

## **Higher Education Internationalization Strategy 2030**

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## 1. Introduction

### 1. 1. Basic information about the strategy

BASIC INFORMATION ABOUT THE STRATEGY	
Strategy name	Higher Education Internationalization Strategy 2030
Strategy category	
Strategy sponsor	
Strategy development manager	Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports of the Slovak Republic
Strategy coordinator	Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports of the Slovak Republic
Strategy development year	2019 - 2021
Strategy approver	Government of the SR
Date of approval	
Form of approval	
Last update	
Related legislation	laws in the field of higher education
Strategy implementation timeframe	2021-2030
Responsible for implementation	Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports of the Slovak Republic
Implementation budget	42,444,657 EUR in the period 2022-2026 <sup>1</sup>
The context of the strategy	The Implementation plan of the National Program for the Development of Education, the Program Statement of the Government of the Slovak Republic, the Recovery and Resilience Plan of the Slovak Republic
Brief description of the problem and the content of the strategy	The strategy sets out objectives and measures to increase the quality of higher education through internationalization, increase the availability of international experience during university studies and modernize higher education in the context of internationalization

### 1. 2. The origin of the strategy

The Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic (hereinafter referred to as the “Ministry”) has developed the Higher Education Internationalization Strategy 2030 (hereinafter referred to as the “Strategy”) on the basis of measure no. 76 of the Implementation Plan of the *National Program for the Development of Education*. The aim of this measure was to create a strategy containing measures to "ensure greater academic mobility of students and university staff, reduce barriers to studying in the Slovak Republic (language of study programs, opportunities to obtain visas and residence permits, scholarship programs), change conditions for enrolling university teachers / researchers, reassessment of the role of tuition fees in study programs conducted in a foreign language, support for integration activities and support for marketing activities aimed at applicants from abroad.”

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<sup>1</sup> Following the review of measures fulfilment/ preparation of action plans, the budget will be revised and at a later stage updated for the period 2026 - 2030; a more detailed budget calculation in relation to the individual measures is given in Annex 3

The vision of the *National Program for the Development of Education* is higher education which is:

- adequately funded, efficiently functioning and systemically supporting the mission of higher education institutions,
- employing high-quality, socially respected and adequately remunerated university teachers and researchers,
- providing education that meets international standards and forms part of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA),
- accessible to all citizens who show interest in it and demonstrate the prerequisites for its successful completion,
- forming the core of Slovakia's research potential in the field of basic research and applied research and being a part of the European Research Area (ERA),
- responding to the current and expected needs of social and economic practice and representing the engine behind development of society and regions of Slovakia.

*The Program Statement of the Government of the Slovak Republic* for the period 2021 - 2024 declares the following intentions:

- to support high-quality, competitive and efficient higher education in the European context,
- to create mechanisms for higher education institutions that will enable them to obtain funds from external sources,
- to introduce modern forms of teaching,
- to support the opening of the higher education system to the external environment and internationalization.

*The Recovery and Resilience Plan of the Slovak Republic* sets out reforms and investments in the field of higher education to support internationalization which will be implemented by 2026 and which will be supported by the Mechanism to Support Recovery and Resilience.<sup>2</sup>

Internationalization of universities is a cross-cutting tool which can significantly contribute to the fulfilment of the set visions in all specified aspects. Modernization of education is closely related to the global development in individual scientific fields, as well as with the management system of higher education. Furthermore, the process of modernization is closely related to the use of the state-of-the-art technologies in education and teaching. It should be noted that internationalization can contribute to the early identification of current trends needed to be implemented in the educational process in order for Slovak universities to withstand global competition.

### **1. 3. Aim of the strategy**

The strategy outlines a medium-term concept targeting internationalization of higher education as an effective tool for improving the quality of education and the research environment at universities in the Slovak Republic by 2030.

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<sup>2</sup> Component 10 of the Recovery and Resilience Plan of the Slovak Republic - investment 3 and investment 4. Available at [https://ec.europa.eu/info/files/annex-proposal-council-implementing-decision-approval-assessment-recovery-and-resilience-plan-slovakia\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/files/annex-proposal-council-implementing-decision-approval-assessment-recovery-and-resilience-plan-slovakia_en)

The National Program for the Development of Education aims at increasing the quality of higher education through internationalization, increasing the availability of international experience during university studies and modernizing higher education in the context of internationalization.

#### **1. 4. Beneficiaries**

The beneficiaries of the strategy are universities, national agencies and non-profit organizations operating in the field of internationalization of higher education, science and research and relevant state administration bodies.

#### **1. 5. Basic terms used**

The term "internationalization" refers to "the process of integrating the international, intercultural and global dimensions into the purpose, functioning and outcomes of higher education institutions."<sup>3</sup> Internationalization cannot be seen as a goal but rather as a tool contributing to meeting goals and improving desired results.

"By "internationalization at home" we mean "the purposeful integration of international and intercultural dimensions into formal and informal curricula for all students within domestic learning environment."<sup>4</sup>

The term "short-term international mobility" refers to mobility lasting less than two months.<sup>5</sup>

The term "long-term international mobility" refers to mobility lasting more than two months or more.

#### **1. 6. Other relevant strategic documents**

In 2017, the *Communication from the commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee and the Committee of the Regions - Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture*<sup>6</sup> announced the start of building a European learning area in which learning mobility will be a reality for all by 2025. The aim is to support language training and innovation in the digital age and build world-class European universities able to work together seamlessly across borders.

*The Skills Strategy Slovak Republic*<sup>7</sup> sees the skills imbalance reduction and a shift from a "brain drain" to a "brain gain" to be its priority.

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<sup>3</sup> Knight, J. (2015). Updated Definition of Internationalization. *International Higher Education*, (33). <https://doi.org/10.6017/ihe.2003.33.7391>

<sup>4</sup> Beelen, J., Jones, E. (2015). Redefining Internationalization at Home. In: Curaj, A. – Matei, L. – Pricopie, R. – Salmi, J. – Scott, P. (eds.): *The European Higher Education Area – Between Critical Reflections and Future Policies*, (59). Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-20877-0>

<sup>5</sup> The last day of the second month is already understood as "long-term international mobility"

<sup>6</sup> Communication from the commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee and the Committee of the Regions - Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture , 17 November 2017 COM/2017/0673 final). [accessed on 20. 1. 2021]. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/SK/ALL/?uri=CELEX:52017DC0673>

<sup>7</sup> OECD (2020). OECD Skills Strategy Slovak Republic: Assessment and Recommendations, OECD Skills Studies, OECD Publishing. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1787/bb688e68-en>

*Modern and Successful Slovakia*<sup>8</sup> outlines the support schemes to attract foreign talent, including university students, researchers and university teachers in order to support the internationalization of universities and knowledge transfer.

*The Digital Education Action Plan*<sup>9</sup> for 2021 – 2027 in the field of university cooperation aims to create a Europe-wide platform for digital higher education.

*The Digital Transformation Action Plan Slovakia* for 2019 - 2022, following on from the *2030 Digital Transformation Strategy of Slovakia* in the field of modernization and opening of the labour market sets out to support the enrolment of the best applicants for university studies and highly qualified experts in research institutions from abroad.

The aim of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*<sup>10</sup> is to ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development primarily but not exclusively through the concept of global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity.

*Communication from the commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee and the Committee of the Regions - A New Era for Research and Innovation*<sup>11</sup> sets investment and reform priorities, improved access to excellence, using research and innovation results in practice and deepening policies promoting free circulation of knowledge as strategic objectives for the new European Research Area.

*Communication from the commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee and the Committee of the Regions - Achieving the European Education Area by 2025*<sup>12</sup> to be built in synergy with the European Skills Agenda for Sustainable Competitiveness, Social Fairness and Resilience, the Digital Learning Action Plan and the European Research Area.

*Council Recommendation on promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education diplomas and the outcomes of learning periods abroad*<sup>13</sup> calls on EU Member States to recognize the outcomes of study stays abroad as well as education diplomas by 2025 in order to have access to further studies.

*The Recovery and Resilience Plan of the Slovak Republic* sets out reforms and investments in the field of higher education to support internationalization to be implemented by 2026. These are to be supported by the Mechanism to Support Recovery and Resilience.

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<sup>8</sup> Modern and Successful Slovakia. [accessed on 20. 1. 2021]. Available at:

[https://www.mfsr.sk/files/archiv/8/MaUS\\_NIRP2.pdf](https://www.mfsr.sk/files/archiv/8/MaUS_NIRP2.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the Digital Education Action Plan. [accessed on 20. 1. 2021]. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/SK/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52018DC0022&from=EN>

<sup>10</sup> <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

<sup>11</sup> Communication from the commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee and the Committee of the Regions - A New Era for Research and Innovation.

<sup>12</sup> Communication from the commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee and the Committee of the Regions - Achieving the European Education Area by 2025. [accessed on 20. 1. 2021]. Available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/SK/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0625&qid=1611009806415&from=EN>

<sup>13</sup> Council Recommendation on promoting automatic mutual recognition of higher education and upper secondary education diplomas and the outcomes of learning periods abroad. [accessed on 20. 1. 2021]. Available at: [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/SK/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32018H1210\(01\)](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/SK/TXT/?uri=CELEX:32018H1210(01))

## 2. Definition and analysis of the problem

### 2. 1. Definition of the problem

As part of the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area, Slovak higher education adheres to the principles of cooperation, coordination and streamlining of joint activities. In order to achieve the common goals of these initiatives, the Slovak higher education must meet international standards in education and research.

In the context of the globalization of societies, economies and labour markets, universities are facing increasing demands on the education system and on science and research outputs. The development of the global knowledge economy places new demands on universities in the area of preparing future graduates for the profession on an international scale. At the same time, in the conditions of negative demographic development, the challenge for Slovakia is to provide a skilled workforce to increase competitiveness and sustainable economic growth. Aging population and decline in the working-age population<sup>14</sup> is in sharp contrast to the building and sustainable development of the economy, with the prospect of a high proportion of the highly qualified working-age population. At the same time, Slovakia is in a highly competitive environment for the development of modern technologies and the development of the so-called smart solutions and the ability to attract investment and foreign resources for research, development and innovation are currently lagging behind, with the exception of a few workplaces. With regard to these changes and demands, it is necessary to develop modern and high-quality higher education attractive for Slovak and foreign students and university employees with potential to contribute to the innovation potential of Slovakia.

With regard to the growing global movement of people, Slovak universities are forced to compete for domestic and foreign students interested in studying at universities. Slovakia's position as a destination for study is currently weak<sup>15</sup>. The country has long faced the problem of a growing proportion of students enrolling at universities abroad (especially in the Czech Republic), while research shows that high school graduates with the best results in the external part of the school-leaving examination go abroad<sup>16</sup>. The increasing number of foreigners who come to study at Slovak universities for the entire length of their studies cannot compensate for the overall decline in students interested in studying at Slovak universities also caused by the outflow of Slovak students abroad<sup>17</sup>. In 2018, 31,472 students with Slovak citizenship studied at universities abroad<sup>18</sup>, while only 12,706 foreigners enrolled in study programs at universities in the Slovak Republic in the academic year 2018/2019<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> Šaling, M. (2016). Vplyv starnutia populácie na zamestnanosť a ekonomický rast. Rada pre rozpočtovú zodpovednosť. [accessed on 11. 3. 2021] Available at: [https://www.rozpocovarada.sk/download/komentar\\_vplyv\\_starnutia\\_zamestnanost\\_final.pdf](https://www.rozpocovarada.sk/download/komentar_vplyv_starnutia_zamestnanost_final.pdf).

<sup>15</sup> Slovak universities almost never make it to the relevant international rankings of universities (if so, they land the lowest positions). These rankings are used by students when choosing universities. Slovakia lags far behind, also in comparison with neighboring countries (Hungary, Poland or the Czech Republic) also due to limited resources spent in this area.

