teachers as well as the guarantors. They are more intensively used by representatives of top or middle management than by academic governance bodies.

The results of data analysis show that management of different HEIs evaluate the accreditation process of the study programs based on controversial, different attitudes. On the one hand, there have opinions that the mechanism for approval, review and monitoring of courses and its impact on the evaluation of pedagogues / guarantors of the study programs is

set correctly. Issues occur in their implementation, troubles with their compliance are often joined with human factors (e.g. bad cooperation to remove deficiencies in study programs, ignorance of guarantor's comments...). On the other hand, they have also opinions that the system of accreditation is too restrictive. It doesn't enable to HEI to gain the sufficient autonomy and decide about their strategy, particularly in respect to the study programs. Respondents representing the top and middle managements positively evaluate the fact, that the teaching staff regularly submits the updated requirements for study programs (schedules, reports about tests realized in the appropriate semester...) to the Head of the Department, and afterwards to Vice Dean for education.

- c) How often is revised the content of study programs (curriculum) at your HEI? To what extent are teams that are responsible for the quality (e.g. departments for quality, the Senates, various committees ...) involved in verifying the contents of the revised curricula ?**



Content of study programs undertaken at faculties is significantly joined to the content of study fields, within which the relevant study programs are accredited by the Ministry. The contents of study programs are strictly joined to so-called “core” or description of study fields established by the Ministry. They contain the mandatory requirements aimed at the theoretical knowledge, practical skills and competencies of graduates achieved on the various study levels. “Core” of study fields are obligatory for the creators of the study programs. All HEIs are obliged to adhere to them. Changes in the descriptions are implemented by the Accreditation Commission. Faculties or their governance authorities have no competences to modify or change the description of study fields declared by the Commission. The gained rights enabling the implementation of the study programs should not be changed after their approving without previous agreement of the Commission. Other changes related to a revision of teaching staff of study subjects within the already accredited programs, the offer of additive subjects over the framework of the core subjects are negotiated and approved by the Academic Senates and Scientific/Art Councils of Faculties.

The recommended curriculum is processed for each study program. It consists of the main subjects (compulsory subjects of knowledge). Students achieve by their passing the core competencies necessary to perform their jobs. Except of compulsory subjects, there are also the selective and optional subjects. The profiling subjects of study programs are not changed. Their contents are innovated with regard to new trends, needs of the labour market and demands of employers. Innovation of the subject contents (up to 10 - 20% per a year in accordance with the profile of alumni) could be provided in accordance with decision of guarantors of the study subjects or guarantors of study program. Fact sheets are updated to the

appropriate academic year. Their actualization is in the competence of Vice - Deans for education. The actualized fact sheets are disclosed based on the e-systems.

The contents of individual study programs are reviewed within the complex accreditation and reaccreditation, depending on the period for which the programs gained the individual rights. Modifications and innovations of curricula reflect the needs of intermediate science, research and practice. They are implemented through curriculum innovation. Sometimes the revision can be associated with a change of guarantor of the study program. More frequent are cases, where changes are aimed at guarantors of study subjects or examiners of the subjects of the state final exams (e.g. in respect to leaving of current jobs, or retirement ).

**d1) What are the competencies and responsibilities carry a top / middle management and representatives of governance in terms of quality, review of study programs?**

The Head of Department has a right to prepare a new curriculum or its modification, in which are created the appropriate conditions for high quality study in the relevant field of study. Students themselves don't initiate establishment of new study programs. The opinions of students on curricula of individual study programs started to be identified in recent years



(e.g. by forms of brief inquiries within the day of the state exams). Their suggestions are then reflected in the modification of curricula.

Potential or current guarantors, members of the Department (guarantors of subjects), Vice Dean for education have the responsibility for the creation or revision of the study programs. Decision-making powers and responsibility to submit a new study program for an accreditation are in hands of Scientific/Art Council of the appropriate Faculty in cooperation with Vice Rectors for education as well as for research. Top management of HEI is responsible for strategy, long-term policy and its implementation incl. monitoring and evaluation... in the quality of education, in relation to the successful applying of graduates in the labour market. According to the opinion of the majority of respondents from the top management, their influence on processes of the quality improvement and review of study programs has only advisory and recommendatory characters. Their powers and responsibilities are associated only with monitoring and coordinating of activities related to the accreditation processes of study programs.

