

# The Inspectorate of Education of the Slovak Republic

## 1. A summary profile of the Inspectorate.

The Inspectorate of the Slovak Republic in its present tasks and structure is rather young: from after the breakdown of Communist government in the early nineties. Its main task is the inspection of all schools in Slovakia with a format of full inspections, like in most European countries. These inspections are done every five years. In some samples of schools where such a full inspection is done, there is a special interest in a particular theme, for example the teaching of ICT or reading literacy provision. Also other types of thematic inspections are done.

The quality indicators that are observed and investigated are rather much the same as in most countries. They focus on “learning and teaching”, on “results of the learning in terms of observations and internal testing or national examinations”. Also “management and leadership” are inspected.

Self – evaluation is not very well developed in Slovak schools; so it is not possible for the – inspectors to build just on the results of such a self – evaluation. However; since 2006 schools are obliged to deliver a kind of self – evaluation report, SSI encourages school self – evaluation and inspectors use this as a source of information.

Apart from the not – public reports about inspections in individual schools – with also recommendations for schools to improve things - , the Inspectorate publishes its annual Report about the State of Slovak Education. It is for the Ministry and the Parliament and contains also recommendations and advice.

The Inspectorate has some 190 inspectors. They have to have experience as teachers and have to have also other qualifications based on Slovak legislation, e.g. leadership/management experience.

Recently important changes in School legislation have been passed; these will have important influence on the work of the Inspectorate. New methodologies as well as instruments have been adopted and are being tested. The details will be provided in a later version of the SSI profile.

( Johan C. van Bruggen, September 2009)

## 2. The Education System.

### 2.1. Structure, tables, numbers.

ISCED level	Sector	Name of subdivision in your country	Age range of pupils	Number of schools/ institutions <sup>(1)</sup>	Number of pupils <sup>(1)</sup>	Number of teachers/ employees <sup>(1)</sup>
0	Pre-school (nursery education)	Kindergarten	3-6	2910	139 374	13164
1 and 2A	Primary education	Elementary school Primary (or basic) school 1st stage (grade 1 – 4) and Primary school 2nd stage (grade 5 – 9)	6-15	2283	485018	30 449
3A, 3C	Secondary education	Secondary schools gymnasias, technical secondary schools and conservatories, vocational secondary schools and centres for practical training	15-18(19)	814	312 525 Including external students	26 660 Including external teachers
4	Non-university higher education	n.a.				
5A, 5B	University			30+3 belonging to other ministries	132 499 daily st. +77 195 external students	12194 (including part time lecturers)
	Adult education		18 and more	number of courses	5,6% of population aged 25 – 64 years (source:EU Labour Force	

					Survey, Eurostat,2 007)	
2A, 2B, 2C, 3C	Special education	Special schools: primary, secondary, practical schools and special vocational schools	2-19	394	34351	4437 - teachers in all types of special schools

3. (1). Our reference year is the schoolyear (or academic year) 2007/2008. If there is no information available for the reference year, please provide te most recent information for each sector.

## 2.2. Description.

School inspection is responsible for inspection of pre-school education (ISCED 0), primary education (ISCED 1, 2), secondary education (ISCED 3), special education (ISCED 2A, 2B, 2C, 3C), schools for special-interest education: basic schools of art, school facilities: educational facilities, special educational facilities, educational facilities for prevention and facilities for substitute education.

“Základná škola” – as a part of the entire system of education and training - prepares pupils for their further studies in secondary schools and for their future practical life. Since 1997, the basic school consists of 9 grades and two stages: the first stage (Grades 1-4, ISCED 1) and the second stage (Grades 5-9, ISCED 2) . The pupils are admitted to Grade 1 at the age of 6 years. The compulsory school attendance lasts 10 years. After completing “Základná škola”- the basic school - , the pupils are required to apply for a secondary school. The content of education in basic schools is based on study plans and framework curricula. Such curricula are designed for the standard population. Since 2008/2009 schools are obliged to create a School programme with some additional alternatives to study plans. At some schools various classes for meeting specific interests and skills of students are formed (e.g., extra foreign languages, mathematics and natural sciences, sports, art, music, or technical education). Basically schools have an option to add extra lessons to the core study plan or to provide education aimed at creating new skills and/or ICT, etc. and to make the school programme specific in their school. Basic schools can integrate pupils with special educational needs.

However, there are special schools for students with more severe forms of handicap.

Pupils with special educational needs can attend: apprentice schools “učilište”- ISCED 2C and special schools - ISCED 2B. Students of the special schools can continue their study at special vocational schools – ISCED 3C. There they can get a certificate of apprenticeship that depends on the level of their handicap. The apprentice school represents a special level and type of school which prepares the pupils for performing trades upon completing the compulsory schooling in a lower grade of basic school or those who failed to complete grade 9 successfully and therefore cannot advance to secondary school. (The apprentice school is not an equal type of secondary vocational school). The objective of special schools is to provide education using special educational and training methods, tools and forms for pupils and students with mental, sensorial or physical handicaps, with dysphasia, with multiple

handicaps, maladjusted pupils, ill or weakened pupils placed in medical facilities and to prepare them for their integration into the working process and social life. Special schools include special primary (basic) schools, special secondary schools, practical schools and vocational schools.

The secondary education is currently in three streams of education: in gymnasia “Gymnázium”, technical secondary schools “Stredná odborná škola” and vocational secondary schools “Stredné odborné učilište”. The last two types of secondary schools can create one joint educational institution – an associated secondary school “Združená stredná škola”. The secondary schools provide – for pupils who completed the basic school - the following kinds of education:

- general secondary education with a school leaving certificate (gymnasia)
- technical secondary education with a school leaving certificate
- higher vocational education
- vocational secondary education.

The updated curricula of gymnasia underline the development of cognitive abilities and activities of the students, their preparation for higher education, independent creative work, a higher level of communication, the acquisition of functional literacy, the ability to work with information. They also strengthen the focus on ecological, health and environmental education and humanities. With regard to the new concept of secondary education also the new concept of school-leaving examinations “maturita – maturitná skúška” has been approved. For the school-leavers of gymnasia the post-secondary forms of vocational education have been introduced.