<sup>16</sup> Martinák, D., Varsík, S. (2019). Odliv mozgov I: Necestuj tým vlakom!. Ministerstvo školstva, vedy, výskumu a športu SR. [accessed on 16. 4. 2021] Available at: <https://www.minedu.sk/data/att/18017.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> Table 1. and Figure 1. in Annex 2

<sup>18</sup> UNESCO Institute for Statistics. [accessed on 11. 3. 2021] Available at: <http://data.uis.unesco.org/index.aspx?queryid=172>

<sup>19</sup> CSTI SR. For the purpose of comparison, the text presents data for the academic year 2018/2019. There were 14,232 foreigners enrolled in study programs at universities in the Slovak Republic in the academic year 2019/2020.

Slovak universities have problems attracting foreign university teachers and researchers to work longer-term<sup>20</sup> i.e. longer than stays carried out within the framework of international mobility. This problem is caused mainly by various administrative and legal obstacles. One of the obstacles is the limitation imposed on the position of “associate professor” and “professor” – the positions may not be filled in by a person without a scientific-pedagogical title or an artistic-pedagogical title of “associate professor” or “professor” for a period longer than three years. Various aspects related to the exercise of the rights and obligations of foreigners in relation to longer stays in Slovakia, including the administrative complexity of some processes, may also negatively affect the interest of foreigners to work and study at Slovak schools.

In terms of increasing the attractiveness of studies, the readiness and potential of universities to attract foreigners has improved over the last two decades due to the creation of separate subjects taught in English (especially under the influence of mobility programs such as Erasmus +), thus expanding the range of study programs taught in foreign languages<sup>21</sup>, deepening cooperation with foreign universities thanks to joint study programs<sup>22</sup>, which, with the growing number of foreign students coming to Slovakia<sup>23</sup> indicates an improvement in the readiness of Slovak university teachers to lecture and teach in a foreign language.

In terms of developing skills needed in the globalized world, internationalization promotion is an important aspect of making the opportunity to gain international experience widely available, as it is international experience which contributes to the development of language skills, intercultural competences and expertise. In the case of university students, the primary form of gaining international experience is international mobility, either for the purpose of study or internship (usually on the basis of a scholarship or grant program)<sup>24</sup>. *The ET 2020 Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training*<sup>25</sup> set the target value for the International Mobility Indicator, according to which by 2020 at least 20% of EU university graduates should have completed international mobility for study or training purposes (including internship) abroad - either at least 15 ECTS credits or for a duration of at least three months. With regard to these target values, Slovakia manages to send only a low proportion of students to international mobilities, while only 5.24% of graduates graduating in the academic year 2019/2020 completed mobility lasting at least two months during their studies<sup>26</sup>. The recent statistics on participation in mobilities show a growing interest in internships abroad. This might be also caused by a change in the expectations of future graduates, for whom internships are an attractive means of acquiring practical skills for future employment. On the contrary, interest in study stays stagnates/ grows only slightly, especially in the first and second level of study.

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<sup>20</sup> Table 2 in Annex 2

<sup>21</sup> As of 16 April 2021, out of the total number of 7,110 accredited study programs at all levels of study, 1,277 of them are accredited as carried out exclusively in a language other than the state language. Portál vysokých škôl (Universities Portal).

<sup>22</sup> As of 16 April 2021, 54 joint study programs carried out by Slovak universities in cooperation with universities abroad are accredited. The total number of accredited study programs is 7,110. Portál vysokých škôl (Universities Portal).

<sup>23</sup> Table 3 in Annex 2

<sup>24</sup> In the Slovak Republic, these are, for example, Erasmus +, the National Scholarship Program of the Slovak Republic, the Austria-Slovakia Action, CEEPUS, DAAD and scholarships based on bilateral international agreements and government offers.

<sup>25</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/european-policy-cooperation/et2020-framework\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/european-policy-cooperation/et2020-framework_en)

<sup>26</sup> Central Register of University Students. Data as of 28 February 2021. 1.79% of graduates graduating in the academic year 2019/2020 completed mobility lasting less than two months.



Information and counselling on mobility opportunities, knowledge of foreign languages, portability of scholarships and loans, support for disadvantaged students and recognition of learning outcomes are considered to be key factors<sup>27</sup> influencing students' motivation and opportunities for international study or internships. According to the latest surveys,<sup>28</sup> students of Slovak universities most often perceive the need to meet missed study obligations after returning from abroad to be the biggest obstacle to completing international mobility<sup>29</sup>. Other obstacles include administrative complexity of international mobility, insufficient amount of funds to cover costs abroad, lack of information about mobility opportunities on the part of the home university, insufficient knowledge of a foreign language and unattractive offer of partner universities abroad.

In order to introduce an international context to each student, regardless of their ability to take part in student mobility or internship abroad, it is necessary to focus on tools allowing international experience in the domestic academic environment (so-called internationalization at home). Slovak universities integrate the international and multicultural dimension into the content of their studies by offering study programmes and classes in foreign languages, and, to a lesser extent, by organizing international summer schools. Compared to the situation abroad, the Slovak Republic still pays little attention to the digitization<sup>30</sup> of education and development of virtual or mixed mobility where students participate in courses and classes offered by a foreign university electronically and also gain (to a limited extent) benefits of classic physical mobility without the need to travel abroad. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the onset and development of online forms of education and has further highlighted the need to stimulate internationalization in this area as well.

An important principle of international mobility is the effort to balance the numbers of sent and hosted students and university staff. At present, Slovak universities send a significantly higher number of students to mobility than they host (in the academic year 2019/2020, they sent 2,172 students for mobility and hosted 1,517 students<sup>31</sup>). The lower interest in completing mobility at Slovak universities may also be related to the offer of scholarships in some scholarship programs financed from the state budget, the amount<sup>32</sup> of which does not cover the real cost of living in Slovakia.

The exchange of knowledge on a global scale must be a priority if Slovak universities are to provide education for the globalized labour market and achieve more significant results in the international field. Nevertheless, the system is still very rigid. According to the latest surveys,<sup>33</sup> Slovak university teachers are primarily focused on cooperation with other Slovak universities and not with foreign partners, while the trend at internationalized universities is just the opposite. The share of foreign university teachers and researchers<sup>34</sup> is not increasing fast enough and domestic university staff often report their inability of to undergo mobility (due to management's reluctance to create conditions for longer mobility stays abroad, problems with leaving the workplace due to scheduling conflicts,

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<sup>27</sup> [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/mobility-scoreboard-higher-education-background-report-%E2%80%93-201819\\_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/mobility-scoreboard-higher-education-background-report-%E2%80%93-201819_en)

<sup>28</sup> Structures of vast majority of study plans do not take into account international mobilities. Students risk their study results from abroad will not be recognized. This forces them to re-take subjects at the home university (and pass exams) to meet all conditions of the study program for its completion.

<sup>29</sup> Survey carried out in the years 2017 - 2019 within the project "To dá rozum (It makes sense)!" - data from the survey of undergraduate and graduate students ([www.analyza.todarozum.sk](http://www.analyza.todarozum.sk))

<sup>30</sup> The European Student Card and Paperless Erasmus initiatives are being implemented to support university cooperation through the digitization of administrative processes.

<sup>31</sup> Central Register of Students. Data as of March 11, 2021.

<sup>32</sup> Table 6 in Annex 2

<sup>33</sup> Survey carried out in the years 2017 - 2019 within the project "To dá rozum (It makes sense)!" - data from surveys among university teachers ([www.analyza.todarozum.sk](http://www.analyza.todarozum.sk))

<sup>34</sup> Table 2 in Annex 2

administrative complexity, etc.)<sup>35</sup>. Even though some positive impulses have been recorded (as evident from the development trends), the rigidity of the system prevents fundamental changes.

In addition to the benefits for the universities themselves, internationalization also brings benefits for the society as a whole. With the development of the knowledge economy, the importance of scientific diplomacy and cooperation in education and research in bilateral and multilateral partnerships is growing, too. The way a country presents itself through education, exchange of knowledge and cultural identity is an important aspect of cultural diplomacy. Therefore, Slovakia should strive to build an image of a trustworthy, safe and responsible partner. At the same time, higher education also plays an important role in international development cooperation<sup>36</sup>.

The natural change in the individual needs of students and staff in the context of increasing demands on the higher education system requires a change in the internationalization conditions and planning. Strategic decision-making and planning must be based on a vision and perspective (proactive and forward-looking) and not tackle current shortcomings and needs. Although the current problems require and provide the most impetus for the necessary changes, it is necessary to set goals with future in mind (one to two decades ahead). The process of internationalization is influenced by many factors and actors, ranging from the internal environment of schools to the international situation. These facts must be taken into account and evaluated if the desired internationalization goals are to be achieved. For this reason, too, internationalization efforts need to be supported on an ongoing basis, along with further changes to the system.

## 2. 2. Review of existing measures

Over the past two decades, several government initiatives have been implemented to improve international cooperation in higher education and science with a view to strengthening the development of the knowledge economy. *The Concept of Further Development of Higher Education in Slovakia for the 21st century* from 2000 recommended strong support for the international mobility of employees and students of Slovak universities and also highlighted the need to create conditions for mutual mobility so that the participation rate in mobility increases from 1% to 3 - 5%. Subsequently, the *Minerva Knowledge Society Government Development Program* was adopted in 2005, under which a *National Scholarship Program* was created to support the mobility of students, doctoral students, university teachers and researchers. This government program was followed in 2011 by *the Minerva 2.0 - Slovakia Top League Strategy*, which indicated a shift towards a systemic and cross-cutting approach to the internationalization of higher education, science and research, emphasizing the removal of administrative barriers to the arrival of foreign highly qualified university staff and students and the coordination of the promotion of Slovak universities abroad.

The gradual transition from the perception of internationalization as a standalone goal to its integration into individual areas of university life as a means of improving the quality of university activities was declared in the *Long-term Intention of the Ministry of Education in Educational, Research, Development and Other Creative Activities for Universities for 2016-2021*. As part of its implementation in the years 2017 to 2019, the Ministry supported projects aimed at improving the quality of higher education through internationalization in the total amount of 2.85 mil. EUR<sup>37</sup> at nine public universities. Thanks to the support, existing study programs provided in foreign languages were innovated, new study programs have been introduced and experts from universities abroad were

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<sup>35</sup> Table 5 in Annex 2

<sup>36</sup> The provision of government scholarships to study at Slovak schools for students from developing countries is a long-term part of the development cooperation of the Slovak Republic.

<sup>37</sup> In 2019, the University of Žilina in Žilina returned 130,000 EUR provided in 2019 due to termination of its development project.

invited to lecture in order to improve study programs and activities supporting the development of PhD students' skills necessary for their involvement in international projects and international research have been implemented.

With the aim to open universities to professionals from abroad, the qualification requirements for the employment of university teachers (the positions of associate professor and professor) were adjusted in 2018. As part of this regulation, it was possible to fill in the positions of associate professor and professor with a person without a scientific-pedagogical title or an artistic-pedagogical title of "associate professor" or "professor" for a maximum of three years.

In 2019, the Ministry supported nine public universities with the amount of 251,832 EUR to prepare grant applications for the project Alliance of European Universities in the second round of the Erasmus + call: Key Action 2 - Innovation Cooperation and Exchange of Best Practices - European Universities. Three Slovak universities (Comenius University in Bratislava in the ENLIGHT alliance, the Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra in the INVEST alliance and the Technical University in Košice in the ULYSSEUS alliance) succeeded under the call. Over the three-years duration of the project, each alliance of European universities will create a common learning space in which students and staff can move (physically and virtually) smoothly and freely to study, train, teach, do research, work or provide services at any partner university.