**d2) What kinds of competencies and responsibilities are carried by the middle management - Deans, Heads of Departments and Governance bodies corresponding to the level of middle management in terms of quality, review of curricula?**

Middle management of faculties (Deans, Heads of Departments as well as the governance bodies corresponding to the middle management level) creates a core staff responsible for the quality of education in regard to approval, monitoring and review of study programs.

Meetings of Department 's representatives as well as meetings of College of Dean serve as a space for discussion on above mentioned themes. Deans use also governance bodies, the College of Dean and Scientific Council or Academic Senate to negotiate and comment the documents concerning quality of education, monitoring and review of study programs.

Full responsibility for the quality of education is up to the Heads of Departments and Guarantors of the study programs. Their duties are to check, in some periods, the data of the fact sheets of individual subjects (mainly their objectives, contents as well as a relevance of recommended study materials). Guarantors of study programs are responsible for improving their quality. They also have a right to comment the personnel and material background of the study programs.

Heads of departments can affect the quality of learning processes based on supervision of teachers within educational process (including state exams). They can monitor the level of teaching performance and teaching skills, adherence to schedules of classes, they can provide operational changes in teaching. In terms of quality and review of curricula, they involve in establishment of structure and content of the study programs (under tutoring of the guarantors). Heads of departments, together with the guarantors of the study programs are responsible for processing the documents for obtaining the accreditation. Regular review of



study programs is taken as criteria necessary to ensure the competitiveness of the program in Slovak and foreign HEIs environment.

Respondents from middle management ( Vice-Deans of Faculties) highlighted their role the accreditation and re- accreditation processes. They also manage and respond for educational and publishing activities. The competence of Vice Dean for education is aimed at commenting on policy documents of HEI/ faculty, participating in the Scientific Council and College of Dean, as well as administrating the Disciplinary Commission of the faculty. They methodically manage the Office for education. Close cooperation between the Dean and Vice-Dean for academic affairs exists in the fields of policy and administrative tasks.

### **d3) What kinds of competencies and responsibilities are carried by the ordinary teaching staff?**

Ordinary pedagogues provide teaching within the study programs at the level of guarantors of study programs (required is degree of professor ), guarantors of study subjects (required is at least degree of PhD.) or teachers (new requirement for their qualification is that all teachers have to achieve at least PhD. as well). One teacher can guarantee one study program, only (but within all three degrees of studying - Bc., MA and PhD.). The number of study subjects, which can be guaranteed by one teacher cannot exceed 5. Teachers are actively involved in the preparing and review of content of study programs. They are responsible for their implementation within educational process. In line with the ESG 1, they are directly involved in providing the assessment of students.

The quality of study programs depends on the quality of teaching staff and their ability to deliver their knowledge to students in the learning process. They are the primary beneficiaries of feedback from students in regard of the quality of the study subjects. Based on the received feedback, they can submit the suggestions to the guarantor of the study subject / study program to improve the quality (mainly in form of the study subject content innovation). Based on the data analysis, it was found that powers of guarantors of the study subjects are not enough clearly defined in the appropriate documents. Even though they have a crucial influence e.g. on the selection of ordinary teachers. Guarantors of study subjects can also propose updating of information sheets to guarantor of study programs. Good results are achieved in cases, where the ordinary teaching staff is in constant contact with the guarantors of study subjects and they continuously inform each other about the achieved results in the subjects education, or about the proposed changes in their content.

Data obtained from the survey analysis show the fact that ordinary teachers have the opportunities to affect changes in the study subjects concerning their quality assessment. They have created a space to apply the “bottom – up “ initiatives to improve the quality of education. Even though, the survey results showed the passive attitude of ordinary teachers and lack of their suggestions.



#### **d4) What kinds of competencies and responsibilities have students in review of study programs ?**

Students, at least once per year, reflect the quality of education based on an anonymous questionnaires. They can comment work of pedagogues, their professional and didactic competencies. They can also evaluate the material and technical backgrounds of educational processes, including the suitability and accessibility of the study materials and other study resources. This way enables them to significantly affect the educational process and initiate the changes concerning a review of the study programs.

In addition, students can nominate their representatives in the governance bodies, equally on the level of HEI as well as faculties, with all rights and duties of full members ( the Academic Senates). They can through their representatives significantly affect all educational processes. Data analysis showed that students do not use these tools in adequate rate (an initiative of students concerns more the individual activity of members of the Senates than delegating of activity from side of ordinary students to members of Senate, comments submitted by students who are not members of the Senates, through their representatives are much more rare).