The mission of technical secondary schools (TSS) in the light of the education law in force is to provide for pupils vocational secondary education with a school-leaving certificate and higher vocational education. Also to prepare them for occupations and professional activities in all spheres of economy, administration, culture, art and social life, and, at the same time, to prepare them for following higher education and further education. TSS provide education at the third level (ISCED 3A) completed by a school-leaving examination, but also at the fourth level (ISCED 4A) in post-secondary qualification study, and higher vocational education in vocational post-secondary education leading to “graduate” diploma (ISCED 5B). TSS provide preparation of specialists for individual industries, such as the construction, transportation, agriculture, food industry, services, economics, financial sector, culture, state administration and other areas of social life. The curriculum sometimes involves a larger number of lessons in foreign languages, and a range of interdisciplinary subjects – informatics, computing, environmental protection and also management, marketing, entrepreneurship, gastronomy, banking, labour psychology, ethics, mechatronics, legal education, introduction to the world of work, and others.

The mission of the secondary vocational schools (SVS) is to prepare students for skilled performance in workers’ trades and professional activities corresponding to the system of trades and for performance of some more demanding workers’ trades and technical-economic activities of operational nature in the study fields in production and services in all branches of national economy. The content of education and training consists of general and vocational part. The vocational part with vocational (practical) training which makes up the basis of a

graduates' profile, predominate. Depending on the level of achieved education (final examination – “záverečná skúška”) the school leavers of SVS receive a certificate on education with the level of qualification indicated as follows: 1. trained, 2. instructed, or 3. qualified (certificate on apprenticeship – “výučný list”).

The Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic is providing budget for the schools via the school providers (the municipalities or regional school departments or school boards, but also private or church entities) who distribute them to schools. Private and church schools can be partly financed from fees paid by students' parents.

All levels and kinds of schools are obliged to fulfil the core state curriculum standards, approved by the Ministry of Education. All subjects have educational standards and some so – called “exemplified tasks”- specific examples or models for the compulsory phenomena or content in the curricula. According to the law (Act 596/2003 Z.z. on School organisation and school local governance) the head teacher is responsible for meeting the educational standards in the teaching programmes and teaching plans. He or she has to observe c.q. to supervise the quality of education at school.

Nationwide testing focused on educational standards for maths and the language of instruction (mother tongue) is provided at primary schools at the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> grade. No other nationwide testing is currently applied at Základná škola. However the new institution NUCEM – responsible for national and international testing of educational achievement that has been set recently - is planning to prepare other national achievement tests in the future. The Slovak Republic has participated in international studies, e.g. PISA, PIRLS, TIMSS in several rounds.

Secondary schools (with the school leaving examination called “maturitná skúška” that provide pupils with the school-leaving certificate – “maturitné vysvedčenie”) are involved in the system of external state examinations combined with internal school final examinations.

The general rules concerning quality assurance are obligatory for all schools. Also for private and church schools, the school programme and other documents have to be approved by the Ministry of Education. These schools are also inspected by SSI, as all other public schools.

### **3. The Tasks, Responsibilities and Roles of the Inspectorate – general statements.**

#### **3.1. Legal basis; description in official documents.**

Based on legislation of the Slovak Republic (Act 137/ 2005 Z.z. On school inspection), the Slovak State School Inspectorate is responsible for checking the quality of the school management, the teaching and learning process, and the material and technical conditions in schools and institutions.

The school inspectorate performs the supervisory function on behalf of the State. The school inspectorate supervises and observes the quality of education and management of educational affairs, as well as the conditions in which education is provided, including practical education in schools and other educational institutions, such as centres of practical training, vocational training and educational institutions.

The school inspectorate also deals with complaints and petitions in matters of education.

Inspection of schools is performed by the employees of the "State School Inspectorate" (SSI) - the school inspectors. SSI is established as a state administration institution in education. The eight regional SSI - centres are the executive branches of the State School Inspectorate. The SSI is independent in its work and is acting in accordance with laws and other generally valid legal norms, acts and decrees. The State School Inspectorate (SSI) has its registered headquarters in Bratislava and is financed from the budget of the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic. The main authority of the State School Inspection is the Senior Chief Inspector, who is installed in his or her position or dismissed from it by the Minister of Education. The position is held for 5 years.

In the post WWII period the new Education act of 1948 on a unified school system as well as other laws played a key role. The laws and codes defined the absolute subordination of the inspectorate to the state administration - in its role of supervision, instruction, evaluation and cooperation

Substantial changes have occurred after November 1989, when the key role of the Communist Party has been abolished as well as the state monopoly on foundation and administration of schools. The roles changed in connection with the adoption of amendments to educational laws and decrees based on the new mission and objectives of education and relevant forms and methods of quality achievement.

In the past the start and development of „supervision over schools” were connected with the church. The church was the main school founder and provider. Since the second half of the 18th century the state began to play a more significant role in the school supervision, and the influence of the church began to diminish. School inspection during the reign of emperor Joseph II was regulated by an instruction (law) adopted in 1788. According to the Act XXVIII of 1876 the educational authorities and the school inspectorate (or supervision) were unified and much improved. The „royal school supervisors” inspected all types of schools – church schools, municipal schools, private schools, state schools. This situation lasted until 1918. In the period of the first Czechoslovak Republic the inspectorate was organized at the district level. School inspectors were assigned to inspection districts supervising all types of schools in that district, except higher education facilities. The quality of supervision was improved due to the introduction of the compulsory state examination for potential school inspectors.

Nowadays school inspectors gather information based on observations in schools and interviews with the school management and teachers using a specific methodology and specific quality indicators. The reports have to be provided to schools or other inspected institutions. SSI has to provide an overview of the overall outcomes about quality in the annual report submitted to the Minister of Education.

The State School Inspectorate works with an annual plan of activities, dealing with regular full school inspections once in five years; and specific or thematic tasks to be fulfilled according to requirements of the ministry, the school provider or the SSI internal plan.

The tasks are carried out in accordance with the agreed schedule and inspection methodology agreed centrally. The methodology is used both for primary and secondary schools and other school facilities. In specific cases or themes or for specific tasks a specific approach or framework and corresponding methodology or instructions are prepared. There are no differences for the regional aspects. The SSI policy is applied nation wide.

