



NATIONAL REPORT OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC



SUMMARY

The aim of the project Dialogue is bridging the gap between academic research on ULLL and the professional practice in teaching, learning and guidance in ULLL provision. The national report describes the situation in lifelong learning at universities in the Slovak Republic as well as research conducted in this area. It seeks to identify target groups, increase the accessibility of LLL at universities. Data in this report give only selective insights to the current situation in Slovakia related to the Dialogue project and thematic working group "Access & Progression". This information will allow us to subsequently identify new segments for lifelong learning activities at universities as well as better and more efficient ways of linking research and practice.

Part 1 describes the methodology of the preparation of National Report. Part 2 defines the basic terms related to lifelong learning. It also provides basic information and numbers of adult involved in those activities. Part 3 describes the general legal context for lifelong learning activities at universities in the Slovak Republic. Part 4 is the concrete application of legal frameworks to the real lifelong learning activities of universities in Slovakia. Part 5 defines the legal framework for research activities aimed at defining new segments in lifelong learning. Part 6 and 7 describe specific support options for linking research and practice in the areas of access and progress in lifelong learning at universities, along with possible solutions leading to the improvement of the status quo.

This National report is complemented by two case studies describing quality and effective linking between research and practice in order to identify new target groups (eg Roma parents) or new approaches to the already existing target groups (eg partially sighted and blind people, Roma children).

The national report focuses on quality prepared within the other thematic working group "Quality" describes the problems of monitoring and evaluating the quality of lifelong learning activities in Slovak universities. All these documents offer overview of the solved problems.

1. Methodology

The national report is based on materials of the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic, on annual reports and reports to the institution involved in collecting data in the field of lifelong learning and on other relevant materials. The figures were developed with the use of available data. The National Report was prepared by Ing. Lucia Hrebeňárová, PhD working in the Institute of Continuing Education of University of Žilina. Experts from Slovak universities working on various positions (university teachers, researchers and providers of LLL activities) and external researchers focusing on LLL have been consulted about the content of the report. It has to be noted that information and data in this report give only selective insights to the current situation in Slovakia related to the Dialogue project. The figures were developed with the use of available data.

2. Facts and Figures on LLL and ULLL

Lifelong learning – *“celoživotné vzdelávanie”* - is defined as activities undertaken throughout life in order to improve knowledge, skills and abilities according to the law on Lifelong learning. Lifelong learning as a fundamental principle of education is applied in school education (formal system of study) and in continuing education up to the level of education achieved in school education

Education in formal system of study – *“formálne vzdelávanie”* - includes education activities realized in kindergartens, primary and various types of secondary schools provided by the special laws and in higher education sector provided by Act on Higher Education. The higher education sector provides

higher education courses at three levels: three to four-year study leading to Bachelor degree, Master study programmes at second level which may last between one and three years and PhD study programmes at the third level. The standard length of full-time doctoral programmes varies between three and four years. Successful graduation of the secondary school or university leads to the education degree.

Continuing education – “*d’alšie vzdelávanie*” - is the education in educational institutions of further education, which builds on the school education and gives the possibility to have a partial or full qualification or amend, renew, extend or deepen their skills acquired in school education, or increase their interests and get them capacity to engage in the life of civil society. This kind of the education includes also interesting and civic education (senior education). Successful graduation from continuing education does not lead to an education degree.

In Slovak language, the term - “*d’alšie vzdelávanie*” – corresponds to English term “*continuing education and training*” and “*further education*”. Often these two terms are considered as synonyms in Slovakia. Most of the Slovak documents translated into English, translate the term “*d’alšie vzdelávanie*” with the term “*further education*”.