Students can also affect the review of study programs and monitoring of their quality based on their participation in the meeting of Scientific / Art Councils on the level of HEI or faculty where they are invited.

### **Fields No. 3**

#### **Extent of participation of institutional governance bodies in quality assurance of study programs**

##### **a1) What is the share of governance bodies in assessing the quality of study programs with regard to processing and disclosure of learning outcomes?**

Processing of the content of study programs (curriculum) is covered by the appropriate Department. Each study program is guaranteed by the guarantor (Associated professor or Professor, depending on degree of the study program). Content and teaching staff of the study program have to be approved by Scientific/Art Council of faculties, in some cases it is commented by Faculties' Academic Senates. Afterwards, it is submitted for approval to Accreditation Commission. The learning outcomes are assessed every year at level of faculties as well as at level of top management of HEI. The results are processed to the official Reports on Pedagogical Activities which are prepared by faculties/HEI. They are presented to the academic community once a year. The evaluation of learning outcomes is based on evaluation the results of final state exams as well as the results concerning the following data:



- Number of students enrolled to the study program,
- number of prematurely terminated and abandoned students,
- number of students participated in academic mobility,
- number of students' works created within the research, pedagogical and art activities,
- number of exams attended in the regular and substitute dates ,
- achieved average marks ,
- number of credits transferred to higher grade of study,
- number of students attending a study within prolonged period,
- number of students graduated in standard term.

Learning outcomes are also aimed at evaluation of continuity of the study programs on the first, second and possibly the third degrees and in some cases, singularity of the offered study programs. It is identified an interest in individual study programs, or loyalty of the students to HEI (i.e. number of students who after finishing their Bc. degree decide to continue at the same HEI to achieve MA degree). The evaluation and dissemination of learning outcomes is dedicated by the Law on Higher Education Institutions, resp. by the Accreditation Commission. It is a duty of top and middle management of HEI/faculty, particularly Vice-rector and Vice deans for study. Governance bodies fill in this case a role of referees and approvers.

According to the representatives of top management (HEI level) assess the quality of education, including quality programs belong to the responsibilities of the governance bodies. Based on the data analysis, it has been identified the need to involve governance authorities to deal with the issue focused on the study programs assessment procedures, as well as on monitoring of the alumni employment and their feedback on the content of study programs. Respondents also expressed their opinion that information concerning the public evaluation of HEIs and the applying of graduates on the labour market have to be published on the web site of Faculties (in parts of web pages aimed at applicants for study) .

The answers of respondents from middle management (level of Faculties) acknowledge that the Scientific/Art Councils, Academic Senates and Academic Community of Faculties are regularly informed about the learning outcomes of individual faculties based on a year period. System of information disclosure includes information focused on the admission procedures, the number of successful students evaluated based on different school years and different study programs, as well as the number of graduates within the study programs. On the basis of the submitted information, the Faculties governance authorities, responsible staff (heads of departments, guarantors of study programs) and management, evaluate the quality of education provided in individual study programs, primarily aimed at the evaluation of quality of alumni.

The responses of the Heads of Departments acknowledge that the problem of quality of education and achievements in this field creates a part of negotiations of the College of



Dean. The results are then discussed, analysed and evaluated at level of individual Departments. In cases of bad outcomes achieved within the Departments, negotiations are realized by form of personal interview followed by concrete measures to remedy. The data analysis showed a relatively high degree of agreement among the respondents of middle management . They present their view that the issue of quality of education should be primarily followed by governance bodies. Bodies have available all documents containing the results of evaluation the quality of education within individual Faculties (as well as the results achieved in other fields). Based on the evaluation, Faculties have allocated subsidies (depending on the reported results achieved in several areas, not only in education).

**a2) What is the share of governance bodies in assessment of study programs with regard to curriculum, design of study program and institutional profile of HEI?**

The content of study program is reviewed by Science / Art Councils of Faculty and then by the Accreditation Commission. Any update is made based on the proposals the Heads of departments, respectively the Guarantors of study programs. Their proposals reflect the needs arising from the development of science disciplines, practice requirements as well as results of research. They also react on the interest for individual study programs and qualification profile of available pedagogues. The changes approved by the Scientific/Art

Councils of Faculty must be in accordance with rules and criteria of the Accreditation Commission.