In case of shortcomings and insufficiency in any aspect of inspection in a school or facility, the SSI applies various measures and proposals. These vary from recommendations or new instructions towards new examinations, or sanctions if laws or regulations have been violated.

Financial audits are not carried out by SSI – the school providers (municipalities or local administration bodies in case of state, c.q. public schools) are responsible for the budgetary evaluation and the financial audit and report.

### 3.2. Mission statement.

The State School Inspectorate:

- collects and processes facts and findings on the quality of education and does so in co-operation with other State Administration Institutions dealing with education as well as with school providers and educational institutions;
- informs the school management and the school providers about problems, mistakes and failures discovered within the scope of the inspection and proposes measures to be adopted for the improvement;
- delivers the necessary information to other State Administration Institutions dealing with education and instruction; institutions that approve the establishment and closure of schools and educational institution;
- informs about changes in schools' structure, and about the effectiveness of the use of material and technical tools and facilities for educational purposes;
- shares its experience with methods and practices of educational management with responsible managers in education; during seminars and meetings and with teachers during in-service training.

SSI works hard to improve the situation towards a better quality of education; by carrying out supervisory activities as defined in the law. SSI not only monitors the current situation in schools and school facilities but SSI provides information on their findings to the Ministry and all relevant stakeholders and proposes suggestions for improvement.

The findings of inspections and analysis are presented in public reports and articles: in magazines and papers for teachers or for educational researchers.

The State School Inspectorate does not supervise the financial matters of schools, neither the legal matters connected with staff employment.

Short and summarized: The core mission can be formulated in two ways. The first one: “To identify the school’s strengths and areas for improvement, to find problems that are related to violated legislation and to order and assign their improvement. To inform a school provider about unsatisfactory school facilities and problems connected with weaknesses in the teaching”.

The second one is more formal in line with the formal regulations: “To be responsible for evaluating the quality of school management, the teaching and learning process, the material and technical conditions in schools and school institutions and to solve complaints and

petitions”. This mission has been formulated and developed since January 1, 2000 in a continuous process.

Its more general aim is to improve the quality of education in all aspects. By their activities SSI- inspectors have a substantial impact on schools to adapt the learning and teaching process according to the actual educational knowledge, needs and expectations and on stimulating schools to reach overall improvements in all aspects of the process.

### 3.3. Which organizations and practices are inspected except schools?

School inspection is carried out in all state, private and church kindergartens, primary schools, all types of secondary schools, centres for practical training, special schools (primary, secondary, practical schools and special vocational schools), basic schools of arts, school educational facilities (school clubs for children, centres of leisure-time and school centres for special-interest activities, youth homes/boarding schools), special educational facilities (facilities of educational prevention – educational and psychological prevention centres, therapeutic and educational sanatoriums and diagnostic centres, facilities for substitute education – re-educational centres for children, re-educational youth centres), facilities for educational counselling (educational and psychological advisory centres, facilities for special educational counselling), special-interest educational facilities (language schools and State language schools).

## **4. Full Inspection of Schools as a Task of the Inspectorate.**

### 4.1. General description.

The Slovak Inspectorate is in a process of transition now. The new School Act has come into force since September 2008. As a consequence the full inspections in the previous format - from the period before 2008 - are currently not carried out. The new instruments and indicators – following the concept of the new School Act - are being prepared now in order to check the implementation of the School Act provisions in the schools. Other aspects of quality have to be inspected and also other indicators belonging to the aspect “the teaching and learning process”.

Full or complex inspections in the previous format (before the New School Act) were focused on the evaluation of the entire school or school facility - on the inspected subjects or general themes. It basically observes: management and leadership, the quality of the teaching and learning process, the achievement of standards, the overall conditions of education, the adherence to binding regulations and instructions, etc. It is the same for all types of schools and school facilities providing education or other services on primary and secondary level. Sometimes specific topics are inspected (e.g. reading literacy provision) or within a full inspection special attention is given to certain specific issues or specific goals attainment based on requirements of the Ministry or school providers. Specific guidelines or instruments have been created. In case of specific tasks or for specific subjects, SSI may call for an external experts' assistance.

The aim of a full inspection is to provide a general objective view on the quality of the indicators that have been agreed; and write a report on the findings. The outcomes serve the schools and school providers to implement the necessary changes and serves as the source for

school self-evaluation. The shortcomings are identified, the consequences are applied. The implementation of suggested improvements is checked c.q. monitored in a follow-up inspection. It is up to the school management to take the action and to make necessary changes. A time line for the action depends on the severity of shortcomings and suggested deadlines.

#### 4.2. The main aspects of quality to be inspected.

- The quality of teaching and learning process; with key aspects:
  - Quality of the teaching process and provision of the curriculum
  - Conditions for teaching, created by the teacher
  - Effectiveness of teaching
  - Quality of pupils' learning
  - Education standards achievement (the level of pupils' knowledge)
  - Students' results
  - Personal and social development of pupils/students
  - Support for pupils
  - School activities with significant impact on educational school performance
  - Preventive and multidisciplinary activities
  
- The conditions of education:
  - Teachers' qualification
  - School area facilities, conditions, school buildings
  - Material and technical equipment (including didactic tools)
  - Psycho-hygienic conditions
  - Health protection and safety in school
  - Security at school
  
- Management and leadership:
  - The development plan, the structure of the curriculum or school programme,
  - The main goals (aims) of education
  - Courses in the school programmes
  - Planning
  - Effectiveness of leadership
  - Control; the monitoring system
  - Information system
  - Pedagogical and school documentation
  - School legislature and adherence to the norms and regulations
  - School discipline and complaining procedures
  - Progress of achieving the targets and aims in the teaching plans and school programmes
  - The quality of the teaching process and the applied methodology
  - Professional and pedagogical guidance
  - Qualification of a school principal required for the position and further professional development or in service training of teachers.

#### 4.3. The inspection process. (According to the previous model)

The initiator of an inspection is the Inspectorate itself. The inspection is planned in a five – year cycle of school inspections in which ideally all schools are inspected once in five years. But an inspection can also start on the basis of a complaint or on the basis of a request of a school founder or provider or on the request of the ministry.