### **3. Vision and strategic direction**

#### **3. 1. Intervention logic, hierarchy of strategy goals**

The intervention framework is based on the results achieved in the field of internationalization so far on the basis of internationalization tools developed at Slovak universities over the past two decades. In this initial phase of internationalization development, the implementation stage of the strategy made use of activities initiated mainly on the basis of the individual interests of universities, initiatives at national level and funding opportunities at EU level. In order to achieve the purpose of internationalization as a tool for improving the quality of higher education and the research environment in higher education, it is necessary at this stage to move from relatively isolated activities to their implementation on the basis of a systemic internationalization framework (defined at national level) so that the concept of internationalization becomes an integral part of the policy of Slovak universities.

This strategy aims at increasing the efficiency of activities and invested resources in the field of internationalization and maximizing their benefits for Slovak higher education and wider society by introducing a systematic and coordinated approach to internationalization based on common goals of the Ministry and universities. With regard to the above, the introduction of indicators related to internationalization into the measurable indicators will be considered. These indicators are part of the contracts for the provision of subsidies to public universities. Therefore, funds provided to universities are provided based on these indicators.

The set measures will ensure the institutional background at the level of universities and support the quality of institutional strategic planning in the field of internationalization through funding of existing activities, introduction of new funding schemes and improving the implementation of internationalization efforts regulatory framework.

#### **3. 2. Vision and global goal**

In order to improve the quality of higher education and research as well as the competitiveness of Slovak universities in the European Higher Education Area and on a global scale, the goal of the Slovak Republic is to have higher education which in 2030 will:

- offer quality study programs with an international reputation,
- offer opportunities for establishing and developing quality partnerships in the field of education and research with universities from abroad,
- provide future university graduates with knowledge, skills and competences useful in a globalized labour market,
- stimulate universities to implement best international practice in all spheres of social life, both at the national and local level.

This global goal has been further developed into three key strategic goals which will be achieved by supporting and developing cross-cutting and auxiliary aspects related to the arrival and stay of foreign students and university staff in the Slovak Republic.

### **3. 3. Strategic goals**

1. Improving the quality of higher education through internationalization
2. Increasing the availability of international experience during studies
3. Modernization of higher education in the context of internationalization

## **4. Description of goals in individual strategic areas**

### **4. 1. Name and description of a specific goal, impacts of its fulfilment**

#### **Strategic goal 1. Improving the quality of higher education in Slovakia through internationalization**

##### **Goal 1.1 Development of quality study programs provided in foreign languages**

In order to increase the attractiveness of studies in Slovakia for potential students from Slovakia and abroad alike, universities will work on the offer of study programs provided in foreign languages, including new joint study programs developed in cooperation with universities from abroad. To ensure the high quality of study programs, internal documents of higher education institutions will contain clearly identifiable aspects for the regular assessment of the degree of internationalization at the level of study programs and at the level of higher education institutions.

##### **Goal 1.2 The international dimension of study programs enabling international experience at home**

Universities will integrate the international dimension into the study programs and the university environment. This will enable every student to gain international experience in their domestic academic environment. Internationalization not only of the content of study programs, but also of the teaching process itself will ensure interaction between Slovak and foreign students in joint study programs and ensure new teaching approaches thanks to visiting foreign university teachers. Further benefits include development of knowledge, improved language skills and intercultural competencies<sup>38</sup> of future Slovak university graduates on the international and domestic labour market.

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<sup>38</sup> The results of the survey under the project "To dá rozum (It makes sense)" showed that compared to the findings from the Czech Republic, English is currently little used at Slovak universities

### Goal 1.3 Quality working environment for university teachers and researchers

With the intention of creating a quality working environment for core university teachers and researchers, universities will implement international standards in human resource management strategies, introduce ethical rules in research and create an environment enabling networking of professional workplaces, e.g. implementing the principles of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers<sup>39</sup>, which are part of the HRS4R Human Resources Strategy for Researchers<sup>40</sup>, into the internal quality assurance system of higher education institutions. University staff will be supported in their endeavours to develop international cooperation and make contacts at universities abroad right from the beginning of their research career through traditional mobilities, real opportunities for longer-term stays in the form of so-called sabbaticals for university teachers (a creative break from work - the university teacher is released from teaching duties for a predetermined period of not less than 6 months while their employment continues without a change. Person on a sabbatical should focus exclusively on skills development, professional growth, research in their field. This period can be spent abroad at a foreign university or research institution – such stays create new and strengthen already existing ties and bonds between institutions from abroad and domestic university and support professional growth of the employee, thus increasing the quality of the domestic institution upon return).

In order to create conditions for professional growth of university teachers and researchers, as well as to increase the quality of their outputs, the Slovak Republic will create stimulating conditions for the involvement of universities in research<sup>41</sup> at an international level including support for creating synergies with European Union programs, especially the EU Framework Program for Research and Development Horizon Europe (including mobility supported by the Marie Skłodowska-Curie / MSCA Actions) and the EU Education and Training, Youth and Sport Erasmus + program. The possibility of complementarity between existing programs and schemes financed from the state budget and these EU programs will also be considered.

### Goal 1.4 Opening of job positions for university teachers and researchers working abroad

With a view to maintaining and enhancing the quality of higher education and ensuring the competitiveness of institutions on a global scale, higher education institutions will develop supportive tools to **increase international job openness for higher education teachers and researchers**, in particular to stimulate long-term employment and retention of high-quality staff in order to compete with employees from abroad and lure back Slovak researchers working abroad. **Posting job vacancies on international researcher portals**, such as EURAXESS Jobs or Nature, will help attract high-quality staff.

### Strategic goal no. 2. Increase the availability of international experience during studies

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(<https://analyza.todarozum.sk/docs/342396001tt1a/>). The survey also shows students have little confidence when communicating in a foreign language, which is one of the biggest obstacle to mobility (up to 17% of respondents identified this obstacle in question 23 – [www.analyza.todarozum.sk](http://www.analyza.todarozum.sk)).

<sup>39</sup> <https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/jobs/charter>

<sup>40</sup> <https://euraxess.ec.europa.eu/jobs/hrs4r>

<sup>41</sup> Currently, some stimulus tools are already the subject of Component 9 of the Recovery and Resilience Plan of the Slovak Republic approved by the Government of the Slovak Republic ([www.planobnovy.sk](http://www.planobnovy.sk)). Other possible tools will be identified and defined in the long-term plan of educational, research, development, artistic and other creative activities for universities according to Section 102, par. 2, letter b) of Act 131/2002 Coll. and in the long-term plan of the state scientific and technical policy according to Section 5, par. 1 of Act no. 172/2005 Coll., or in other strategic documents (e.g. documents related to the preparation and implementation of ESI Funds).

### **Goal 2.1 Make information about study opportunities at universities in Slovakia widely available to foreign students**

Information on study opportunities at universities in Slovakia will be provided in a **transparent and user-friendly way** through the Portál vysokých škôl Universities Portal, a new website promoting study opportunities in the Slovak Republic (the "Study in Slovakia")<sup>42</sup> and websites of individual universities<sup>43</sup>. As with study programs provided in foreign languages, the offer of study programs provided in Slovak will also be available in foreign languages, **at least in English**, so that those who are considering studying a study program in Slovak will be able to study the program even though they not yet have full command of the language (and are taking a language course). At the level of higher education institutions, the specific conditions for admission and the requirements for proving their fulfilment will be presented in a clear way. The Ministry will ensure information on study opportunities will be published on Europass.

### **Goal 2.2 Active promotion of study opportunities at Slovak universities among potential applicants for study abroad**

In the interest of effective presentation of study opportunities in Slovakia, **nationally coordinated activities (also those developed by universities) aimed at promoting Slovakia will be implemented**. The establishment of a joint **concept "Study & Research in Slovakia"** under the concept Good Idea Slovakia and more intensive use of various means of promotion (e.g. social media, physical and virtual fairs) will increase the visibility of Slovak higher education and research. **Slovak embassies abroad will be involved in the promotion of study opportunities in Slovakia**. The embassies will be provided with methodological and material support and information on planned activities in their territories (including joint activities covered by the European Commission) through a central organization in charge of promoting Slovak higher education abroad.

### **Goal 2.3 Modernization of the admission procedure and active recruitment of potential foreign students**

From the point of view of potential students from abroad, the quality of counselling in the admission process, the active interest on the part of universities and the timeliness of the admission results are the biggest motivating factors. Applicants from abroad will have access to counselling at universities regarding documentation needed. In order to reduce the administrative complexity of the process of proving the fulfilment of the basic conditions for admission to studies universities will, in the case of students from abroad, issue a decision on the fulfilment of education-related conditions for the purpose of university enrolment. With regard to the admission process, universities **will move to the recruitment of talents**, i.e. active recruitment<sup>44</sup>. In order to do that, the admission procedure will have to be adapted to reflect the move while the effort will also have to be made to maintain students' interest in studying at the university of choice, for example by using the admission procedure model under which applications are assessed and notified either continuously until the program capacity is filled or within the set deadlines. If possible, universities will cooperate with embassies of the Slovak

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<sup>42</sup> Following the example of the surrounding states (e.g. Poland- <https://study.gov.pl/>; Hungary - <http://studyinhungary.hu/> ; Czech Republic - <https://www.studyin.cz/> ) a modern information page will be created on study opportunities in the Slovak Republic

<sup>43</sup> This fact also applies not only to completing the entire study in Slovakia, but also to the mobility offer aimed at foreigners (e.g. Erasmus +, NSP and other programs), so that such applicants can choose an institution best suiting their needs and plan the their stay before contacting the school with a mobility request.

<sup>44</sup> Therefore, in addition to traditional promotion, universities could use other forms of promotion, like organizing summer schools or international student conferences / events during which universities could present to talents possibilities and conditions of studying and working in Slovakia.

Republic abroad/reliable organizations chosen for presiding over university admission test outside Slovakia.

In promoting the possibilities of study, **the ethnic diversity of the student population will be taken into account in order to increase the effects of cultural exchange**. By focusing on various territorial areas when promoting study opportunities, the quality planning and sustainability of talent recruitment in terms of geopolitical and demographic development in the world. The balanced geographical background of foreign students will limit the emergence of large monocultural groups of students in study programs and will have a positive impact on their motivation to integrate in Slovakia.

In order to stimulate the interest of students from abroad in studying at Slovak universities, the Ministry will introduce a national scholarship scheme **to provide full scholarships**<sup>45</sup>. Through scholarships and by setting up ongoing checks on the results achieved by students, it will be possible to support the integration of foreign students. The aim is to support students from abroad in learning Slovak during their studies to help them integrate.

#### **Goal 2.4 Integration of students from abroad in the academic environment and university social life**

In accordance with the principles of an open, tolerant and welcoming society, foreign students studying in Slovakia will be provided with conditions which will help them integrate into social and working life (with a view to their potential employment in the Slovak labour market after graduation).

In order to facilitate the adaptation of foreign students in a new academic and social environment, they will have opportunities to adapt to the new socio-cultural environment at the beginning of their studies and also make use of counselling during their studies. At the same time, in order to promote intercultural understanding, universities will have mechanisms in place to prevent and resolve socio-cultural-based conflicts and issues, including support for school staff in such situations<sup>46</sup>.

In order to ensure a comparable quality of study, social life and provided services, universities will, with regard to the existence of language barriers, develop an open and friendly environment for foreign students by making the university's internal regulations available in a foreign language<sup>47</sup>, introducing multilingual bulletin boards and signs and ensuring foreign students will be able to

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<sup>45</sup> E.g. in Hungary awarded more than 5,000 full scholarships (starting with undergraduate studies (bachelor's degree) in the academic year 2019/2020, while according to information from the Tempus Public Foundation, these scholarship holders are joined by other students - self-payers - who decide to complete the study even if they are not eligible for scholarship. In this way, Hungary manages to maintain a high diversity of foreign students, which is already reminiscent of the situation in Switzerland. Poland introduced a scholarship program covering the entire graduate study (master's degree). Similar scholarships are also provided by other countries, e.g. Germany.