In 2008, according to Eurostat surveys the level of adult involvement in the Slovak Republic at the age of 25 to 64 years was 3.3%, in 2009 and 2010 the same - only 2.8%, far below the EU 25 – 9,6 %. The National Report of the Slovak Republic in 2007 was considered a turning point in 2007, when the number of adults participating in continuing education should reach a minimum - 3.9%. From this year onwards, this figure has been growing linearly due to the promotion of lifelong learning and the effective use of the Social Fund. In 2010 it should have achieved 5.62% and in 2012 12.5%. As is already evident from the introductory information, the prediction was not accurate. The number of adults involved in continuing education has decreased due to low efficiency of the chosen instruments, the global financial crisis and other factors (eg, withdrawal of funds from the European Social Fund).

In 2011, the Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education responsible for collecting data in educational sector has addressed 35 universities to collecting statistical data in field of LLL. The year 2010 was the reference year. 8 universities (4 public and 4 private high schools) did not respond. Under the collected statistic data 5 private high school institutions realized any activities in LLL in 2010. 22 high school institutions (16 public, 3 private and 3 state high school institutions) realized various LLL activities. 25 882 participants (68% women) took part and 15 230 finished their study. 16 958 adults studied at the public high school institutions, 428 adults at the private high school institutions and 8 496 adults at the state high school institutions.

Figure 1: Number of participants and graduates of LLL activities at Universities in Slovak Republic in 2010

Universities	Participants	Graduates
Public	16 958	9 626
State	8 496	5 531
Private	428	73
Total	25 882	17 488

Source: Institute of Information and prognoses of Education; Adult Education Survey (2011)

Since 2006, 13 high schools carried out education at the Third Age University as part of lifelong learning education. The programmes offered to seniors are mainly based on full-time studies of each university. The number of students from the foundation of this activity was gradually increasing. 5 822 seniors took part in LLL activities at the University of Third Age in 2010.

According to the results of the project Policies and Practices in Lifelong Learning the contribution of universities in providing continuing education in the Slovak Republic is still only about 5%. It is a very low level and the potential of universities in this area is not fully used for educational research processes.

3. The legal context for the LLL and access to it

All activities in Lifelong learning are realized in a conceptual framework based on well-known core international conventions and declarations.

The Strategy for Lifelong learning and lifelong guidance was approved by the Slovak Government Resolution no. 382/2007 in 25 April 2007. The starting point for drafting strategy of LLL and LLG were European and national strategic and policy documents aimed at the issue of human capital as a driving force behind the development of society. Particularly the European Commission adopted the Memorandum of lifelong learning and the Lisbon Strategy, the Government concept of lifelong learning in Slovakia in 2004, the National Programme of Education in the SR (Millennium), the National Strategic Reference Framework of the Slovak Republic for the years 2007 to 2013, as well as other relevant European and national materials focused on the area of human resource development. The main objective of the strategy of LLL and LLG is a complete system of lifelong learning and lifelong guidance system in order to facilitate citizens' access to flexible and re-acquisition of new skills through quality education throughout a person's life while respecting the equality.

Another document on follow-up strategy is the **National Programme for Learning Regions** from 2007. The document focuses on the implementation of the principle of learning regions and the promotion of stakeholder networks for the development of LLL.

Last and the newest document, which states about the LLL is Programme Declaration of the Government of the SR from 2010. It states that: *"Given the demographic development trends in society is the concept of lifelong learning, the only possible answer of responsible political representation. The Government will ensure that every citizen has equal access to quality lifelong education after finishing of compulsory education, during the working process and also in retirement age."* The Long-Term Strategy of the Ministry of Education in educational, research, development, artistic and other creative activities for universities till 2014 was approved 09.June 2010. It considers universities as creators of new knowledge and discoveries play a vital role in the continuing education system.

The educational institutions have to implement their activities in the framework defined by the law. Two laws are the most important for providers of LLL at universities:

- Lifelong Learning Act No. 568/2009 Coll.;
- Act No. 363/2007 Coll., amending and supplementing Act č.131/2002 on Higher Education.