The school (teachers, school principal) are informed about the planned inspection 4- 6 weeks before the inspection takes place. The inspectorate requests pre-inspection information: a questionnaire to be filled in by the school principal, a school report, the school plan, the timetable, etc. The inspection itself in the school phase takes 2-5 days depending of the size and complexity of the school.

The school (provider, headteacher) and the teachers are informed about the results of the evaluation in written form 21 days after the accomplishment of the inspection.

This scheme counts for all schools, independent of sector and type.

The team of inspectors consists of 2 – 5 inspectors depending on the size of schools.

Before the inspection itself the inspectors have gathered the pre-inspection information. They study the pedagogical documentation, the school plan, the school reports, the school website, etc. The head of the inspection team is planning the schedule and communicates with the school management; she/he hands over the questionnaires for the management. He/she also instructs other inspectors and involved experts.

The school (the teachers) are informed about the results of the evaluation in written form within 21 days after the accomplishment of the inspection.

#### 4.4. Practical organization.

In the phase of direct contact with a school, inspectors take the following actions: lesson observations, interviews, participations at school and department meetings. They are submitting other questionnaires, and do school building and facility inspections.

The inspectors can have different specialisations, dealing with specific issues if followed. The team is headed by an experienced inspector responsible for the organisation, process and outcomes (report) of the inspection.

In case of specialised, technical secondary schools or specific school facilities experts from outside are involved as well.

For various sectors the concept and methodology of inspection is about the same, however some tools and some questionnaires are specifically modified according to the type of inspected school or school facility. Also some indicators are created for specific purposes.

The tertiary sector is not inspected by SSI. Neither the sector of adult education with the exception of public or /state language schools.

*Questionnaires* are used in the preparation phase and during the inspection process.

There is a questionnaire for the first “Orientation”; to be filled in by a school provider who requests an inspection. It helps the inspectorate to focus the inspection on certain areas of concern.

The inspectorate requests to fill in the “Informational inspection questionnaire” (for the administration, the school provider, the school board) in advance. The “Inspection questionnaire of school atmosphere” has to be filled in by the teachers. They also fill in the “Autodiagnostic questionnaire” after the lesson observation. And they fill in a questionnaire in which is asked how and whether they apply fundamental pedagogical documents.

The inspectorate uses also questionnaires during the process of inspection and in particular when teachers and other staff are interviewed or observed. The questionnaires are “scales” on which the inspectors score there interpolation of what has been said in the interview or seen in classes. These scale questionnaires are working instruments for inspectors: record sheets, scale profiles, atmosphere scales, and records of observations. For example inspectors use a `Scale inspection questionnaire` with 70 questions dealing with the quality of school management and school activities; scored according to a scale with expressions of frequency – always, often, sometimes, rarely, never.

Inspectors use also an Inspection questionnaire of school and class atmosphere – scale profile. Inspection records are electronically processed

*Interviews* (directed or free) are done with the members of the school administration, the pedagogical coordinator, the coordinator of drugs prevention, the coordinator of environmental education, the coordinator of parenting. Also the school management, the heads of departments, specific educational coordinators (mentioned above), advisors, school psychologist are interviewed to provide supplementary information or to clarify some aspects of the school environment or the educational process. In case of felt problems - for example signals of inaccuracy - more information is looked for via interviews with involved staff (eventually members of the school board, other teachers, parents, students...)

*Observations:* there are pedagogical visits of selected lessons; in compulsory, optional and facultative subjects. The choice of these lessons is based on sampling and particular aspects of a certain specific school inspection. The inspection record takes two perspectives: 1. The level of teaching from the viewpoint of the teacher (effectiveness of teacher’s activities, conditions for learning created by the teacher, the effectiveness of teaching organisation); 2. The level of teaching from the viewpoint of a student - effectiveness of students’ activity, the level of their knowledge, skills and competencies, educational results.

Observed are also the interior an exterior of the school. And the environmental factors.

Also meetings of methodical authorities and observations of after-school activities (cultural, sport, social action or activity, club activities) are carried out during a full inspection; in accordance with the possibilities of the school inspection.

*The use of tests and benchmarks:* The inspectorate sometimes uses own self-made inspection tests focused on different subjects. These tests are self made or prepared by specialists/experts from outside SSI. These tests measure the performance of educational standards.

Inspectors also survey achieved students’ results: control tasks and records based on practical activities that are prescribed by teaching plans, students’ exercise books, handwork, drawings, etc.

Results of testing – 9th grade (last year of Základná škola) – from maths and language of instruction are analysed. In secondary schools the school’s results based on the external part of final school leaving examinations (called maturitná skúška).

Currently there are no other nationwide standardized tests. However, some are planned to be developed by the new national institution NUCEM – National Institute for Certified Educational Measurement.

*Documents:* Currently after adoption of the new School Act great attention is being paid to School Educational Programme that has to be prepared by each school since September 2008. School inspection checks the adherence of the programme to the obligatory documents reflecting the educational policy. Inspectors do analysis of the pedagogical and working documentation of the responsible head teacher or school management and staff: the report on education, the achieved results; the school conditions from the previous school year, the school plans, the school rules, documentation of the pedagogical coordinator, the coordinator of drug prevention, the coordinator of environmental education, the coordinator of parenting, the school website, the school plan or school programme, etc. The details can differ every year according to the annual plan of inspection and followed priorities.

*Guidelines in use for inspectors:* Inspection activities are carried out on the basis of integrated methods according to the relevant methodology of the particular inspection task - indicators. Adequate inspection strategies are used, the documents and instruments are regularly checked and latest practices and innovations are implemented. The methodology, concept and instruments are updated on a regular basis for various types and levels of schools and/or school facilities. The guidelines and instruments are uniform for all inspectors. Indicators are customized according to the current needs and inspected issues, topics or tasks.

All inspectors use the following guidelines during a full inspection: ( At this moment new instruments have been developed and are being checked and guidelines have been updated) .

- Methodical guidelines to accomplish a full inspection.
- An outline for the report about the full inspection.
- Evaluation criteria for full inspection.
- Other auxiliary documentation (guides, questionnaires) as attachments.

*Other tools:* Meetings or consultations with school staff, with a representative of the school provider, with the self-governing bodies. Information on facilities of educational counseling, participation in advisory boards of the principal, in school competitions and exhibitions.