Governance bodies are entitled to be informed about the Report on Education made on an annual base. They can comment it and submit proposal for changes. Their position is particularly significant in the process of the budget allocation. From this position, governance bodies can significantly affect the quality of education (e.g. based on strengthening the criteria of quality education in the methodology of the budget allocation ). The core of the quality assessment of study programs in regard of the content and design of study programs, is put on the Faculty. The level of cooperation among Faculties and the Departments is also important. The assessment of quality of study programs are therefore primarily in hands of guarantors of courses with regard to the acceptance the labour market requirements on graduates of the appropriate degree programs.

**a3) What is the share of governance bodies in assessing the quality of study programs regarding to availability of adequate resources for education and resources to support students?**

The availability of adequate resources for education and support to students depends on the demands of study programs. Respondents to our survey identified it as insufficient. The basic study literature is more or less available. A wider range of literature (especially in foreign languages) is provided depending on current financial situation. Exchange with partner organizations is used also for delivery of study materials. In generally, the process is not



systematic. As the biggest barriers were indicated a low availability of foreign study resources, mainly journals in print form, as well as lack of funds to purchase educational materials for some specialized disciplines.

Providing the resources for education is in the responsibility of the top management of Faculties and HEI. Criticism of some students, respondents of the survey, was oriented in the area of availability of computer technology and the internet. HEIs are currently aimed at continuous solving of this problem. The increased use of private laptops contributes to its solving. HEIs started to be primarily focused on improvements of data network capacity, mainly with respect to improving the parameters of wifi or LAN networks.

**a4) What is the share of governance authorities in assessing the quality in view of the periodic evaluation of study programs, including a feedback from employers and alumni?**

Creating the new study programs is in the responsibility of individual Departments which prepare them and submit for approval to the Accreditation Commission. Governing bodies of Faculties and HEIs are included into a commenting process on the study programs proposals.

Creating the new programs reflect the needs of practice and applying of alumni in practice. Older study programs are reviewed mainly on the level of Departments. The study programs are reviewed also based on the results of students evaluation realized regularly every year. All study programs are obligatory reviewed at the occasion of state accreditation (please, see data listed in the previous parts of the document). Based on the survey data, a strong requirement for establishment a national system focused on a real determination of needs of the Slovak labour market from side of the state was identified. These requirements relate the need to define the official policy of education on national level .

Feedback from employers is provided by HEIs sporadically. It depends strongly on the area of labour market for which are alumni prepared. A common problem of all HEIs is aimed at the relatively low reflection of HEIs on expressing of the employers non positive assessment of the content of existing study programs and their requirements. For identifying of needs of labour markets and opinion of employers are used also the diploma works. Many of them are focused on the topic of applying of alumni and survey of the employers opinion on education of graduates. It is also possible to exploit the information of external agencies for this purpose.

**Field No.4**

**Awareness of students, academic workers and representatives of decision-making bodies on ESG.**





### **a) To what extent are students, academic workers and representatives of decision-making bodies informed on the ESG?**

Awareness with the ESG in the individual HEIs is really varied. It usually depends on how these institutions are included in various national or international projects focused on ESG issues. Based on our data analysis, we can state the following levels of awareness achieved by the individual institutions:

#### **UKF in Nitra**

- The first contact with the ESG at Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra (UKF) was realized in 2009. The management of University introduced to representatives of faculties the material *“Proposal of development of a quality assurance system in education at the University in Nitra”*. In connection with this material, representatives of top and middle management of HEI gradually acceded to the systematic implementation of ESG as well as to transferring the ESG philosophy into the processes of approving, monitoring and review of study programs with

accent on the evaluation of study programs from side of students. The ESG 6 and 7 focused on information systems, started to be systematically implemented at HEI. The new project supported from ESF started in 2011. It was aimed at implementation of ESG comprehensive system to develop quality in different education areas, mainly in study programs. The project’s guarantors (representatives of top management) perform the regular meetings of the expert teams of project at the level of faculties and departments. A concept of ESG in the context of the project objectives and the UKF strategy was presented to representatives of middle and low management as well as employees.