In addition to these two laws 10 other actual laws and regulations regulate some specific activities and processes or continuing education for specific target groups (doctors, teaching staff etc.). Specific legal entities or sectoral institution provide the continuing education of employees in some sectors. This is done by specific legislation.

4. The current implementation of this legal framework

As well as studying at universities and further education is accessible to all citizens. Each University through its faculties or institutes is offering various types of LLL activities. Their accessibility depends on their type. Admission conditions and its process, condition for selection of participants, fee, the length of the study or training depends on the orientation of the educational activity. In terms of age LLL activities are accessible to all who have completed compulsory schooling. Full-time compulsory school attendance starts at the age of 6, takes ten years and lasts until the end of the school year in which the pupil reaches the age of 16. The minimum age for participation in LLL activities in universities is usually 19 years (after graduating at the secondary school). The affordability is to be said that the Slovak Republic has established no system of the incentives or bonuses to encourage the participation of inhabitants in LLL activities. An exception is the continuing education teachers in primary and secondary schools.

LLL activities in universities could be from the point of access divided into four categories:

1. **Universities of Third Age** are realized by 13 universities in Slovakia. Studying at the Universities of third Age is open to all adults older than 45 years with completed secondary education. Other input conditions are not for those studies. This three-year study programmes focus on a various area of knowledge or society. The fee is from 27€ per academic year to 67 € per academic year.
2. **Supplementary teachers' education** is governed by a specific decree of the Ministry of Education 581/2007. Graduates and students of non-teaching universities (master degree) acquire pedagogical competence to teach subjects whose content follows the content of their study programmes or passed state exams. Graduates of bachelor study program or high school graduates can gain teaching competence for execution of work masters in vocational education. Scope - 4 semesters and a minimum number of hours is determined by decree. The study is finished by the state examination. The participation in education is limited only by the capacity of the training centers (subject to the condition of education). The fee is from € 250 per 1 semester to € 850 per 1 semester. The fee rate depends on the university.
3. **Continuing education of teachers of primary and secondary schools** aims to improve and develop the competences of teachers to their profession toward improving their professional skills in line with social needs and having regard to the individual conditions of teachers, their social activity. These educational activities are becoming important LLL activities - especially for universities with pedagogical study programmes. Admission requirements depend on the form of further education. The universities could provide the different forms of teacher education under the Act No. 445/2009 Coll. They can provide updates, upgrades, specialized, functional training and qualification education. A completely new system of continuing education of the teachers was created. This system will reflect the salary of teachers and their functional classification.
4. **Short-term or long-term educational activities**, which are usually linked to professional orientation of the universities or language courses. Here is the accessibility, admission conditions and fees very individual. These activities are governed by the law on lifelong learning. All other activities that can not be included in the above categories are here.

Certain professions (doctors, lawyers, architects) have created their own system of continuing education realized by strictly specified faculties. Participation in these educational activities is clearly defined in the relevant laws.

The geographic accessibility of LLL activities at universities is very good. It is given that universities are situated throughout country. The Slovak Republic is a small country and the educational opportunities are readily accessible for all candidates.

Part-time study is another very important activity of universities. It is addressed to all candidates after secondary school graduation, whose are unable to study full-time for various reasons (work, are on maternity leave ...). External study is fully compatible with all full-time study programmes including the admission conditions, study subjects and study degree after finishing. It is prepared and approved by the same accreditation process as a full-time study. Only the organization of the study programmes and the amount of the fee (full-time study at public state universities is free of charge) is different. Opening selected accredited programmes to part-time students and the fee depend on the decision of the Scientific Council of the Faculty. Not all the study programmes are usually offered as part-time study programmes. It depends on public demand. The supervisor of the study programmes takes decisions on the organization of the programme (during one or two week concentrated blocks or during the weekends). In terms of age - 18 years is defined as the minimum limit. The upper limit is not fixed. Only medicine cannot be studied as a part-time programme. The whole process of study programmes takes place under the Act No. 363/2007 Coll., amending and supplementing Act č.131/2002 on Higher Education. But all those learning activities are realized in the formal system of education. Those activities are not described as LLL activities.