<sup>46</sup> Thus, it is not only cultural courses for foreigners introducing cultural and social differences, but also counselling during studies (including psychological counselling, counselling in crisis situations, problems with adaptation to new environments and mediation options in case of conflicts). In this context, it is therefore necessary to train not only foreign students, but also university staff who come into contact with foreign students. Attention should also be paid to the targeted preparation and support of domestic students for cooperation with people from different cultures and with other cultural and social backgrounds (not only in terms of contact with foreign classmates, but also teachers).

<sup>47</sup> According to the standards for the internal quality assurance system of higher education adopted by the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education, the university publishes the internal system documentation relevant for students in all languages study programs are carried out in. Available at: <https://saavs.sk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Standardy-pre-vnutorny-system-zabezpecovania-kvality-2.pdf>

communicate in foreign language<sup>48</sup> not only at the administrative and professional workplaces of the university, but also in catering and accommodation facilities and when handling other daily practical matters.

Universities will provide or ensure Slovak language courses (Slovak as a foreign language) in order to increase not only the integration potential of foreign students but also their employment chances. To support their integration into the labour market, universities will provide foreign students with targeted career counselling, including support in legislative requirements, provided such students wish to work during and after their studies, taking into account their specific position in terms of labour and residence legislation, language skills and other aspects.

### **Goal 2.5 Support for existing scholarship programs to open up to the international mobility programs for students, university teachers, researchers and artists**

The aim is to increase the number of mobilities (especially those coming to Slovakia) and their quality so as to create a better and more positive perception of Slovakia and style it as a great destination for mobility and as a country systematically and purposefully investing in international cooperation.

In order to maintain and increase the participation students and university staff in international mobility, **existing programs<sup>49</sup> will continue to be supported (for international students, university teachers, researchers and artists)**. At the same time, opportunities will be sought to enable mobilities to be funded from several sources (e.g. Erasmus +, national scholarship program, other programs) and allow new co-financing instruments for existing scholarship and grant schemes to be introduced (e.g. in relation to Erasmus +). Increasing the funding rate of selected scholarship programs will boost the attractiveness and competitiveness of the programs in terms of scholarships provided in comparison with other countries and the total number of scholarships provided. The support envisages scholarship bonuses for students and staff with special needs.

With a view to improving information on the readiness to host international students and staff with special needs, higher education institutions will indicate in their interinstitutional agreements whether they have the necessary infrastructure to receive people with special needs. At the same time, universities will register information on the accessibility of their academic environment and the services provided to students with special needs in international online databases<sup>50</sup> created to promote inclusive mobility.

### **Goal 2.6 To promote the automatic recognition of learning outcomes achieved during mobility period**

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<sup>48</sup> If we are talking about a foreign language, it is essential that the information is provided at least in English. Of course, if the university has a higher proportion of foreigners speaking other language (e.g. Ukrainian, Russian, Chinese, etc.), it may consider, in addition to English, to add another language, thus promoting the integration and feeling of being accepted in the eyes of foreign students.

<sup>49</sup> The Erasmus+ grant program counts on co-financing of mobilities from the state budget in the amount agreed in accordance with the Agreement on Cooperation in the Coordination of Programs in the Field of Education no. 381/2009 of 2 June 2009 as amended between the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports and SAAMS (Erasmus + National Agency for Education and Training)

<sup>50</sup> For example [www.inclusivemobility.eu](http://www.inclusivemobility.eu)



In order to enable international mobility for as many students already studying at Slovak universities<sup>51</sup> as possible, it is necessary to minimize the obstacles associated with scheduling, study obligations arising out of the study plans and the recognition of study outcomes achieved during mobility period. Universities will create so-called mobility **window**<sup>52</sup> **in their study plans. The mobility window provides students with a period of time reserved for international student mobility embedded into the curriculum of a study programme.**<sup>53</sup> Scheduling study obligations (these can be fulfilled at a partner university abroad on the basis of a pre-agreed study contract and later confirmed in the study results report) for a specific year of study in the study plan will significantly contribute to achieving automatic recognition of learning outcomes achieved during international mobility by the sending university. The period of time created by the introduction of the mobility window can also be used for other forms of **internationalization at home** for students who do not take part in international mobility but wish to have an opportunity to gain international experience at home.

### **Strategic goal 3. Modernization of higher education in the context of internationalization**

#### **Goal 3.1 Using the possibilities of evaluating the quality of internationalization processes**

Internationalization is a dynamically evolving and changing concept and its implementation and timely addressing can bring in a competitive advantage compared to foreign universities. The Ministry will support the activities of universities **aimed at evaluating the quality of their internationalization processes** and subsequently provide support in developing aspects of internationalization according to the results and recommendations of the evaluation and their own objectively identified needs.<sup>54</sup>

#### **Goal 3.2 Support for networking at the universities level and modernization of administration processes**

The Ministry will support the development of partnerships and networking of universities with universities abroad through grant and mobility support<sup>55</sup> and by supporting the involvement of public universities in the European Universities initiative. In order to develop cooperation in the field of

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<sup>51</sup> These are primarily domestic students (usually Slovak citizens), but the same approach and opportunities should be offered to foreign students already studying in Slovakia, as they should have the same rights and obligations as domestic students.

<sup>52</sup> More detailed studies on the issue of mobility windows written by e.g. Academic Cooperation Association – ACA (Ferenz, I. – Hauschildt, K. – Garam, I. (eds.). (2013). *Mobility Windows: From Concept to Practice*. Bonn: Lemmens Medien GmbH. [cit. 23. 10. 2020]. Available at: [https://aca-secretariat.be/post\\_other\\_pub/mobility-windows-from-concept-to-practice/](https://aca-secretariat.be/post_other_pub/mobility-windows-from-concept-to-practice/)) or the Hungarian Tempus Public Foundation (Fekete, Zs. – Szabó, I. et al. (2018). *Guide to the Introduction of Mobility Windows for Higher Education Institutions*. Tempus Public Foundation. [cit. 23. 10. 2020]. Available at: <https://tka.hu/kiadvany/10418/guide-to-the-introduction-of-mobility-windows-for-heis>)

<sup>53</sup> These can be, for example, comparative subjects, elective subjects, a foreign language or practical training. Source: European Commission. (2015). *ECTS Users' Guide*. [accessed on Jan. 20, 2021]. Available at: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/da7467e6-8450-11e5-b8b7-01aa75ed71a1>

<sup>54</sup> There are several audits / evaluations of the level of internationalization of higher education at the institutional level, e.g. institutional monitoring of internationalization performed on the basis of the methodology of the Association for Academic Cooperation in Brussels (ACA - implemented even nationwide in the Czech Republic and Hungary) / the possibility of obtaining a Certificate for Quality in Internationalization (CeQuInt) from the Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education. At the same time, there are also international accreditations for specific study programs, e.g. in economics, veterinary medicine and many others.

<sup>55</sup> For example, through mobility programs such as Erasmus +, CEEPUS, NSP, DAAD and scholarships based on international agreements.

research and development, universities will be able to use national grant resources for the activities of foreign partners in joint projects<sup>56</sup>.

In order to promote Slovak higher education, the Ministry will support the participation of representatives of Slovakia and Slovak universities in key international events in the field of internationalization of higher education (especially conferences and fairs organized by the European Association for International Education (EAIE), Asia-Pacific Association for International Education (APAIE), the Association of International Educators (NAFSA), etc.). Participation in these events will promote Slovakia as a country suitable for studying and establishing cooperation in the field of higher education on a global scale. Representatives of Slovak universities will have a unique opportunity to establish new and strengthen already existing partnerships. At the same time, the Ministry will support specific universities in their participation in specific fairs with a view of recruiting students from predefined territories. The acquisition and exchange of knowledge and learning about the latest trends in internationalization will have an immense effect on the functioning of the university and the professionalization and development of human resources.

### **Goal 3.3 The use of digitization and information and communication technologies in the internationalization of teaching**

With regard to the development brought on by the onset of COVID-19 pandemic, recommendations for and best practices in the use of online technology and innovation in higher education were brought to the forefront. The intention is to support universities in providing online courses in cooperation with partner universities abroad. The introduction of systems to support the so-called virtual mobility along with Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) is expected. Monitoring international trends in online cooperation and introducing an international dimension to the educational process is essential for the modernization of education and increasing its quality at Slovak universities.

#### **Cross-cutting objective: Developing cross-cutting and supporting aspects influencing internationalization**

The internationalization of Slovak universities, as well as the need to increase the attractiveness of the Slovak Republic to attract foreign students and university teachers and researchers depends **not only on the readiness and development of universities, but also on the overall internationalization framework and other rules outside the Ministry itself**. It is necessary to create such conditions for foreign students, researchers and university teachers, which will encourage them to come to Slovakia and choose it from the myriad of other options on the global level (i.e. other countries already significantly more internationalized in higher education and research).

The Ministry will address the complex issue of administrative and other obligations closely related to the arrival and stay of foreigners, especially from third countries, the change of which would rapidly speed up administrative processes and remove numerous barriers (including specific evaluation in relation to the implementation of the Erasmus + grant program). At the same time, it is assumed that existing and newly adopted measures to support internationalization will be evaluated on an ongoing

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<sup>56</sup> Currently under the general call of the APVV, only Slovak organizations can apply for financial support; foreign partners, if any, can apply for financial support only as natural persons on the basis of an employment contract or similar relationship. Thus, no networking or cooperation of institutions is taking place. In Austria, for example, FWF grant agency (similar to the Slovak APVV) allows the involvement of foreign partners in projects and there is also the possibility of financing these partners under certain conditions (“funds may only be transferred to a cooperation partner (also abroad) if they are clearly limited contracts or services and directly necessary for carrying out the Austrian project”).

basis, including existing programs, the amount of their financing/ co-financing and their impact on the development of important indicators.

#### 4. 2. Overview and description of measures, results and outputs of implementation of individual measures

Name of the measure	<b>4.2.1 Internationalization of universities and support for the related audit as a prerequisite for the creation and updating of institutional strategies for internationalization</b>
Implementation period	2022-2026
Description of the measure	Implementation of an independent evaluation of the quality of university internationalization activities through an audit with the participation of foreign assessors in order to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the activities and formulate recommendations / action plan for the implementation of systemic changes. Following the audit, the university, in accordance with the audit recommendations and the national strategy for the internationalization of higher education, will develop/ update the institutional strategy for internationalization. Two years after the start of the initial audit, a follow-up audit (re-audit) will be carried out. The aim of this follow-up audit is to evaluate the implementation of recommendations and changes in the systemic use of internationalization at the university.
Output	Internationalization audits carried out at universities elaborated/ updated strategies for the internationalization of individual universities
Indicator	The share of public universities with their own internationalization strategy created/ updated in line with the results of an external audit focusing on the internationalization of the university
Responsible entity	Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports of Slovak Republic
Source of finance	Recovery and Resilience Plan of the Slovak Republic / state budget
Goal	Goal 3.1
Dependence on other measures	no

Name of the measure	<b>4.2.2 Support for the implementation of the principles of the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers - HRS4R at Slovak public universities</b>
Implementation period	2023-2026
Description of the measure	Support for higher education development projects aimed at preparing documents and developing strategies, action plans (and their implementation) related to the assessment process for obtaining the HR Excellence in Research quality mark awarded by the European Commission, demonstrating the university's efforts and commitment to the European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers under the Human Resources Strategy in Research. Within the framework of calls for development projects, activities of universities in the preparatory phase, in the implementation phase and in the subsequent phase of maintaining the awarded quality mark will be supported.