#### 4.5. Reporting with a judgment about the school’s quality and the possible consequences.

The quality level of the inspected domains and aspects (i.e. school educational programme, school management, conditions and course of education, process and results) is assessed by the given assessment scale:

<i>Written assessment</i>	<i>Assessment according to positives and negatives</i>
<b><i>very good</i></b>	<i>Majority of positives</i>
<b><i>good</i></b>	<i>Positives prevail</i>
<b><i>average</i></b>	<i>Balance of positives and negatives</i>

<i>less satisfactory</i>	Negatives prevail
<i>unsatisfactory</i>	Majority of negatives

Each member of the inspection team submits a part of the report. All information is put together by the head of the team and the report is finalized. It has to be provided to the head of the school and discussed with the management within 21 days since the last day of the inspection.

Depending on the seriousness of the findings or problematic issues, the follow up inspection is planned; checking if relevant measures have been taken and improvements **have been** implemented.

After the school phase is finished there may be a discussion about the results and conclusions of the inspection with the headmaster of the school, as well as with the staff members concerned. If applicable, such a discussion about the results and conclusions of the inspection is also held with the school provider or its representative, because the school provider is responsible for establishing the appropriate conditions for education.

Among the responsibilities of the SSI there is also a task to share information with responsible managers in education (during seminars and meetings) and with the teachers during in-service training.

After a school inspection - depending on the nature of the school inspection findings - the following measures might be imposed:

- recommendations
- warnings
- the decision that certain conclusions have to be adopted by the institution that has been inspected
- given tasks
- given tasks to eliminate serious mistakes and failures found out
- postponing the ( repeated) appointment of the head teacher of the school when valid rules and regulations have been broken.

Besides highlighting the strengths, the inspectors have the task to define weak points of the school, to mention areas for improvement, to indicate violated regulations and legislation.

Results of all full inspections are summarized in an annual report that is submitted to the minister. This report has a uniform structure and involves: school strengths, the areas for improvement, trends and long-term persisting problems.

In case of serious quality problem, school inspection findings can result (especially with private schools) in financial budget restrictions.

In the case of serious negative findings (significant failings in the process of management and leadership, in the process of teaching, etc.) and lack of elimination during the assigned time, the chief inspector - after negotiations with the school provider- submits the proposal to the Ministry of Education to close the school and exclude it from the national school network

system. The Ministry makes the last decision. In the case of serious problems in management, the headmaster can be dismissed.

If the school inspectors will discover – in the follow-up inspection - that not all mistakes and failures found in the previous school inspection, have been properly handled, and/or when the proper conditions for the inspection performance have not been created the inspectorate may impose a financial punishment on the responsible employee of the school concerned.

If there are some less important failings, SSI can use some measures determined by the law. If there are options to handle these, the school has to take measures to eliminate the shortcomings. If there are no attempts to improve all failings, SSI has to take measures by itself. In case of more serious failings, the school inspectorate gives a binding decision to eliminate them immediately. SSI accepts a certain required time for improvement and carries out a follow up inspection focused on identified areas for improvement. Schools have a chance to express their view of the inspection findings and to react.

The proportion of judgements about schools can be given but has to be read with caution because it is an average over various school sectors. And the numbers of schools that have been inspected differs per sector. But the figures give some indication: very good – 8 % of the schools, good – 56 %, average – 35, 5 %, less satisfactory – 0, 5 %, unsatisfactory- 0, %.

#### 4.6. Full inspection of non – public schools.

The same rules concerning quality assurance are obligatory for all schools. For private and church schools, their school programme and documents have to be approved by the Ministry of Education. These schools are also inspected by SSI, as well as other public schools.

The same methodology for accomplishment of a full inspection goes for all types of schools. However, private and church schools follow partially different provisions, so these have to be monitored in a slightly different way.

We need to stress again that currently new models of full inspections have been prepared following the new concepts and legal acts in education. Full inspections are not carried out fully at the moment; however the new model aimed at adherence to the new School Act and following different criteria is to be tested.

### **5. Inspection of the School's Self – Evaluation.**

#### 5.1. Obligation of schools concerning quality assurance and improvement.

School self-evaluation in the common concept has not been fully adopted in the Slovak Republic. However, the first steps toward school self-evaluation have been taken. According to the regulation, schools are supposed to write an annual report on their education, on achieved results of education and on conditions. There is a given structure for the report and school providers are offering some instruction how to deal with it. The majority of topics and areas coincide with the aspects and cues in the full inspection: programme, management, conditions, processes, results. Self-evaluation focuses at the fulfilment of the school programme. The annual report is written by the management on the basis of internal findings and results. The inspectorate is not involved in the process of its preparation.

This report is submitted to the school provider and published on the school's website. The report involves some components of self-evaluation and is compulsory since December 2006. School reports are used as a source for the inspection- team that compares their findings with data and evaluation results mentioned in the report. The school inspection can verify the credibility of this report in the case that a school founder asks for this.

This new phenomenon was put in practice just about three years ago and schools are learning how to handle the format and content of the report. The aim of this report is to reflect on the various factors and indicators of quality. SWOT analysis is included. After the approval by the school provider and after its recommendation or suggestions, it is expected that the school implements improvements and possible new concepts into the teaching programme for the next school year.

SSI uses this report as a starting point for inspection to gain more information.

#### 5.2. Standpoint of the inspectorate about the inspection of school – self –evaluation.

SSI supports the process of schools' self-evaluation and is involved in the project of developing new criteria and document on schools self evaluation. The official title of the ESF project is: "Externé hodnotenie kvality školy podporujúce sebahodnotiace procesy a rozvoj školy" - External school quality evaluation supporting school self-evaluation and development. Practice is only beginning.

#### 5.3. Reporting on the school's self – evaluation and possible consequences.

Is not yet done, however SSI is aware of the positive effects and importance of a correct self-evaluation report and is supporting the development process of such a document and quality standards development. It is hoped that such an instrument for the school self evaluation is the outcome of the new SSI project (see above).