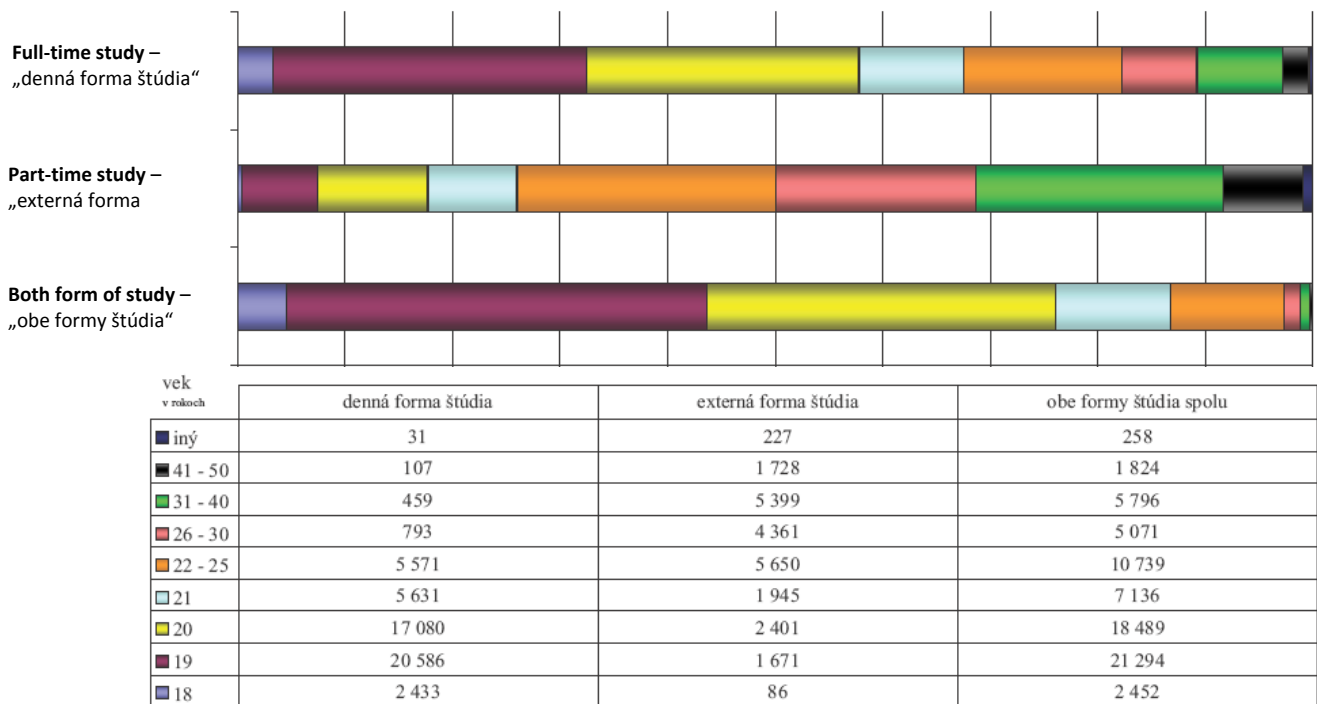
35 102 students studied in the part-time study programmes in academic year 2010/2011. The fees were from 340 € per academic year till 6 000 € per academic year.

Figure 2: Number of students in full-time and part-time study in all three forms of study (Bachelor, Master and PhD.) in academic year 2010/2011

Universities	Number of students	
	Full-time study	Part-time study
Public and state	135 043	44 615
Private	9 241	28 140
Total	144 284	72 755

Source: Ministry of Education; Annual report 2010 – Higher education in Slovakia

Figure 3: Comparing the age structure of students admitted into first year university studies in the full-time and part-time studies in academic year 2010/2011



Source: Institute of Information and Prognoses of Education; Admission to Universities in Academic Year 2010/2011 in the Figures and Graphs (2011)

5. The legal framework for the thematic research on Access

Research is systematic creative work carried out in the field of science and technology for society's needs and the development of knowledge. Research consists of basic research and applied research.