	The implemented strategy will contribute to increasing the quality and attractiveness of Slovak universities and will create attractive working conditions for international teams of foreign and Slovak top researchers.
Output	Calls for development projects Elaboration of university documents to obtain the HRS4R emblem Acquisition of the HR Excellence in Research quality mark
Indicator	Proportion of universities which have received the HR Excellence in Research quality mark  Share of university teachers, researchers and artists with non-Slovak citizenship in the total number of university teachers, researchers and artists
Responsible entity	Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports of Slovak Republic
Source of finance	State budget
Goal	goals 1.3 and 1.4
Dependence on other measures	no

Name of the measure	<b>4.2.3 Support for existing scholarship programs to open up to the international mobility programs for students, university teachers, researchers and artists</b>
Implementation period	2022-2030
Description of the measure	<p>As part of increasing the funding rate of CEEPUS, DAAD scholarship programs, scholarships provided on the basis of bilateral agreements and government scholarships, the number of scholarships provided to enrolled scholarship holders in Slovakia will be increased and unified across these programs according to the scholarship levels under the National Scholarship Program of the SR. This will make these study programs more attractive and competitive in terms of scholarships provided compared to similar study programs provided in other countries.</p> <p>By increasing the budget of the National Scholarship Program of the Slovak Republic it will be possible to increase the number of scholarships offered. Therefore, it will be possible to accept all applications that received a rating of over 75% in the admission procedure.</p> <p>The increase in the budget for scholarships provided on the basis of bilateral international agreements will also mean an increase in the scholarship bonus / scholarships for scholarship holders from the Slovak Republic, paid by the Government of the Slovak Republic for their participation in international mobility.</p> <p>The increase in scholarship programs funding will also include scholarship bonuses/ scholarships for students and staff with special needs.</p> <p>At the same time, support for the Fulbright Program for the implementation of new and existing scholarship schemes and programs will be increased. The support will be gradually increased so that in 2024 the parity of</p>

	<p>contributions for both parties to the intergovernmental agreement will be achieved and subsequently maintained.</p> <p>Existing scholarships and grants<sup>57</sup> for the mobility of international students, university teachers, researchers and artists will continue to be supported. At the same time, opportunities will be sought to enable mobilities funding from multiple sources (e.g. Erasmus + and NSP) as well as to introduce new co-financing instruments for existing scholarship and grant schemes (e.g. in relation to Erasmus +).</p>
Output	Increasing the funding rate of scholarship programs
Indicator	<p>Number of scholarships awarded under scholarship schemes for the implementation of long-term mobility of students and university teachers and researchers</p> <p>Proportion of graduates who completed at least two-months long international mobility during their studies in the total number of graduates in a given academic year</p> <p>Number of foreign students undergoing international mobility at Slovak universities lasting at least three months in a given academic year</p> <p>Number of foreign university teachers, researchers and artistic staff implementing international mobility at Slovak universities lasting at least two months in a given academic year</p>
Responsible entity	Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports of Slovak Republic
Source of finance	Recovery and Resilience Plan of the Slovak Republic / state budget
Goal	Goals 1.2, 2.3 and 2.5
Dependence on other measures	no

Name of the measure	<b>4.2.4 Analysis of the readiness of higher education institutions for the internationalization through virtual mobility and collaborative online international education</b>
Implementation period	2021-2023
Description of the measure	Mapping the conditions of Slovak higher education institutions for the implementation of virtual mobility (especially material and technical conditions for distance learning, readiness of university teachers and universities themselves for the implementation of virtual mobility - especially in the field of continuous assessment and testing, enforcement of principles of student-oriented education in virtual space/ learning process where students are based in different localities, digitization of processes - mobility management, European Student Card) or COIL (Collaborative Online International Learning) concept. The aim of the

<sup>57</sup> The Erasmus + grant program continues to provide for the co-financing of university mobilities from the state budget in the agreed amount in accordance with the Agreement on Cooperation in the Coordination of Programs in the Field of Education no. 381/2009 of 2 June 2009 as amended between the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports of Slovak Republic and SAAMS (Erasmus + National Agency for Education and Training)

	measure is to analyze the current state and readiness of higher education institutions for the implementation of virtual mobility/ distance learning using digital technologies as such and developing standards and recommendations for the implementation of virtual mobility, especially in terms of virtual mobility management, combination of virtual and physical mobility, technical support, conditions for participating in virtual mobility on the part of students, subject scheduling and student participation in virtual mobility (two-way). Recommendations should be addressed to students, university teachers, universities, the Ministry, and other relevant entities. Once the results of the analysis are known and needs are identified, (financial) possibilities for the implementation of standards and recommendations will be prioritized, re-evaluated and sought. <sup>58</sup>
Output	Analysis of the current state and readiness of universities for the implementation of virtual mobility/ distance learning using digital technologies and elaborating standards and recommendations for the implementation of virtual mobility
Indicator	Elaboration of standards and recommendations (documents) for the implementation of virtual mobility in the European Higher Education Area in the conditions of Slovak universities
Responsible entity	Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports of Slovak Republic
Source of finance	state budget
Goal	Goal 3.3
Dependence on other measures	no

Name of the measure	<b>4.2.5 Change in conditions for registration of foreign students, third-country nationals in the system of compulsory public health insurance</b>
Implementation period	2022
Description of the measure	At present, students of Slovak universities who are third-country nationals and do not study in the Slovak Republic on the basis of an international agreement by which the Slovak Republic is bound are not registered in the system of compulsory public health insurance in the Slovak Republic. These students have the opportunity to conclude an individual health insurance contract on the basis of which they are provided with health care to the extent specified in the contract. Given the expected economic benefits of foreign students studying at Slovak universities for the domestic economy, <sup>59</sup> registration of third-country nationals studying at Slovak universities in the

<sup>58</sup> The results of the analysis will be known towards the end of 2021/ at the beginning of 2022 and will be subsequently re-evaluated, i.e. at the current stage it is not possible to define whether it will affect national information systems/ whether intervention in these systems will be necessary.

<sup>59</sup> Several studies in different countries show the economic benefits of foreign students for the domestic economy, e.g. Finland (<https://www.oph.fi/en/statistics-and-publications/publications/facts-express-4b2014-what-do-we-know-about-economic-impact>), Spain (<https://monitor.icef.com/2019/06/economic-impact-of-foreign-students-in-spain-estimated-at-e2-2-billion/>), Czech Republic (<http://www.msmt.cz/vzdelavani/vysoke-skolstvi/ipn-kredo-kvalita-relevance-efektivita-diverzifikace-a> - specifically the parts on strategic decision-making of the Czech Ministry of Education, Internationalization part) and the like.

	system of compulsory public health insurance, at least as self-payers, should be considered <sup>60</sup> .
Output	Legislative proposal
Indicator	Proportion of students (third-country nationals) registered in compulsory public health insurance system as self-payers
Responsible entity	Ministry of Healthcare of the Slovak Republic
Source of finance	public health insurance expenditure
Goal	cross - cutting goal
Dependence on other measures	no

Name of the measure	<b>4.2.6 Introduction of a mobility window into the study plans of newly emerging and already existing study programs</b>
Implementation period	2023
Description of the measure	<p>With a view to removing obstacles to international student mobility in terms of recognition of learning outcomes by the sending university (the student will have to retake subjects and examinations at home university or the risk of failing to meet all study program conditions within the standard length of study), the Ministry will prepare a draft legal regulation which stipulates the introduction of a mobility window into the study plans of newly emerging study programs and later into the already existing study programs.</p> <p>Scheduling study obligations (these can be fulfilled at a partner university abroad on the basis of a pre-agreed study contract and later confirmed in the study results report) for a specific year of study in the study plan will significantly contribute to achieving automatic recognition of learning outcomes achieved during international mobility by the sending university.</p>
Output	Legislative proposal
Indicator	Proportion of graduates who completed at least two-months long international mobility during their studies in the total number of graduates in a given academic year
Responsible entity	Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports of Slovak Republic
Source of finance	no additional expenses are foreseen
Goal	Goal 2.6
Dependence on other measures	no

Name of the measure	<b>4.2.7 Analysis and revision of the financing of study programs carried out exclusively in foreign languages in selected fields of study</b>
Implementation period	2022 - 2023

<sup>60</sup> Due to the relatively young age and the related expected low morbidity (comparable to the same population of Slovak students of a similar age), such students should not represent an increased financial burden for the public health insurance system.

Description of the measure	<p>At present, tuition fees for study programs conducted in foreign languages in the full-time form of study (if such a study program is tuition-free provided it is not offered in foreign language) are in place.</p> <p>In order to increase the competitiveness of study programs conducted in foreign languages at Slovak universities, a discussion will be initiated on changing the system of tuition fees in full-time study programs conducted exclusively in a language other than the state language, in particular the need to scrap tuition fees in selected study programs / fields will be discussed in the light of the negative situation on the labour market. The solution adopted will take into account the risk of losing the income from tuition fees.</p>
Output	- Expert feasibility report
Indicator	<p>Number of accredited full-time study programs conducted exclusively in a language other than the state language</p> <p>Number / share of students with Slovak citizenship enrolled in study programs conducted exclusively in a language other than the state language.</p> <p>Number / share of students with non-Slovak citizenship enrolled in study programs at universities in the Slovak Republic in the total number of all students in a given academic year</p>
Responsible entity	Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports of Slovak Republic
Source of finance	no additional expenses are foreseen
Goal	Goals 1.1 and 1.2
Dependence on other measures	no

Name of the measure	<b>4.2.8 Introduction of the procedure assessing education attained abroad for the purpose of admission process</b>
Implementation period	2022 - 2023
Description of the measure	<p>Currently, applicants for studies at Slovak universities who studied abroad are required to submit an application for recognition of secondary education to the district office in the seat of the region in which the applicant resides or in which the applicant's university is located in order to continue their studies.</p> <p>To simplify the process for holders of diplomas issued by institutions from abroad (especially from outside the EU<sup>61</sup>), procedure assessing education</p>

<sup>61</sup> Pursuant to the EU Council Recommendation of 26 November 2018 on the promotion of automatic mutual recognition of qualifications obtained in higher education, upper secondary education and training and the results of study visits abroad (2018 / C 444/01), Member States should take the necessary steps to achieve automatic recognition of higher education as well as upper secondary education as a precondition for higher education by 2025, without the need to go through the recognition process. After fulfilling this step, recognition from EU countries will not be necessary and universities will be able to focus on the assessment of applicants from the so-called third countries (non - EU countries).



	attained abroad for the purpose of admission process will be introduced. The process will be carried out by a higher education institution which is accredited to create study programs in at least one field of study <sup>62</sup> based on the statement of the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education. A positive decision of a higher education institution will represent an implicit recognition of a foreign certificate/ diploma certifying the attained upper secondary education or full secondary vocational education for the purposes of higher education institution admission process.
Output	Legislative proposal
Indicator	Number / share of students with non-Slovak citizenship enrolled in study programs at universities in the Slovak Republic in the total number of all students in a given academic year
Responsible entity	Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports of Slovak Republic
Source of finance	no additional expenses are foreseen
Goal	Goal 2.3
Dependence on other measures	No

Name of the measure	<b>4.2.9 Changing the staffing process – associate professors and professors</b>
Implementation period	2022
Description of the measure	In order to increase the attractiveness of working at Slovak universities for university teachers working abroad, the position of associate professor and professor will be opened also for persons not holding these academic titles without the current time limit of three years. <sup>63</sup>
Output	Legislative proposal
Indicator	Share of university teachers and researchers and artists with non-Slovak citizenship in the total number of university teachers and researchers and artists
Responsible entity	Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports of Slovak Republic
Source of finance	no additional expenses are foreseen
Goal	Goal 1.4
Dependence on other measures	No

Name of the measure	<b>4.2.10 Promoting the involvement of public universities in the European Universities Initiative 2021-2023</b>
Implementation period	2021-2023
Description of the measure	In 2021, the Ministry will provide grants to co-finance the activities of European Universities alliances during 2021-2023 to three public

<sup>62</sup> Act no. 25, par. 1 of Act no. 269/2018 Coll. on Quality Assurance in Higher Education and on Amendments to Act no. 343/2015 Coll. on Public Procurement and on Amendments to Certain Acts, as amended

<sup>63</sup> Act no. 77 par. 2 of Act no. 131/2002 Coll. on Higher Education Institutions and on Amendments to Certain Acts