### **Inspection of particular Themes of Quality.**

#### 5.4. General position.

The starting point of this type of inspection is not the whole school (full or whole school inspection), but a particular topic, theme, domain or actor. Domain(s) or /actor(s) can vary greatly. Some examples: an inspection could be concentrated on domains like "quality of teaching in pre-primary education", or "the quality of teaching and learning in mathematics in pre – university secondary education", or "the school's compliance with statutory regulations concerning time to offer teaching in vocational schools", or "cross-curricular work in primary schools", or "study guidance in higher education", etc. Such themes or topics are inspected in a sample of schools with the intention to report at the national level.

Such thematic inspections at system level by taking a sample of schools for specific inspections do take place in the Slovak Republic.

Some of these inspections are the tasks of so - called "higher attention"- included in the full or thematic inspection. These are specified in the annual plan (inspection schedule of SSI) depending on the current issues in the educational process that need higher attention and

requirements of the Ministry of Education. Attention is also given to implementation of the new curricula or new competences; e.g. ICT competences, reading literacy, testing of foreign language skills, or the conditions of children from socially deprived surrounding. Sometimes there is also an audit of the conditions of services in guidance centres for pupils; or a thematic inspection of new forms of external and internal testing at national level (school leaving exam – maturitná skúška, national assessment in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade of basic school, etc.)

Some of these themes with a specific interest are inspected every year.

In 2007 – 2008 these were:

The monitoring of the implementation of reading literacy skills in the educational process in school activities: the verification of the development of reading literacy skills in primary schools. Also the monitoring of the provision of reading literacy activities in different subjects of the primary school/ZŠ - Basic school. The purpose is: to investigate and describe and assess the current situation in the provision and acquiring of reading literacy at primary and lower secondary education.

- To follow the professionalism of teaching and teachers, the fulfilling of the teaching standards, the atmosphere in classes, the use of teaching aids and methods.
- The prevention of drug addictions as part of the educational process.
- In the current school year the development of ICT competences is followed with special attention.
- Also the situation and special care devoted to children from socially deprived families and neighborhoods
- The stage of the school- programme- development in the basic schools of art (optional attendance).
- The monitoring of standards achievement in foreign languages at the 9<sup>th</sup> grade at schools with a different language of instruction for language minorities, in particular Hungarian.
- The monitoring of the external part of the school leaving exam at selected secondary grammar schools ( Gymnázia)
- The monitoring of the quality of the professional education and the equipment of facilities for teaching practical skills.
- The monitoring of the external part of the school leaving exam at selected vocational schools and specialized secondary schools.
- The level and state of the individual integration of students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) at various types of schools.
- The monitoring of the admission procedure at given types of school.
- An audit of the procedure of admission to the schools of art with a compulsory practical/talent entrance exam
- The monitoring of the implementation of pre- reading literacy strategies in kindergartens.

- The monitoring of the national assessment in mathematics and mother tongue in the 9th grade of primary schools ( Základná škola; Základná škola in our concept is Primary plus junior Secondary school)
- An audit of the state and conditions of the professional services in the field of educational advisory, pedagogical and psychological care for children.

The findings are processed in a special report on each aspect.

Topics or themes that are inspected every year are: the external part of the school leaving exam at selected schools; and the national assessment in the 9th grade of primary schools.

### 5.5. Examples of particular themes or topics.

In 2007 – 2008 a number of 689 thematic inspections or inspections of particular domains were carried out as “extra interest topics” in usual school inspections.

Topics or themes were:

1. Testing of 9<sup>th</sup> grade of ZŠ( Základná škola ) samples in English and German language command according to educational standards and findings on the personal conditions, state and equipment of teaching foreign languages (questionnaires for head teachers, teachers and pupils).
2. Supervision of the external and written part of the secondary school leaving exam (maturitná skúška) at selected Gymnázia (Secondary Grammar Schools) .
3. Provision of human rights education in all types of schools - education towards human rights.
4. Provision of professional education in secondary vocational schools and apprentice schools, monitoring of places of practical education - workshops equipment and machinery for teaching professional working skills.
5. Monitoring of the final school-leaving exam execution in vocational schools and specialised secondary schools.
6. Current stage of the process of integration concerning students with special educational needs of primary and secondary schools.
7. Admission procedures at upper-secondary stage of post graduate study at certain programmes of vocational schools.
8. Admission procedures of specialised secondary art schools.
9. Monitoring the state of implementation of pre-reading literacy activities at kindergartens.

There were 205 so called informative inspections carried out in school year 2007/2008:

1. Monitoring of the national assessment in the 9th grade of Základná škola) 2007/2008
2. Monitoring of the internal part of the school leaving exam at selected secondary schools (bilingual gymnasia). 2006/2007.
3. Audit of the usage of relaxing and protecting-rooms or - facilities 2006/2007.
4. Audit of the state and conditions of professional services in the field of educational advisory, pedagogical and psychological care for children. 2007/2008

#### 5.6. Processes and methods in thematic inspections.

The thematic inspections and informative inspections are carried out according to the inspection - plan or on impulse of the ministry or of a school provider. The schools are not informed in advance. The inspectorate does not request pre-inspection information. The school/teacher/other actors are informed about the results of the evaluation in a report on the findings within 21 days after the inspection. There are no follow-up inspections in case of inspection of particular domains.

There is a specific procedure/methodology instruction for each inspection depending on the nature and scope of the given theme or domain of inspection updated and specified in the SSI annual inspection plan which is compulsory for all inspectors. The time varies: a day for an informative inspection; one to three days for a thematic inspection.

Every year in case of a new domain a new uniform framework or instruments (questionnaires, tests, plans, etc. are prepared centrally with detailed descriptions of the inspection procedure. It comprises instruction on each aspect of inspection to be followed, including the type of questionnaire to be used, the methods and forms of inspection, the methodology, and recommendations on the process and instruction on processing of the findings. New electronic forms and programmes have been developed to record and process the data and findings. These can be used to process the information/data on the domain across the country. Agreed norms of assessment are used in all inspection centers as well as the same procedures. Due to the new School Act adopted in September 2008, some new indicators **have been** proposed and some instruments are being redrafted. New procedures are developed to monitor some new domains.

Observations were done in classes, focussing on what pupils did in the lesson: knowledge, relation to the teacher, schoolmates, effectiveness of learning, personality development. The observations also focussed on the teachers: relation to the pupils, pedagogical skills, methods and forms of work, effectiveness of teaching. Documents of the school about this topic were analysed: teaching plans, the national syllabus, the subject standard, records from the meetings of the subject committee in the school.