Development is systematic work in the field of science and technology using patterns and knowledge gained through research or based on practical experience in developing new materials, products, equipment, systems, methods and processes or improved them.

The aim of the Ministry of Education of Science, Research and Sports of the Republic in the field of science and research is to increase the share of profits of universities, obtained through the solution of research projects to income realized from subsidies for accredited study programmes and to systematically reduce the proportion of funds obtained in the framework of institutional support.

The government has approved the main strategic document in the field of research and development - **Long-term plan of the State Scientific and Technological Policy till 2015** in 2007. Progressive achievement of these strategies and documents will ensure the fulfillment of the objectives of the Ministry of Education.

The main objectives of the Plan of the State Scientific and Technological Policy in 2015:

- increasing the involvement of science and technology in the overall development of the Slovak Republic – a more intense involvement of science and technology in addressing the economic and social problems of Slovakia;
- in order to increase the involvement of science and technology in the overall development of Slovakia;
- ensure conditions for the development and exploitation of science and technology by setting the objectives for detailed areas.

The above-described aims are supported by legislation: Law from 3th February 2011 amending and supplementing Act. no. 172/2005 Coll. about the organization of state support R & D and the amendment of Act. no. 575/2001 Coll. about the organization of government activities and central government, as amended by Act no. 233/2008 Coll. an amending certain acts.

In the period of 2007 – 2015 the science and technology in the Slovak Republic is supported mainly from the following sources of support:

- state budget of the Slovak Republic,
- resources of the Structural Funds of the European Union,
- business sources,
- international sources.

From the state budget financial support for science and technology will be secured through the state budget chapters of:

- the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic,
- other ministries and central authorities that ensure the solution of their sectoral problems through research and development,
- The Slovak Academy of Sciences.

6. The current implementation of this legal framework

Under the Long-term plan of the State Scientific and Technological Policy till 2015 one of the substantive priorities of research and development is an area of lifestyle challenges. The activity of research and development in the social sciences should focus primarily on seeking solutions to problems of social inclusion of marginalized groups according to the document. In this area will be research dealt with the problems of education for citizenship, transformation of values and individual position in the network of social relationships, partnerships, networks and targeted activities to involve all stakeholders in the labor market created to prevent and deal with the consequences of social inclusion. Other areas of research and development: the development of methods and forms of education, effective management, internationalization of the EU space, including issues of increasing migration of population and its implications for Slovak citizens.

Lifelong learning is mentioned only in relation to staff training and scientific research. The aim is to provide the State with permanent professional growth.

According to the Law on Higher Education universities fulfill their mission by development and dissemination of knowledge through research, development or artistic and other creative activities as well as by providing continuing education.

The Long-Term Strategy in educational, research, development, artistic and other creative activities in the field of higher education by 2014 characterizes universities as a generator of new knowledge and discoveries. According to this document universities have a vital role in the continuing education. Furthermore, it is said that universities pay little attention to the further training of their employees in all positions. Professional training is lacking in the case of full-time doctoral students who are involved in the teaching process, too. That is why in the part of description of the content and methods of education, the Ministry undertakes to initiate and support projects focused on the conversion of training of teaching staff to the new needs of education and improving conditions for Educational Research.

The institutional and financial support through the Ministry is implemented through:

- the Scientific Grant Agency (hereinafter referred to as „VEGA“),
- and the Cultural and Educational Grant Agency (hereinafter referred to as „KEGA“).