	<p>universities that are members of thereof supported by the European Commission under the Erasmus + call: Key Action 2 - Innovation Cooperation and Exchange of Best Practices - European universities.</p> <p>Following this support, subsidies will be provided again in 2022 for the period 2022-2023. The aim of this support will be to increase the effectiveness of the activities of alliances of European universities at Slovak universities on the basis of the identified needs to improve the capacity of universities to implement the intentions of the alliances</p>
Output	Supported university development projects
Indicator	Created alliances of European universities
Responsible entity	Number of universities that are part of the European Universities Alliance supported by the European Commission under the Erasmus + call (Key Action 2 - Innovation Cooperation and Exchange of Best Practices - European Universities)
Source of finance	Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports of Slovak Republic
Goal	state budget
Dependence on other measures	Goal 3.2

Name of the measure	<b>4.2.11 Development of online platforms for informing about study opportunities</b>
Implementation period	2022-2024
Description of the measure	<p>In accordance with the communication plan for the promotion of Slovak higher education and thanks to interlinking the newly created website promoting study opportunities in the Slovak Republic ("Study in Slovakia" concept), the Universities Portal website will be modernized and updated so that data on study programs are always up-to-date and the website itself is user-friendly with a state-of-the-art search engine for browsing through study programs (from the perspective of foreign applicants). Regular data updates will ensure prospect students access up-to-date information on the study programs offered and the admission procedure in one place.</p> <p>The measure will ensure information on study opportunities is published on the University Portal on the Europass online platform.</p>
Output	Modernized University Portal
Indicator	-
Responsible entity	Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports of Slovak Republic
Source of finance	State budget
Goal	Goal 2.1
Dependence on other measures	4.2.15

Name of the measure	<b>4.2.12 Analysis of cross-sectional and supporting aspects related to the arrival and stay of foreign students and university employees from third countries in the territory of the Slovak Republic</b>
Implementation period	2022 - 2030
Description of the measure	In relation to increasing the openness of universities in the Slovak Republic to students and university staff from third countries, round tables with universities will be held to identify current problems and legislative obstacles which negatively affect the processes related to the arrival and stay of foreign students and university staff, especially from third countries, in the territory of the Slovak Republic as these reduce the ability of Slovak universities to attract high-quality foreign students and employees (including the reform of qualification recognition and the reform of residence and labour legislation in relation to third-country nationals). An inter-ministerial working group will be established to coordinate a cross-cutting approach to issues related to the arrival and stay of foreign students and university staff in the Slovak Republic, consisting of representatives of the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, Ministry of Health, National Implementation and Coordination Authority – NIKA, Slovak Rectors' Conference, Council of Higher Education Institutions, Student Council of Higher Education Institutions, Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education, SAIA, n. o., the Slovak Academic Association for International Cooperation and representatives of organizations operating in the field of migration (e.g. the International Organization for Migration). An action plan will be developed to remove the identified barriers and simplify processes.
Output	Report on cross-cutting and supporting aspects related to the arrival and stay of foreign students and employees of universities from third countries in the territory of the Slovak Republic  Action plan focused on cross-cutting and supporting aspects related to the arrival and stay of foreign students and employees of universities from third countries in the territory of the Slovak Republic
Indicator	Action plan created
Responsible entity	MESRS SR, MI SR, MFAEA SR, MLSAF SR
Source of finance	no additional expenses are foreseen
Goal	cross - cutting objective
Dependence on other measures	No

Name of the measure	<b>4.2.13 Support for the implementation of institutional strategies for the internationalization of higher education institutions (institutional grant)</b>
Implementation period	2023 - 2026
Description of the measure	Following the implementation of audits of the internationalization of universities (measure 4.2.1), universities will be supported with regard to the continuous development of aspects of internationalization and implementation of systemic changes at the institutional level in

	<p>accordance with the outputs of audits (recommendations / action plans) and this strategy (beyond support in other measures or as additional support to achieve the objectives primarily addressed by other measures).</p> <p>The condition for providing support under this measure is the development of an institutional strategy for internationalization/ updating the existing strategy based on an independent audit and in line with the audit recommendations.</p> <p>It will be possible to obtain the subsidy, for example, for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• preparation of new or innovation of existing study programs provided in foreign languages, measures to support the preparation, creation and innovation of joint study programs with universities abroad in foreign languages</li> <li>• improving the readiness of domestic university teachers to work in an international environment and to participate in international networks</li> <li>• activities supporting the development of skills of PhD students needed for their involvement in international projects and international research</li> <li>• international cooperation in online education, digital content creation and making it available to students.</li> </ul> <p>These preliminary areas of support will also be adapted and expanded in the light of the findings of internationalization audits.</p>
Output	Min. 9 <sup>64</sup> university development projects supported
Indicator	Number of university development projects aimed at implementing the internationalization institutional strategy supported Number of joint study programs carried out in cooperation with universities abroad
Responsible entity	Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports of Slovak Republic
Source of finance	The Recovery and Resilience Plan of the Slovak Republic / state budget
Goal	impact on the achievement of all objectives
Dependence on other measures	4.2.1

Name of the measure	<b>4.2.14 Scholarship scheme to make university studies in the Slovak Republic more attractive to talented foreign students</b>
Implementation period	2022-2030
Description of the measure	<p>A new scholarship scheme to make the undergraduate university studies more attractive to talented foreign students.</p> <p>The aim is, in accordance with the Recovery and Resilience Plan of the Slovak Republic, to support the study of foreign students during the entire</p>

<sup>64</sup> In the Recovery and Resilience Plan within the investment 4 component 10, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Slovak Republic undertook to support min. 9 projects aimed at supporting the implementation of institutional strategies for the internationalization of universities

	<p>undergraduate study in order to have 600 scholarship holders enrolled per year after three years of operation of the program.</p> <p>The scholarship of 4,000 EUR is intended to cover the cost of living for ten months (whole the academic year). At the same time, the university will receive a flat-rate contribution of 2,000 EUR per student which should be used to support excellent students of graduate studies abroad or for integration and career development programs for students from abroad (e.g. tuition, travel and Slovak language courses run by universities or private languages schools).</p> <p>After the scheme is drawn up and evaluated (including information whether scholarship holders remain studying or working in the Slovak Republic), the possibility of expanding the scheme will be considered, including the possibility of providing support in the graduate study programs taking into account the negative labour market situation.</p>
Output	Scholarship scheme
Indicator	<p>Number of scholarship holders under the scholarship scheme to make the undergraduate and graduate university study programs in the Slovak Republic more attractive to foreign students in a given academic year</p> <p>Share of students with non-Slovak citizenship enrolled in study programs at universities in the Slovak Republic in the total number of all students in a given academic year</p>
Responsible entity	Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports of Slovak Republic
Source of finance	Recovery and resilience plan of the Slovak Republic / state budget / ESIF
Goal	Goal 2.3
Dependence on other measures	No

Name of the measure	<b>4.2.15 Promotion of Slovak higher education and science abroad and support of international networking at Slovak universities</b>
Implementation period	2022-2026
Description of the measure	<p>Under the measure, the communication plan for the promotion of Slovak higher education abroad will be prepared. Under the plan, a brand covering Slovak higher education ("Study &amp; Research in Slovakia") will be proposed. The aim is to present Slovak higher education abroad (as a whole) and at the same time stimulate Slovak higher education institutions to plan and systematically use student recruitment tools, define recruitment territories and subsequently use educational fairs to actively address and gain potential students in accordance with a proposed communication plan.</p> <p>Events aimed at recruiting foreign students and promoting study opportunities and related activities will be supported under the scheme. The intention is to complete min. five recruitment events abroad per year, systematic promotion of the university as a whole and once a year participation of min. two representatives of the university at the annual EAIE, APAIE and NAFSA conferences and exhibitions.</p>

	<p>The aim of supporting the networking of universities is to increase the potential for cooperation and intensify interinstitutional cooperation in the field of higher education through Slovakia's participation in important international events such as the NAFSA annual conference and exhibition in the USA, EAIE in Europe and APAIE in the Asia-Pacific region where universities from all over the world meet, exchange experiences and get acquainted with the latest global trends in higher education and internationalization.</p> <p>At the national level, a communication plan for the promotion of higher education abroad, the coordinated creation and implementation of a joint presentation of Slovakia at EAIE, NAFSA and APAIE events (drawing inspiration from Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic, which have been successfully implementing this for years), promotional activities and national presentations at recruitment fairs in addition to the individual promotion of universities will be prepared and implemented.</p>
Output	<p>Communication plan for the promotion of Slovak higher education abroad. Support for "national" promotion project and min. 9 university projects for the purpose of promotion and recruitment of foreign students<sup>65</sup></p> <p>Joint presentations of Slovak universities at international recruitment fairs</p>
Indicator	<p>Share of students with non-Slovak citizenship enrolled in study programs at universities in the Slovak Republic in the total number of all students in a given academic year</p> <p>Number of supported projects aimed at promoting higher education and universities abroad</p> <p>Number of joint study programs carried out in cooperation with universities abroad</p>
Responsible entity	Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports of Slovak Republic
Source of finance	The Recovery and Resilience Fund of the Slovak Republic / state budget
Goal	Goal 2.1, 2.2 and 3.2
Dependence on other measures	4.2.12, 4.2.14

Name of the measure	<b>4.2.16 Supporting socio-cultural integration of foreign students and language training for university staff</b>
Implementation period	2022-2030
Description of the measure	The support intended for socio-cultural orientation courses, for the provision of counselling services to foreign students and university staff in working with culturally diverse target groups, and for the provision of foreign language courses to university staff.
Output	University development projects

<sup>65</sup> In the Recovery and Resilience Plan within the investment 4 component 10, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Slovak Republic undertook to support min. 10 projects aimed at promoting Slovak higher education and universities abroad

Indicator	Number of students, third-country nationals who completed a socio-cultural orientation course in a given academic year Number of foreign language courses for university staff
Responsible entity	Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports of Slovak Republic
Source of finance	State budget
Goal	Goal 2.4
Dependence on other measures	4.2.14

### 4. 3. Indicators

Measurable indicators are defined to monitor the fulfillment of the objectives and measures of the strategy, to evaluate the success of its implementation and to assess the progress achieved in individual areas of internationalization. Based on the planned scope of the intervention and the availability of data, quantified target values of measurable indicators are set.

Measure	Indicator	Baseline value in 2020	Target value in 2030	Data source
4.2.1	The share of public universities with their own internationalization strategy implemented or updated in line with the results of an external audit focusing on the internationalization of the university	— <sup>66</sup>	70% Public higher education institutions	Higher education institutions
4.2.2	Proportion of universities that have been awarded the "HR Excellence in Research" quality mark	— <sup>67</sup>	50.00 % Public higher education institutions	Higher education institutions
4.2.3	Number of months funded under scholarship programs for the implementation of long-term mobility of students, university teachers, researchers and artists	2,394 <sup>68</sup>	36,000	Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports of Slovak Republic

<sup>66</sup> As of 28 February 2021, seven public universities had adopted an internationalization strategy in a separate strategic document. Other universities state their intentions in the area of developing international cooperation in the long-term intention of the higher education institution and in the Erasmus Policy Statement, which is part of the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education application.

<sup>67</sup> On April 1, 2021, one Slovak university (Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica) has been awarded the "HR Excellence in Research" quality mark).

<sup>68</sup> Average number of months during which scholarship was provided in 2016 - 2019.