This special attention during the full inspection is given by the usual team for that inspection.

For other thematic or informative inspections the way of work is comparable – depending on the theme or topic.

#### 5.7. Inspection of staff.

This is not done.

#### 5.8. The judgment about themes, topics and staff and its possible consequences.

This judgment is given in the reports for a school or in a thematic report and in the annual report of the Slovak Inspectorate.

## **6. Advisory Tasks of the Inspectorate.**

### 6.1. Areas and Tasks.

According to the law the inspectorate is not responsible for providing advice for schools or teachers.

Depending on the results of the inspection recommendations are given and measures to be taken are formulated in the report. Informal discussion – in particular with head teachers - often takes place in this phase.

Advice to the Ministry is given in the form of the annual report about the state and standard of the education at schools and educational facilities with the recommendations

### 6.2. Practices.

## **7. Other Tasks of the Inspectorate.**

### 7.1. Curriculum development.

The inspectorate is not responsible for developing curricula; the responsible authorities can take data from the above mentioned annual report's outcomes and recommendations. However, inspectors are often involved in cooperation with other educational bodies (e.g. the National Institute for Education – SPU) in the process of curricula development depending on their background and expertise. The staff of SSI is also involved in special committees, installed by the Ministry of Education in the process of national policy development, e.g. definition of Foreign Language Policy, preparation and commenting/revision of educational materials, acts / School Acts, Act on Teachers Qualifications, etc.

### 7.2. Data bases.

A specific organisation - the Institute for Information and Predictions - is responsible for the development and maintenance of data bases in the educational area.

The SSI maintains data bases of the audited schools for its own use. It has created new software tools for the collection and processing of the data gathered by the inspectors. The inspectors use the special tools and fill them in electronically. They are processed at national level.

### 7.3. Examinations.

The SSI is not responsible. Inspectors are only invited to observe and/or to monitor the procedures, the adherence to instructions, etc.

### 7.4. Handling complaints.

The so - called Law on Complaints is valid and is applied in the Slovak Republic. According to it teachers, pupils and their parents can appeal to the authorities, ask for enquiry of their problem and elimination of shortcomings.

The complaints of the pupils and their parents most frequently have to do with insufficient evaluation or marking of work of pupils, behaviour (including dissatisfaction with given punishment or disagreement with punishment), a perceived low standard of teaching, unqualified teaching, improper or inadequate behaviour of teachers, e.g. applying physical

punishment. Recently more complaints have to do with teasing/bullying. (This issue and preventive procedures for elimination is part of the inspection issues followed in the school year 2009/10).

The teachers complain about an authoritative way of school management by the head teacher, mobbing, etc. The inspectorate is not responsible for investigation of teachers's problems concerning labour conditions (e.g. termination of employment).

The inspectorate gets more than 300 complaints every year, 250 are investigated on average. In 2006/2007 there were 380 complaints and 236 were inspected.

In 2007/2008 there were 576 appeals, 512 were considered as complaints and 333 cases were examined

The inspectorate investigates whether the complaint is grounded; if so he/she imposes measures to diminish shortcomings.

#### 7.5. Financial or staff management of schools or districts.

These topics are not inspected.

### **8. Risk – Based Evaluation. –**

The general idea in some countries is to look for an alternative for the periodic full inspection of all schools on a regular basis. In that system all schools are to be inspected on a regular basis, which is expensive and perhaps not always necessary if inspectors know from other sources that many schools are doing well. The alternative is the development of a “risk-based” selection of schools. In this type of evaluation, the inspectorate could rely on “early warning” monitoring systems: only if there is such a “warning” schools are selected for a “quick scan” if they provide low scores on the monitored quality standards. If the “quick scan” confirms that something is not satisfactory, a full inspection may be done.

The Slovak inspectorate is not working with such an approach. The school inspection can involve to their plan of inspections a school or a school facility in case of repeated cases of complaints or upon the request of the school provider.

### **9. Reports of Inspectors.**

#### 9.1. Kinds of reports.

There are four kinds of reports:

- a. Reports for the inspected schools with the results of the inspection, recommendations about improvements included. These are for the school management and for the school provider. They are confidential.
- b. Reports about the inspected areas for the region. For the regional administrative head; confidential.

The Slovak Republic is divided into 8 administrative regions and traditionally all kinds of reports are prepared within this division. There are some known differences among the regions (dense Gypsy population, higher level of unemployment, low deprived areas, etc. – this background info are mentioned in the report). It is also easier from organisational point of view – there are 8 main Inspection centres). The regional reports provide

supplementary information concerning the region specifics, so that necessary provisions can be adopted.

- c. Reports about the inspected themes or domains of quality at national level. Public. These reports are disseminated actively, also on the website of SSI.
- d. The Annual Report about the state and standard of the education at schools and educational facilities in the Slovak Republic in the school year. Public. In particular for the Ministry, all educational institutions, experts in education, the general public and involved stakeholders.

#### 9.2. Target audiences.

See 9.1.

#### 9.3. Confidential or public.

See 9.1.

### **10. Structure, Position, Staff and Budget.**

#### 10.1. Structure.

The Office of the Chief Inspector is in Bratislava. The secretariat consists of 4 people – the Director, the head of solving complaints and petitions, the coordinator for international projects and relations and the secretary. There are two main departments supervised by the deputy of the senior chief inspector that carry out the tasks dealing with methodology (7 people) and the department of planning and inspection activities (7 people) at central level.

Outcomes of their effort are applied all over the country in 8 regional inspection centres.

There is a personnel department at central level as well as an economic department headed by the Director for economic affairs; with specific support staff dealing with economic, financial and technical activities, and with ICT - work (department of informatics) with several employees.

There are 8 regional Inspection Centres with their local branches that carry out day-by-day activities and inspections at schools and school facilities. They employ inspectors with a relevant education for different types and levels of schools and school facilities - specialised in different subjects and age groups or stages of the school system. Each Inspection Centre is headed by a Director and his/her deputy. If necessary, experts are hired from outside to participate in inspections - especially at technical or vocational schools.