#### **UMB in Banská Bystrica**

- Greater awareness of ESG began to raise at the University of Matej Bel in Banska Bystrica (UMB) in 2010, when it gained the project funded by the ESF *„Improving the quality of higher management in terms of UMB“*. The main objectives of the project are aimed at implementing and sustainability of quality management system in accordance with the requirements of International Standard ISO 9001:2008, ESG and the standards applied in the process of accreditation of study programs according to Law no. 131/2002 Z. Z. on Higher Education. For this purpose, the Quality Board as a professional, advisory, initiating and methodical authority in quality assurance was established by the UMB. Its chairman is a member of the College of Rector. In this context, the *„Document on the introduction of a standardized quality management system based on standards of ISO and non-standardized system according to the ESG*



*standards*“ was included into the discussion of the College of Rector in November 2011. Top and middle managers are familiar with principles and procedures of quality assurance. Awareness is provided also on level of representatives the students and employees. The advisory body of the Quality Board at UMB is the Institute of Managerial Systems at Faculty of Economics UMB. It is experienced with the implementation of the Quality Management System according to ISO standards since 1999. Special trainings focused on acquiring the teaching skills (according to ESG, section 1.4) were carried out for future teachers at UMB between 2011 and 2012. The internal prescription of University clearly defines obligatory to attend these trainings to achieve full qualification of HEI pedagogues. UMB also organizes the trainings aimed at improvement of skills and competences in managerial fields as well as QA (e.g. training of internal auditors managers of quality for different target groups of UMB). The implementation of quality management is planned to start in 2013. The members of the Academic Senate Faculty, Board members, the College of Rector/ Deans are familiar with the procedures and principles of quality assurance. Information about the introduction of a quality assurance system designed to UMB are available to teachers, students, faculty in intranet in the form of MOODLE LMS records of discussions, presentations and projects.

### **VŠVU in Bratislava**

- The Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Bratislava (VSVU), in comparison with the above two institutions of higher education, is characterized by a weak awareness of ESG. Basic knowledge of ESG have some members of top management of HEI (especially the Rector, Vice-Rector for education and selected members of the Academic Senate and Art Council). Awareness of the ESG is, in this case, more informative. In practice, the direct implementation of ESG doesn't work. Even though, the various processes and mechanisms implemented at the Academy, aimed at ensuring quality education, respond to ESG rules. The ordinary academics – teachers, administrative employees..., are not familiar with ESG. Higher awareness is possible to observe within pedagogues who are directly focused on themes of quality education, evaluation processes or Bologna process. Awareness of ESG among students is almost zero. Some of students confirmed within the realized survey, they had the opportunity to participate in discussion about ESG within the Academic Senate meetings.

### **ZU in Zilina**



- At the University of Žilina was identified low awareness of ESG. A significant part of the respondents of the conducted survey (one third of all respondents - regardless of the segment) lacked any information about ESG. A big portion of respondents who have knowledge about the ESG is familiar with the issue based on their participation in the project „*Development of quality culture at the University of Žilina based on European standards in higher education*“.

#### **b) How the students, academic workers and decision makers take the impact of ESG on curricula and quality assessment?**

Given the fact, that awareness of ESG at individual higher education institutions is very different (please, see the findings reported in the previous question), it is not possible to answer clearly this question. It is necessary to distinguish whether it is an institution characterized by weaker or broader awareness of ESG.

Top and middle management of UKF in Nitra (level of Rectorate and four Faculties) take a systematic implementation of ESG as a challenge and actively participate in the project “*Internal quality assurance of education in UKF based on implementation of ESG*“, which is aimed at creation of internal tools to evaluate the quality of the educational process based on the ESG. The project will also involve representatives of UKF students (mainly students working in academic senates).

The Institute of Managerial Systems of the Faculty of Economics became a coordinating institution for implementing of ESG at UMB Banská Bystrica. Activities of this Institute are aimed at improving the quality of education and providing the professional development of the university staff. They meet with the positive reflection on the faculties. Based on good present experience, the implementation of QA system is planned for 2013 within the rest of faculties of the UMB (except the Faculty of Economics, which is already proprietor of ISO norms).

In the context of higher education institutions with weak awareness of ESG, it is difficult to talk about the direct impact of ESG on curricula and quality assessment. How was stated in the previous part of analysis (section 4, question 4a), regardless of the absence of a broader awareness of the ESG, also these institutions pay attention to the quality of education, corresponding to the standard ESG. E.g. the results of survey conducted at the Academy concluded that the Academy tends to apply the own quality mechanisms and procedures which are not called „ESG“ but responding to conditions of ESG. Own procedures are then confronted with ESG. Recently, the Academy was invited to participate in several projects relating the quality in education (e.g. project AHELO - The Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes which is realized within several Slovak universities).