4.2.3 4.2.6	Proportion of graduates who completed at least two-months long international mobility during their studies in the total number of graduates in a given academic year	5.24 % <sup>69</sup>	15.00 %	CRS
4.2.3	Number of foreign students who completed at least two-months long international mobility at Slovak universities in a given academic year	1,517 <sup>70</sup>	—	CRS, MESRS SR
4.2.3	Number of foreign university teachers, researchers and artistic staff undergoing international mobility at Slovak universities	2,829 <sup>71</sup>	—	HEI
4.2.4	Elaboration of a document containing standards and recommendations for the implementation of virtual mobility in the European Higher Education Area at Slovak universities	—	1	MESRS SR
4.2.7	Number of accredited full-time study programs conducted exclusively in a language other than the state language	1,278	—	Portál VŠ (Universities Portal)
4.2.7 4.2.8 4.2.14 4.2.15	Number of students with non-Slovak citizenship enrolled in study programs at universities in the Slovak Republic	15,432	—	CRS
4.2.7 4.2.8 4.2.14 4.2.15	Share of students with non-Slovak citizenship enrolled in study programs at universities in the Slovak Republic in the total number of all students in a given academic year	11.26 %	15,00 %	CSTI
4.2.7	Number of students with Slovak citizenship enrolled in study programs conducted exclusively in a language other than the state language	770	—	CRS

<sup>69</sup> Data for the academic year 2017/2018.

<sup>70</sup> Data for the academic year 2019/2020.

<sup>71</sup> Data for the academic year 2018/2019. Source: Annual reports on university activities in 2019.

4.2.7	Proportion of students with Slovak citizenship enrolled in study programs conducted exclusively in a language other than the state language in the total number of students with Slovak citizenship	0.59 %	—	CRS
4.2.5	Proportion of students, third-country nationals, registered for compulsory public health insurance as self-payers	—	—	MH SR
4.2.2 4.2.9	Share of university teachers and researchers and artists with non-Slovak citizenship in the total number of university teachers and researchers and artists	5,77 %	10,00 %	CSTI
4.2.16	Share of doctoral students with non-Slovak citizenship in the total number of doctoral students	12,94 %	15,00 %	CRŠ
4.2.13 4.2.15	Number of joint study programs carried out in cooperation with universities from abroad	54	—	Portál VŠ (Universities portal)
4.2.13	Number of university projects aimed at implementing the institutional internationalization strategy supported	—	min. 9 <sup>72</sup>	MESRS SR
4.2.14	Number of scholarship holders enrolled in undergraduate study programs in the Slovak Republic to make the studies more attractive for foreign students	—	1,600	CRS
4.2.10	Number of universities that are part of the University Alliance supported by the European Commission under the Erasmus + call: European universities	3	—	HEI
4.2.16	Number of students, third-country nationals, who completed a socio-cultural orientation course in a given academic year	—	—	HEI
4.2.15	Number of projects to promote higher education and universities abroad supported	—	min. 10 <sup>73</sup>	MESRS SR

<sup>72</sup> In the Recovery and Resilience Plan within the investment 4 component 10, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Slovak Republic undertook to support min. 9 projects aimed at supporting the implementation of institutional strategies aimed at internationalization of universities

<sup>73</sup> In the Recovery and Resilience Plan within the investment 4 component 10, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Slovak Republic undertook to support min. 10 projects aimed at supporting the promotion of Slovak higher education and universities abroad

4.2.16	Number of foreign language courses for university staff	—	1,500	HEI
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## 5. Strategy implementation

### 5. 1. Implementation structure and management system for strategy implementation

The Ministry, as the manager of the strategy implementation, will set up a steering committee to implement the strategy. The members of the committee shall include the Minister/ the Secretary of State, relevant managing heads of the relevant departments.<sup>74</sup>

The steering committee:

- oversees the implementation of the measures resulting from the strategy
- ensures the coordination of cooperation with the responsible entities
- sets up working groups for the implementation of measures
- approves changes to the strategy and changes to the strategy budget
- approves the proposal for the mid-term and final evaluation of the strategy implementation

In the case of requests or proposals for changes in the strategy implementation, the responsible department shall record these proposals, analyze their expected impact on the time frame of implementation, budget, implementation of measures and achievement of set objectives and submit the opinion to the steering committee. The steering committee shall decide on the approval or rejection of the submitted request or proposal for amendment. If approved, the responsible department shall incorporate the approved changes into the implementation strategy or plan.

To coordinate a cross-cutting approach to issues related to the arrival and stay of foreign students and university staff in Slovakia, an inter-ministerial working group will be established consisting of representatives of MESRS SR, MFAEA SR, MI SR, MLSAF SR, MH SR and representatives of Slovak Conference of Rectors, the Council of Higher Education Institutions, the Student Council of Higher Education Institutions, the Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education, SAIA, n. o., the Slovak Academic Association for International Cooperation and representatives of organizations operating in the field of migration (e.g. the International Organization for Migration).

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<sup>74</sup> In accordance with the organizational structure of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Slovak Republic valid as of September 1, 2021 these include the head of the Higher Education Department, the head of the International Cooperation and European Affairs Department, the head of the Science and Technology Department, the head of the EU Structural Funds, the director of Higher Education Department, the head of the Strategies and Concepts of Science, Research and Universities Department and the head of the Higher Education Development Department.

## 5. 2. Activity implementation plan and time schedule

No.	Measure	Implementation period	Note
4.2.1	Support for the implementation of the audit of the internationalization of universities as a prerequisite for the creation and updating of institutional internationalization strategies	2022-2026	
4.2.2	Support for the implementation of the principles of the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers - HRS4R at Slovak universities	2023-2026	
4.2.3	Support for existing scholarship programs to implement the international mobility of students, university teachers, researchers and artists	2022-2030	
4.2.4	Analysis of the readiness of universities for the internationalization of higher education through the implementation of virtual mobility and collaborative online international education	2021-2023	
4.2.5	Change in conditions for registration of foreign students and third-country nationals in the system of compulsory public health insurance	2022	In parallel with the measure Analysis of cross-sectional and supporting aspects related to the arrival and stay of foreign students and employees of universities in the territory of the Slovak Republic
4.2.6	<b>Introduction of a mobility window into the study plans of newly emerging and existing study programs</b>	2023	As part of the anticipated amendment to Act no. 131/2002 Coll. on Higher Education Institutions and on Amendments to Certain Acts
4.2.7	Analysis and review of financing of study programs carried out exclusively in foreign languages in selected fields of study	2022 - 2023	
4.2.8	Introduction of fulfilment of the basic conditions for admission to university studies (prior education at university abroad)	2022 - 2023	
4.2.9	Changing the rules for filling positions of an associate professor and professor	2022	As part of the anticipated amendment to Act no. 131/2002 Coll. on Higher Education Institutions and on Amendments to Certain Acts
4.2.10	Promoting the involvement of public universities in the European Universities initiative	2021-2023	

4.2.11	Development of online platforms informing about study opportunities	2022-2024	Partly under the measure Promotion of Slovak higher education and science abroad and support for international networking of Slovak universities
4.2.12	Analysis of cross-sectional and supporting aspects related to the arrival and stay of foreign students and employees of universities in the territory of the Slovak Republic	2022 - 2030	In parallel with the measure Change in conditions for registration of foreign students and third-country nationals in the system of compulsory public health insurance
4.2.13	Supporting the implementation of institutional strategies for the internationalization of universities (institutional grant)	2023-2026	Following the support of the implementation of the internationalization audit of universities as a prerequisite for the creation and updating of internationalization institutional strategies
4.2.14	Scholarship scheme to make university studies in the Slovak Republic more attractive to talented foreign students	2022-2030	In parallel with the measures Promotion of Slovak higher education and science abroad and support for the international networking of Slovak universities
4.2.15	Promotion of Slovak higher education and research abroad and support for international networking of Slovak universities	2022-2026	In parallel with the Scholarship Scheme to make university studies in the Slovak Republic more attractive for foreign students
4.2.16	Support for the socio-cultural integration of foreign students and language training for university staff	2022-2030	In parallel with the Scholarship Scheme to make university studies in the Slovak Republic more attractive for foreign students

### 5. 3. Budget and funding

The budget for the implementation of the strategy is compiled for the period 2021 - 2026. Following the review of the measures, implementation process and possible preparation of action plans, the budget will be revised and later updated for the period 2026 - 2030. Where possible, EU funds will also be used to finance the implementation. A detailed budget is given in Annex 3.

### 5. 4. Strategy implementation monitoring and evaluation system

The Ministry's organizational unit designated by the steering committee will be responsible for monitoring the implementation of individual measures and updating the objectives and measures of the strategy. The success of the implementation of the strategy, including the fulfilment of the set scope of measures, time frame and budget, will be regularly evaluated at biennial intervals through the measurable indicators set for individual objectives and measures and presented in the monitoring report on the implementation of the strategy. Based on the results, it will be possible to revise and update the strategy through action plans planned for the selected period.

### 5. 5. Risk management system and strategy implementation assumptions

In 2020, activities in the field of internationalization of universities requiring cross-border movement were significantly affected by the adoption of measures in connection with the spread of COVID-19.

With regard to the implementation of the strategy in the context of the spread of COVID-19, the main interest of the Ministry will be to protect the health of students and university staff. The measures of the strategy will be implemented in accordance with the epidemic situation and guidelines and recommendations of the state administration bodies.

Assumptions regarding strategy implementation:

- Political sustainability of the set objectives and measures throughout the strategy implementation period
- Stability of the set financial framework for the implementation of the strategy
- Cross-cutting approach in cooperation with the relevant ministries to create favourable conditions for achieving the set goals
- Absence of significant restrictions on cross-border movement due to exceptional circumstances

Risk	Risk reduction measures / contingency plan
It is not possible to secure resources according to the set financial framework	Inclusion of expenditures on planned measures in the state budget Cutting down on expenditures and identifying priority actions
Underestimation of costs due to the complexity of calculating future costs	Negotiating the increase in expenditures Cutting down on expenditures and identifying priority actions
Decreased political sustainability of the strategy	Building societal consensus on the benefits of internationalization and setting up an inter-ministerial working group to coordinate a cross-cutting approach

Insufficient cross - sectional access	Establishment of an inter-ministerial working group to coordinate a cross-cutting approach to issues related to the arrival and stay of foreign students and university staff in the Slovak Republic
Measures will not be fully implemented due to exceptional circumstances resulting in cross-border movement restriction	Increase the use of digital technologies and identify priority actions

An organizational unit of the ministry will be responsible for monitoring the risks during the process of strategy implementation. In the risk event, an alternative measure will be taken, if possible.

## **6. Strategy creation process**

### **6. 1. Strategy authors and stakeholders**

The authors of the strategy are employees of universities. Representatives of universities, non-governmental organizations operating in the field of internationalization (especially SAIA, n. o. and other participating and cooperating entities) are involved in the creation of the strategy (e.g with regard to the preparation of the component 10 of the Recovery and Resilience Plan of the Slovak Republic, employees of the Value for Money Department of the Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic).

### **6. 2. Description of the strategy creation process**

The strategy was prepared in the period from November 2019 to September 2021. In March 2020, a meeting of the Higher Education department with representatives of higher education institutions and NGOs working in the field of internationalization of higher education was held. The stakeholders presented their ideas and discussed the relevance of the proposed strategy objectives and measures. In January 2021, the draft strategy was submitted to the representatives of the European Commission under the measure "4.3 Strategic policy framework for education and training at all levels" in accordance with the EU Cohesion policy in 2021-2027. During February and March 2021, negotiations regarding the Recovery and Resilience Plan of the Slovak Republic took place. The negotiations also tackled some measures of the strategy. In April 2021, the draft strategy was presented to members of the Monitoring Committee for the Operational Programme Human Resources Development.