VEGA, as a joint advisory body of the Deputy Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic and the Minister of Education and the President of the Slovak Academy of Sciences (hereinafter referred to as the

“SAS”) for the selection of institutional projects of public and state higher education institutions and the SAS, will continue to ensure a common competitive environment for the selection of institutional projects for the support from the state budget. The higher education projects selected for the SB support will continue to receive the support from the budget chapter of the Ministry, and the institutional projects of SAS, from the budget chapter of the SAS.

KEGA, as an advisory body of the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Education will continue to exist and will ensure the technical assessment of projects applying for support on publishing of university study texts, textbooks, and for other activities securing the teaching process in higher education institutions.

The thematic areas for applications for applied research projects in education, pedagogy, creative and performing arts through KEGA till 2014 are designed to support pedagogical models of education, new technologies, forms and methods within the school system and outside the classroom. One of the most important criteria for evaluation of these grant applications are the quality of scientific outputs of the project coordinator and his team, a list of scientific or research projects and publications. The applicants could be only universities, Slovak Academy of Sciences or the organization directly controlled by the Ministry of Education. Therefore, mainly three Departments of andragogy in the Slovak republic usually use those funds for carrying out research in the field of lifelong learning. Many of realized research activities are focused on pedagogical staff at primary, secondary school and universities due to topics. One could realize research leading to the new continuing education programmes of universities teachers, too. The outputs of individual projects are isolated and do not always available

The Strategy of Lifelong learning and Lifelong guidance describes in one of its section the optimal system of services in lifelong guidance. One of the features, which describe the complexity of this system, is the involvement of target groups in the process of the formulation, definition, identification of the offered services. They have to know their needs which are constantly changing. It is possible to map them by involving clients, respectively target groups, various providers of services, employers and policy-makers in the processes of developing the whole system. According to this document, this approach is directly linked to supporting research, theory and methodology in the field of lifelong guidance.

The aim of the document National Programme for Learning Regions is the implementation of the principle of learning regions, support of networking stakeholders for the development of lifelong learning and the creation of the networks. One of the motives of their creation is the detailed analysis of the curriculum and necessity of developing an attractive offer. This offer corresponds to the expectations of potential participants in education but also to the access of the wider range of learners. The realization of the researches, surveys, analysis of the training needs at the regional level is eligible activities of the networks. The document describes two types of networks - thematic networks and project networks. Thematic Ns are defined as a common platform for discussion and exchange of information on important issues in the field of lifelong learning, developing strategies and research.

The National Strategic Reference Framework of Slovak republic for the period 2007 and 2013 is divided into 11 operational programmes (including technical assistance). Four common horizontal priorities requiring special attention and a special approach are defined for all operational programmes: Marginalised Roma communities, Equal opportunities, Sustainable development, and Information society. All horizontal priorities are reflected in the operational programmes and centrally coordinated through coordination bodies of the horizontal priorities.

The operational programme Education, the operational programme Research and Development (executive authority - Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic) and the operational programme Employment and Social Inclusion (executive authority - Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs of the Slovak Republic) focus most on the issue of lifelong learning

from all operational programmes. The main objective of the OP Education in continuing education is to facilitate the access of the population to the repeated and flexible acquisition of new qualifications and to deep qualifications by means of good quality education acquired – in addition to the formal and non-formal systems of education, also in the informal learning system – with the support of the comprehensive guidance services.

The operational programme Employment and Social Inclusion is combined with the activities of the Regional operational programme, the operational programme Education, the operational programme Research and Development and the operational programme Healthcare. It implements activities which lead to the fulfillment of tasks in the sector of employment politics funded by the National Reform Programme. Through two priority axes, it concentrates on contributions to achieve high levels of employment, a decrease in long and term unemployment, adaptation to demographic changes and, last but not least, social inclusion. We could find illustration activities like this „Support for science and research development in the field of employment, unemployment, poverty and social exclusion, as well as social inclusion, including social work” in the description of the framework activities.