Representatives of management feel that only a small part of projects takes into account the QA specifics of the HEIs focused on education of art .

University of Žilina took into consideration the data obtained from the respondents who are familiar with the ESG, only. Respondents declared the following impact of ESG for quality assessment and curricula:

- ESG provide a framework for internal policies and procedures for quality assurance of study programs. The policies have a formal status and should be disclosed. Respondents identified the needs to complement existing documents or create new documents, which will exactly define the internal mechanisms of the approval, periodic review and monitoring of study programs as well as establishment of criteria, regulations and procedures for the students assessment.
- The implementation of ESG motivates to a mutual comparing of achieved knowledge of students / graduates of individual HEIs.
- Implementation of ESG means to take into consideration facts concerning unemployment of alumni. Respondents expect changes in state accreditation of study programs. Commission should not approve the programs in which graduates don't achieve the appropriate qualification to apply for the chosen qualified positions.
- Implementation of ESG should not be strict. Individual HEIs should have enough space for their discretion to use beside ESG already implemented QA system, e.g. evaluation model CAF.

### **c) How are the students, academics and decision-makers involved in the evaluation of the ESG implementation?**

Level of involving is different based on level of ESG implementation.

#### **Institutions which started to implement ESG.**

##### **UKF in Nitra**

University analyses a current situation in the internal quality based on the results of ESG questionnaires survey. Middle management of faculties as well as top management of HEI are involved to this process. Involving of low managers e.g. at level of individual Departments to all processes seems to be crucial for successful implementation of the ESG.

##### **University of Zilina**

Representatives of HEI are currently involved in a new project aimed at developing a culture of quality at the university based on ESG. It is expected a significant involvement of students,



academic staff and decision-makers during the project and after its completion in the evaluation of the implementation of the ESG.

**Institution which has experience with ISO norms implementation which harmonizes ISO with ESG.**

**UMB Banská Bystrica**

UMB has several years experiences with implementing of ISO norms in quality evaluation. One of its Faculty currently carries out the assessments of quality of study programs and quality education according to ISO 9001:2008. The evaluation assumes an active involvement of the students, teachers and managers. ISO certification is done by an external agency every three years. There are available the management standards, by which the evaluation is done. Systematic procedures to correct deficiencies are received. Internal review realized by the internal quality auditors and managers of the Faculty is followed by external audit.

In addition, the Faculty provides the certified trainings for the 30 – 40 students every year. They are trained to gain qualification of internal auditors with a valid certificate of the auditor. The evaluation process realized based on ISO standards, corresponds to requirements of ESG. The quality assurance system will be implemented from 2013 within the other faculties of UMB.

**d) What are the barriers perceived by students, academics and decision makers in the implementation of ESG standards, Part 1?**

Students perceive the following two main barriers in the implementation of ESG :

- unclear evaluation criteria for certain study programs (some study programs don't have listed the clear criteria in the Information Sheet, or it happens that they are changed during the semester)
- lack of feedback from faculties, respectively HEI on the results of every year evaluation of teaching staff from side of students (realized based on questionnaire survey).

Respondents of survey identified the following barriers in relation to the implementation of ESG:

- Lack of a clear coherent strategy and lack of schedule in ESG implementation.
- Inconsistency of views on the implementation of ESG of different representatives /target groups of HEI.



- Lack of wider awareness of ESG, which causes a reluctance of some organizational units to participate in the process of implementation of the ESG.
- Reluctance to increase knowledge on the ESG.
- Fear of further administrative burden on teachers' activities carried out in addition to their principal professional activities as well as new requirements for their next qualification and professional development.
- Time consuming analytical work realized in the initial phase of ESG implementing.
  
- Non-systemic approach of national authorities to the education joined with the constantly changes in national policies not exceeding the term of election of the Minister
- Lack of motivation of staff, lack of flexibility and staff to implement changes.
- Lack of contacts and feedback from employers.
- Unwillingness of teachers to verify and check the procedures of assessment of students .
- Reluctance of students to be engaged in the QA processes.