## 7. Annexes

### Annex 1. List of abbreviations used

APAIE	Asia-Pacific Association for International Education
CEEPUS	Central European Exchange Program for University Studies
CSTI SR	Center for Scientific and Technical Information of the Slovak Republic
CRS	Central Register of Student
CRZ	Central Register of Employees
DAAD	German Academic Exchange Service
EAIE	European Association for International Education
EU	European Union
MLSAF SR	Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic
MESRS SR	Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports of the Slovak Republic
MI SR	Ministry of the Interior of the SR
MH SR	Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic
MFAEA SR	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic
NAFSA	Association of International Educators
NSP	National Scholarship Program of the Slovak Republic
OECD	Organization for Economic Co - operation and Development
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
HEI	Higher Education Institutions

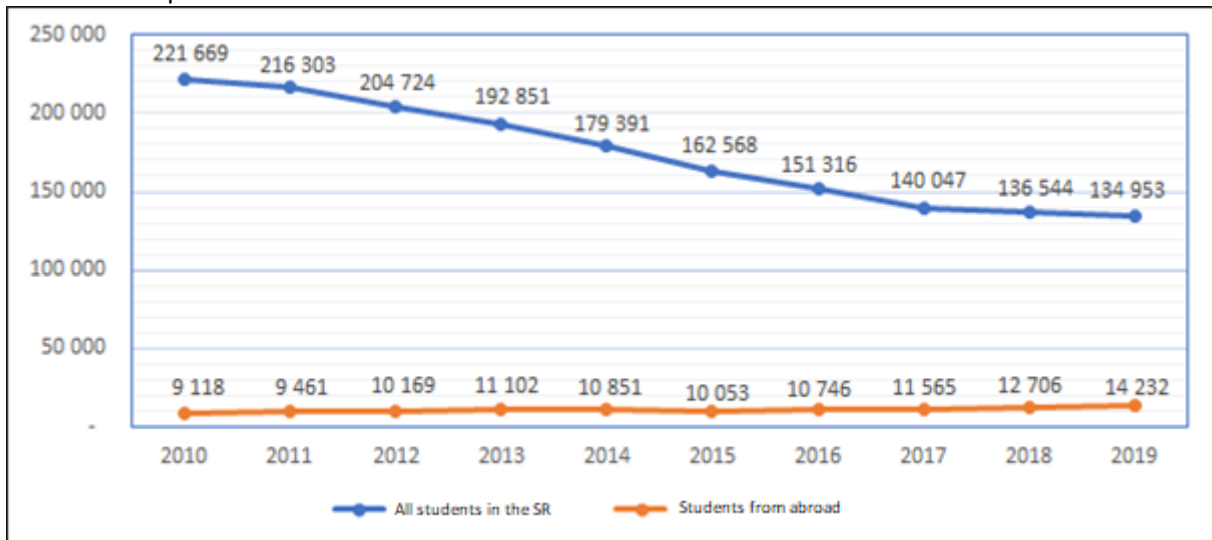
## Annex 2. Statistical indicators

Table 1. Flows of university students enrolled outside their home country

Year	Share of citizens studying outside their home country in the total number of students in that country				Share of foreigners in the total number of students in a given country			
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2015	2016	2017	2018
Slovakia	17,09	19,11	20,8	21,79	5,9	6,02	6,9	8,03
Czech Republic	3,17	3,37	3,74	3,75	10,55	11,51	12,54	13,61
Hungary	3,46	3,94	4,32	4,54	7,05	8,86	9,97	11,41
Poland	1,43	1,51	1,62	1,77	2,64	3,42	4,12	3,64
Austria	4,06	4,19	4,46	5	15,89	16,35	17,19	17,49

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics. <http://data.uis.unesco.org/index.aspx?queryid=3810>

Figure 1. Number of all university students in the Slovak Republic and foreign university students in the Slovak Republic



Source: CSTI SR – Statistical Yearbook - universities

Table 2. Foreign employees of universities in Slovakia

	Full-time and part time			Full-time		
	in total	from abroad	share	in total	from abroad	share
to 31.12.2019	14 506	839	5,78%	10 924	687	6,29%
to 31.12.2018	14 581	834	5,72%	10 996	672	6,11%
to 31.12.2017	14 619	859	5,88%	11 077	698	6,30%
to 31.12.2016	14 571	862	5,92%	11 274	709	6,29%
to 31.12.2015	14 715	909	6,18%	11 475	745	6,49%
to 31.12.2014	15 577	944	6,06%	11 903	761	6,39%
to 31.12.2013	15 770	918	5,82%	11 751	736	6,26%

Source: Register of University Staff

Table 3. Mobilities – accepted students

	2010/2011					2016/2017				
	Total Scholarship Approvals/Recommendations	of which students and doctoral students for study stays	of which students and doctoral students for internships	of which university teachers and researchers	of which others	Total Scholarship Approvals/Recommendations	of which students and doctoral students for study stays	of which students and doctoral students for internships	of which university teachers and researchers	of which others
<b>SAIA</b>										
Scholarships based on bilateral intergovernmental agreements and offers from foreign governments	56	40	0	15	1	79	46	0	33	
National Mobility Scholarship Program	87	26	0	61	0	184	48	0	136	
Action Austria - Slovakia, cooperation in science and education	7	7	0			14	13	0	1	
CEEPUS - Central European Exchange Program for University Studies	357	209	0	148		502	233	0	269	
<b>SAAIC</b>										
EU Lifelong Learning Program // Erasmus	2 338	999	182	139	1 018	4 439	1 615	534	1 519	771

Source: SAIA annual program reports [https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/about/statistics\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/about/statistics_en)

Table 4. Mobility – students and staff sent

	2010/2011					2016/2017				
	Total Scholarship Approvals/Recommendations	of which students and doctoral students for study stays	of which students and doctoral students for internships	of which university teachers and researchers	of which others	Total Scholarship Approvals/Recommendations	of which students and doctoral students for study stays	of which students and doctoral students for internships	of which university teachers and researchers	of which others
<b>SAIA</b>										
Scholarships based on bilateral intergovernmental agreements and offers from foreign governments	394	346		27	21	272	234		23	15
National Mobility Scholarship Program	95	90			5	62	59			3
Action Austria - Slovakia, cooperation in science and education	62	51		11		80	59		2	
CEEPUS - Central European Exchange Program for University Studies	466	233		233		687	365		322	
<b>SAAIC</b>										
EU Lifelong Learning Program // Erasmus +	3 345	2 052	406	160	727	5 603	2 436	1 333	1 093	741

Source: SAIA annual program reports [https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/about/statistics\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/about/statistics_en)

Table 5. Problems related to the international mobility of university teachers

Question no. 29. and 50. What do you, as a university teacher / researcher / artist consider to be the biggest problems associated with international mobility? Select all that apply.

	No. of answers	Column percentages (%)
I have a lot of job responsibilities	337	39.5
Insufficient financial help provided	221	25.9
Administrative complexity	219	25.7
I don't see any problems	218	25.6
Private reasons	216	25.3
I don't have sufficient foreign language proficiency	88	10.4
I'm not interested in mobility	61	7.1
My university does not have relevant international agreements concluded	58	6.8
Lack of information provided by the school	43	5.1
Lack of support by the school management	23	2.7
Poor quality of communication on the part of the receiving institution abroad	23	2.7
Other	13	1.6
Neither our school nor any other organization offers mobility	7	.9
Total respondents	852	100.0

Source: Questionnaire under the project "To dá rozum (It makes sense)" MESA10 – [www.analyza.todarozum.sk](http://www.analyza.todarozum.sk) – questionnaire for university staff working in Slovakia, question no. 29

Table 6. Comparison of monthly scholarships provided to foreign students and employees admitted to mobility/ study in the Slovak Republic in the academic year 2020/2021 in individual scholarship programs (in EUR)

Category	National Scholarship Program of the Slovak Republic	bilateral international agreements	CEEPUS	DAAD	government scholarships SR - ODA
Undergraduate and graduate students	400	280	280	-	280
PhD students	734	330	470	506	330
University teachers and researchers	921 <sup>75</sup>	550	470	550	-

<sup>75</sup> This is an average value as under the current conditions of the NSP, the amount of the scholarship for university teachers and researchers / artists (hereinafter referred to as "university teachers") is determined based on the applicant's career status. Specifically, a university teacher without a PhD degree (or equivalent) and at the same time with less than 4 years of experience as a university teacher is entitled to 734 EUR / month, a university

Source: MESRS SR

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teacher with a PhD degree (or equivalent) and at the same time with less than 10 years of experience is entitled to 980 EUR / month and a university teacher with a PhD degree (or equivalent) and at the same time with more than 10 years of experience is entitled to 1,050 EUR / month.

### Annex 3. Budget

No.	Name of the measure	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	In total for 2022-2026	Source of funding
4.2.1	Internationalization of universities and support for the related audit as a prerequisite for the creation and updating of institutional strategies for internationalization	123,600.00 €	138,920.00 €	80,100.00 €	141 830.00 €	- €	484,450.00 €	Recovery and Resilience Plan of the Slovak Republic
		- €	- €	- €	- €	143,180.00 €	143,180.00 €	state budget (MESRS SR)
4.2.2	Support for the implementation of the principles of the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers - HRS4R at Slovak public universities	- €	500,000.00 €	- €	- €	- €	500,000.00 €	state budget (MESRS SR)
4.2.3	Support for existing scholarship programs to open up to the international mobility programs for students, university teachers, researchers and artists	1,464,429.00 €	1,464,429.00 €	1,464,429.00 €	1,464,429.00 €	- €	5,857,716.00 €	Recovery and Resilience Plan of the Slovak Republic
		705,772.36 €	763,772.36 €	821,772.36 €	655,772.36 €	2,120,201.36 €	5,067,290.80 €	state budget (MESRS SR)
4.2.10	Promoting the involvement of public universities in the European Universities initiative	520,000.00 €	- €	- €	- €	- €	520,000.00 €	state budget (MESRS SR)
4.2.11	Development of online platforms informing about study opportunities	50,000.00 €	- €	- €	- €	- €	50,000.00 €	state budget (MESRS SR)
4.2.13	Supporting the implementation of institutional strategies for the internationalization of universities (institutional grant)	- €	2,828,177.00 €	2,828,177.00 €	- €	- €	5,656,354.00 €	Recovery and Resilience Plan of the Slovak Republic
		- €	- €	- €	- €	- €	0.00 €	state budget (MESRS SR)
4.2.14	Scholarship scheme to make university studies in the Slovak Republic more attractive to talented foreign students	879,520.00 €	1,932,050.00 €	2,982,720.00 €	2,464,370.00 €	1,414,630.00 €	9,673,290.00 €	Recovery and Resilience Plan of the Slovak Republic
		80,000.00 €	280,000.00 €	480,000.00 €	520,000.00 €	320,000.00 €	1,680,000.00 €	state budget (MESRS SR)
4.2.15	Promotion of Slovak higher education and research abroad and support for international networking of Slovak universities	480,200.00 €	1,929,668.00 €	1,944,860.00 €	1,957,648.00 €	- €	6,312,376.00 €	Recovery and Resilience Plan of the Slovak Republic
		- €	- €	- €	- €	- €	0.00 €	state budget (MESRS SR)
4.2.16	Support for the socio-cultural integration of foreign students and language training for university staff	1,700,000.00 €	1,700,000.00 €	1,700,000.00 €	700,000.00 €	700,000.00 €	6,500,000.00 €	state budget (MESRS SR)
<b>Total per annum / total:</b>		<b>6,003,521.36 €</b>	<b>11,537,016.36 €</b>	<b>12,302,058.36 €</b>	<b>7,904,049.36 €</b>	<b>4,698,011.36 €</b>	<b>42,444,656.80 €</b>	
<b>of which the state budget</b>		<b>3,055,772.36 €</b>	<b>3,243,772.36 €</b>	<b>3,001,772.36 €</b>	<b>1,875,772.36 €</b>	<b>3,283,381.36 €</b>	<b>14,460,470.80 €</b>	<b>state budget (MESRS SR)</b>

	<b>of which the Recovery and Resilience Plan of the Slovak Republic</b>	<b>2,947,749.00 €</b>	<b>8,293,244.00 €</b>	<b>9,300,286.00 €</b>	<b>6,028,277.00 €</b>	<b>1,414,630.00 €</b>	<b>27,984,186.00 €</b>	<b>Recovery and Resilience Plan of the Slovak Republic</b>
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