The centres work according to the annual plan of inspections suggested by the head and submitted to the central body for approval. The outcomes of specific findings are described in the reports on types of schools or specific topics that are in the end processed in the final annual national report submitted to the Minister of Education.

## 10.2. Position.

The Inspectorate is established by law, it is independent in its activities and financed by the Ministry of Education.

The Inspectorate is an advisory body for the Minister and the Ministry. Parliament is advised indirectly – through the Annual Report about the state and level of education in schools and school institutions in the Slovak Republic. In the annual report of SSI recommendations are provided towards the Ministry as well. Suggestions for legal changes can be involved in the outcomes. Sometimes the parliamentary Committee for Education can ask for implementation of SSI proposals/suggestions.

The school Inspectorate does not make decisions about closing or financing individual schools; it only gives suggestions to the school founders or the Ministry of Education. Suggestions to take a school out of the school system (or to close it) are provided to the Ministry of Education, but the Ministry decides. Exchange of a school principal is realized by the school founder on the basis of inspection suggestions.

## 10.3. Staff and budget

The inspectorate has 188 inspectors; 33 for pre-school education, 100 for primary education, 55 for secondary education, 9 for special education. The central office has 35 staff. There are 8 regional offices, each with a staff of 4 plus the inspectors, belonging to that regional directorate.

The total costs of the inspectorate are some 5 % of the total education budget.

# **11. Recruitment and Training of Inspectors.**

## 11.1. General remarks.

A school inspector is an experienced teacher; he/she used to work in the school sector or school administration/management, or has been involved in further education based on school management and leadership. A school inspector has to be acquainted with the school legislation, is skilful in information technology, is able to communicate on a professional level; his/her communication is assertive. He/she is recruited through public advertisement in the press and is involved in on-going staff development. He/she becomes a state employee/civil servant during the time of employment for SSI.

## 11.2. Recruitment conditions.

The required qualification background is defined in the Law: university level education for the appropriate type of school/stage of education. Plus 8 years of uninterrupted teaching on the appropriate type of school and a minimum of 3 years of school management or experience as an adviser or the first qualification certificate or further evidence of professional development.

In the appointment procedures a written test and an interview with the committee defined by law on the appointment of civil servants is included.

After the appointment and the promise the school inspector becomes a state employee - civil servant.

### 11.3. Training.

A new school inspector is trained for his/her function by his/her principals according to institutional expectations and training plan for inspectors.

Continual professional training is organised, regarding new developments in the area. The New School Act has new legal provisions and will ask new training. Communicative and interpersonal skills and key competences development are important.

### 11.4. In - service – training.

Five days of in – service training are defined and financed by the inspectorate each year. The results of the participation are part of the evaluation of the state employee. In – service training is focused on the development of the key competences of inspectors, on the application of the legislation in the inspections, on the certificate ECDL Start, etc.

Currently SSI staff has been trained for new skills and appliance of the New School Act adopted in September 2008.

## 12. Evaluation of the Inspectorate.

### 12.1. Internal.

Internal: the head office evaluates the work of the regional centres annually.

Observations and evaluation of inspectors: methodologists at the head office participate at the inspection groups with the aim to observe and evaluate the work of inspectors. Each head of IC evaluates the work of his/her staff based on the set of criteria given for Civil Servants. The level of personal and professional involvement in the work and goals of the institution, personal initiative and independence at carrying out the tasks, self-improvement activities, adherence to Ethical Codex etc. are evaluated on the 5 point scale every year.

Occasionally SSI organizes self evaluation activities.

### 12.2. External.

External evaluative feedback or remarks are gathered from external actors, for instance from professional educational organizations (organizations of heads of schools, teacher unions,) and from professional non-educational organizations (Consumer's organizations ...)

External is also the headmasters' evaluation from inspected schools – after full inspection - on a sample of 200 schools.

An external audit has been done by an organization selected by the Ministry of Education.

### 12.3. Consequences.

The Law defines the inspectorate as a controlling institution (inspection body). Changes in the inspectorate activities (aims, competencies, etc.) are thus connected with the changes in the school legislation that are currently in implementation stages. (see above).

Earlier, according to the National Programme of Education the quality indicators and the methods of their evaluation have been adapted.

The role and functions and tasks of SSI are adapted to the new school acts and provisions. There is a great impact of the professional body of European inspectorate (the Standing Conference of inspectorates – SICI) on SSI developments. International conferences and seminars on specific aspects of work of inspectorates in Europe are very inspiring for the ongoing professional development. As well as are bilateral projects such as the Leonardo da Vinci joint project with HMIE of Scotland: IPSI - Innovation Practices in School Inspections. Within the scope of the project a series of study - trips of 15 SSI inspectors including management have been executed at HMIE to implement the modern achievements of our colleagues into the activities and plans of SSI. The project aims to disseminate the gained information within SSI and outside as well.

SSI tries to follow the new developments in the inspection work and provides ongoing education and training to the staff.

### **13. Developments, prospects.**

#### 13.1. Developments.

Recent and ongoing developments are the changes in the top management, new priorities, and change of the full school inspection framework, innovation of the quality indicators and methods, the SICI membership, cooperation in the bilateral project IPSI.

#### 13.2. Prospects.

SSI staff is often invited to participate at committees appointed by the Minister. SSI is often asked to comment on drafts for prepared legislation and decrees, as well as on curriculum amendments. Based on the new School Act, inspectors have to be involved in the process of interviews of new head teachers appointed by local administration. They have to be involved in monitoring home based education and supervising. So recruiting of new staff is crucial.

The aim of SSI is to propose the long term strategy of institutional development, including the personal and technical improvements, stressing further contacts with partner institutions and inspectorates with the hope of constant quality improvements of inspection process.

#### 13.3. Other areas of inspection.

#### 13.4. Other remarks.

### **14. Information: website, liaison - contact, links. [www.ssiba.sk](http://www.ssiba.sk)**

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## **15. References.**

Zákon č. 596/2003 Z. z. o štátnej správe v školstve a školskej\_samospráve

Vyhláška č. 301/2005 Z. Z . o školskej inšpekcii

Zákon č. 245/2008 Z.z. o výchove a vzdelávaní (školský zákon) a o zmene a doplnení niektorých zákonov s účinnosťou od 1.septembra 2008