Based on the previous facts many framework activities in both operational programmes could support research. Research on lifelong learning in these objectives is not forbidden. That is why depending on the objectives, eligible activities and the maximum applicable grant could be realized research in LLL. Specific penetration of LLL and research is specific described in objective aimed at the development of educational research in the field of training people from marginalized groups. All these studies and outputs are isolated. Similar situation is in other operational programmes, which partly activities could be focused on LLL for specific target groups. Priority axis 2. of the Operational programme Education is called LLL as a basic principle of knowledge-based society.

7. Practical links between Research and Practice on Access

In the Slovak republic there are opportunities for conducting research in LLL at universities. The framework is supported by various grants and schemes that create particular financial space for its implementation. It should be said that the amount of funds allocated for science and research moves in the Slovak republic to one of the last places. Only about 0.46% of GDP was allocated from state budget in 2010. The share of private sector investment in research and development is very low - only 0.20% of the GDP. The Slovak republic also lags behind in spending from the Structural Funds. However, it is necessary to make systemic changes - changes in the management of R & D and in the system of spending funds. Functionless systems in these two areas are the major problem and the brake for future development. Universities focus their scientific and research activities and potential on other areas that are a priority for them. However it is not possible to argue that the research about LLL focused specifically on access is not realized. But the results and outputs are isolated and not always available for professionals and lay public.

These activities mostly solve problems in individual areas of interest of on team of researchers, they are not connected together. The situation is same also by the definition of new target groups for lifelong learning. Centers for continuing education in our universities may play important role in this process. Each centre has its own network of experts from university teachers, researchers and practitioners. They can spread important information about the activities of LLL through common activities and projects; significantly help in the process of increasing interest in lifelong learning at universities. On the other hand, the support from the Ministry of Education and common cooperation is necessary in the process of creating the key elements and processes, which should support of the development of LLL activities in universities.

It is also a way for colleagues to raise interest in participation in lifelong learning and to show them that the area of LLL is a particularly interesting source of research, too. The Slovak Academic Association for Lifelong Learning was established in June 2011 by the 11 Slovak universities from whole Slovak republic. The aims of the association is also to support research and lifelong learning, to seek and identify new target groups for the further development and new activities of centers for lifelong learning at universities. It is a partner for the Ministry of Education, Slovak Rectors' Conference and other institutions dealing with LLL. The area of the Slovak Republic and the number of universities give us the chance to work together and cooperate. Through the common and systematic positive pressure, discussions with stakeholders at national and local (university) level can help to carry forward the issues of lifelong learning to the forefront in universities and to include LLL not only theoretically but also practically among the main priorities of universities. Concentration of the information and outputs from many finished projects published on the common portals can be an opportunity to effectively deal with existing information, add them or use them as input for next work and for identification of new target groups in LLL at universities.

RESOURCES

1. LONG-TERM PLAN OF THE STATE SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY POLICY BY THE YEAR 2015 – National Government
2. THE DEVELOPMENT AND STATE OF THE ART OF ADULT LEARNING AND EDUCATION - National Report of Slovak Republic, Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic
3. NATIONAL STRATEGIC REFERENCE FRAMEWORK OF SLOVAK REPUBLIC FOR THE PERIOD 2007 AND 2013 – National Government
4. NATIONAL PROGRAMME FOR LEARNING REGIONS – National Government
5. LIFELONG LEARNING Act No. 568/2009 Coll
6. THEMATIC ISSUES FOR THE GRANT SCHEME KEGA - Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic
7. *REPORTS ON THE SOCIAL SITUATION OF THE POPULATION OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC FOR 2010 - Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic*
8. *NATIONAL SURVEY ON CONTINUING EDUCATIO IN SLOVAK REPUBLIC (2011) - Institute of Information and prognoses of Education*
9. *EVALUATION OF THE PROCESS OF ADMISSION TO UNIVERSITIES IN ACADEMIC YEAR 2010/2011: IN FIGURES AND GRAPHS (2011) - Institute of Information and prognoses of Education*