## **Conclusions**

The aim of the report was to describe the institutional culture of quality with links to the competence of governance authorities and the responsibilities of individual vertical levels of quality management (top management of HEI, middle management of Faculties, lower management of departments and institutes). The other aim was to identify the key barriers in the quality education at Slovak HEIs arising from the management/governance processes.

### **Area 1) The institutional context**

High degree of centralization of powers at the level of state government limits the power of HEIs in setting and implementing their own internal processes in quality management of education. As a positive aspect of the legislative changes is taken the establishment of the institute the Board of Trustees, in which people from the external environment are represented. Limits of the Board lies in its narrow scope focused only on finances and



property of HEI. Quality of education becomes the public issue discussing on the national level concerning the national long-term plan (directly linked to ESG), as well as on level of the individual HEIs. The prepared national policy makes a "pressure" on HEIs to introduce internal systems of QA in education based on ESG. Even though, there is not defined enough incentives and benefits (e.g. policy on financial funding/subsidies for HEIs) to implement ESG and sustain the internal QA in education. (e.g. current ESG implementation is funded mainly based on realization of the projects supported by ESF of EU).

## **Area 2) Ways of decision-making**

Decision making processes cannot be precisely defined. It is not possible to generalize if they are realized based on bottom-up or top – down principles. They depend on type of decisions which are made (strategic versus operational decision-making processes). The current system of governance at HEIs creates a sufficient platform for communication in the decision-making process as well as space for the involvement of the representatives of all levels of management, ordinary workers and students to decision-making processes (they are represented in government bodies on level of HEI/faculties). Strategic decisions necessary for the initial phase of implementing of quality processes in education are seen as top - down (this is mostly process in which decisions are made by top management, sporadically by middle one). It has been identified a low involvement of lower management, guarantors of study programs and study subjects, ordinary workers as well as students in this process. One of the weaknesses of decision making process is poor motivation of lower management and ordinary staff for changes

*Recommendation: It is necessary to realize management of changes (mainly to create the appropriate space for communication about changes) aimed at managers at all levels of management together with the implementation of ESG*

## **Area 3) Self-governing bodies**

Scope of the governance authorities is strictly determined by the national legislative what creates a pressure on its responsibilities in internal QA of education. On the other hand, the strict determination of the scope reduces their flexibility in implementing of ESG. National legislation and institutional regulations create the conditions for a strong position of local governance in the control activities. It was identified a polarization of powers among governance and management bodies - the top management of HEIs fills a leadership



position, it primarily initiates changes. Governance authorities, which are represented by other segments of the HEIs staff and students, as well as by people from the external environment, are mainly focused on evaluation. It was identified a weak link between the powers of governance authorities and their direct responsibility for the received decisions.

*Recommendation 1: To enforce a driving role of governance authorities, especially of those ones that are connected to the external environment (e.g. the Scientific Council)*

*Recommendation 2: To define the direct responsibility for the decisions of governance authorities in the quality of education, expansion of responsibility of governance bodies*

#### **Area 4) Study programs**

Low participation of external stakeholders in the preparation of curricula and content of study subjects was identified. The preparation is mostly committed by guarantors and pedagogues who follow mainly academic aspects of curricula. Approval of study programs is in the responsibility of the Scientific Council. External stakeholders are represented there, but they become mainly from academic environment. Fulfilment of evaluating and approval roles of governance is concentrated on the phase of obtaining accreditation rights. The subsequent monitoring and evaluating activities focused on the quality of study programs realized in the other period is minimal (it is often limited to comment the results of survey focused on evaluation of quality of study programs realized based on the students' questionnaires).

*Recommendation: To create the new special institute, which will be represented by external experts from the study fields, with the balanced representation of academics and representatives of other fields (employers, students, etc.) which will initiate, monitor, evaluate and approve study programs and their content.*

The core of study subjects in the appropriate study fields are exhaustively determined by national policy. It causes that HEIs are not able to flexibly react to the changing needs of practice.

*Recommendation: To simplify the process of change of core of study subjects on the national level, respectively to delegate responsibilities for the changes on HEIs*

#### **Area 5) Information**

Awareness on ESG in HEIs varies depending on the extent to which they participate in the process of implementation of ESG. Perception of awareness on ESG on levels of lower





management and ordinary staff is limited what is caused by a lack of information as well as their fear of the additional administrative burden.

*Recommendation: To raise awareness of ESG. It is important to review possible increase in workload for teaching staff and communicate with them about possible solutions of the issues.*