1. **Please list existing national laws, regulations and policies establishing norms and standards for quality of education in your country. Please also include any guidelines on the quality of education**

Significant changes occurred in the area of education in the past decade. In 2004, it was mainly the decentralisation of school administration introduced by the passed Act No. 596/2003 Coll. on State Administration in Education and School Self-Governing Bodies. The given act defines the jurisdiction, organisation and role of state administration bodies in education, of municipalities, self-governing regions and school self-governing bodies and stipulates their jurisdiction in the area of state administration in education and school self-governance. It also defines financing of non-state primary art schools, language schools, kindergartens and school facilities.

At the same time, the Act No. 597/2003 Coll. on Financing of Primary Schools, Secondary Schools and School Facilities defining financing of schools (primary schools and secondary schools, including special schools) of all founders and special kindergartens, school facilities, as well as school facilities under the founding jurisdiction of regional school authorities.

The Act No. 245/2008 Coll. on Education (the school act) came into force as of 1 September 2008, which is a piece of legislation long awaited, and which brought a key change in education by introducing a two-level model of curricula consisting of national curricula and school curricula.

In connection with the passing of the Act No. 245/2008 Coll., further pieces of legislation were also approved. The Act No. 184/2009 Coll. on Vocational Education and Training defines, until the time of its approval, non-existing mechanisms ensuring participation of employers in vocational education and training and at the same time sets the conditions for improving vocational education and training by establishing advisory bodies for vocational education and training. It has also established a support mechanism for coordination of vocational education and training with the labour market.

The Act No. 317/2009 Coll. on Educational and professional Staff complexly governs the issue of status and performance of educational and professional employees, defines their rights and duties, sets preconditions for carrying out educational and professional activity and introduces professional development, career levels, career positions, attestations of educational and professional employees and a system of continuous education.

In relation to the above-mentioned acts, governmental regulations and further executive standards (decrees) were passed concerning education in individual types of schools.

2. **Please describe briefly applicable norms and standards and minimal requirements, especially with regard to the following:**

   a) **school infra-structure**

   Annex No. 2 contains a scheme of the system of schools and school facilities in the Slovak Republic.

   b) **class size and pupil teacher ratio**

   Class size is stipulated by the Act No. 245/2008 Coll. on Education (the school act) e.g. Article 29 Paragraph 5 largest class size in elementary school is:

   a) 16 pupils in a class in the zero grade;
   b) 22 pupils in a class in the first grade;
c) 24 pupils in a class attended by pupils of various grades of the first stage of primary school;
d) 25 pupils in a class in the second through fourth grade;
e) 28 pupils in a class in the fifth through ninth grade;

and executing regulations to this act:
Decree of the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic No. 306/2008 Coll. on Kindergarten;
Decree of the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic No. 322/2008 Coll. on Special Schools;
Decree of the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic No. 320/2008 Coll. on Primary School as amended by the Decree No. 224/2011 Coll.;
Decree of the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic No. 282/2009 Coll. on Secondary Schools as amended by the Decree No. 268/2011 Coll.;

**Characteristics of the period of years 2004 through 2011**

The Ministry of Education assigns funds to school founders every year according to the number of pupils and the height of the normative per pupil of the relevant school category. The height of the normative per pupil of the relevant school category is set by the Ministry of Education. Data on the number of pupils in schools and teachers (re-calculated numbers) are collected on annual basis in September of the relevant calendar year. Data is collected according to the status of pupils as of 15 September separately for each school category. The number of school categories for the purposes of funding is stipulated by the Article 2 Paragraph 1 of the Decree of the Slovak Government No. 630/2008 Coll. Data was acquired by the Ministry of Education as part of EDUZBER (data collection for the purposes of normative financing based on the Article 7 Paragraph 4 of the Act).

Requirements for the class (classroom) size are defined by the Decree of the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic No. 527/2007 Coll. on Details of the Requirements for Facilities for Children and Youth. Class size, classroom size and other requirements for class (classroom) are not considered in connection with school financing.

The pupil-teacher ratio is calculated from personnel demand of pupil education expressed in the state education program, specifically by the framework instruction plan, by requirements for the division of classes to groups when teaching individual subjects, requirements concerning occupational safety, degree of direct teaching obligation of teachers and maximum class size.

Based on this data:

**Primary schools**

- The number of pupils has decreased since 2004 from 577,960 to 450,836 in 2011, which represents a decrease by 22%; in the following years, the decrease in the number of pupils slowed down on the year-to-year basis;
- The year-to-year difference in the number of pupils was approximately 20,000 pupils, but in the recent years it slowed down to 6,000 pupils per year;
- The number of teachers in primary schools decreased since 2004 to 37,324 to 32,863 in 2010, and in spite of an increase in 2011 to 33,256, it generally represents a decrease by 11%;
- The pupil-teacher ratio has been decreasing since 2005 on the year-to-year basis, specifically from 15.6 to 13.6 in 2011.
The decrease in the number of pupils is related to the development of the size of the population in the given period, which follows the development of the number of pupils in primary schools.

**Secondary Grammar Schools**

- The number of pupils was oscillating in the course of the years, but it has been decreasing since 2007, and it decreased from 101,606 in 2004 to 90,206 in 2011, which represents a decrease by 11%;
- The largest decrease in the number of pupils occurred in 2010, specifically by 5,533 pupils;
- The number of teachers increased between 2004 and 2001 from 6,821 to 6,894, which represents an increase by 1.2%;
- The number of teachers was increasing between 2004 and 2008, which represents an increase by 3.3%, and since 2008 it has been decreasing;
- The pupil-teacher ratio has been decreasing on the year-to-year basis since 2004, specifically from 14.9 to 13.1;  

The decrease in the number of pupils is related to the development in the size of the population in the monitored period, while the greatest decrease in the number of pupils is connected with the approved new school act, mainly with regards to regulation of the number of pupils in eight-year secondary grammar schools. Cancellation of de-regulation of the number of pupils in the eight-year secondary grammar schools could be seen in the lower year-to-year decrease of the number of pupils (from 5,533 in 2010 to 3,172 in 2011). Cancellation of de-regulation of the number of pupils in the eight-year secondary grammar schools affected also the year-to-year decrease in the number of teachers, the decrease in the number of teachers slowed down from 75 in 2010 to 28 in 2011.

**Art Schools**

- The number of pupils has been increasing on the year-to-year basis since 2004, it increased from 2,073 in 2004 to 2,738 in 2011, which represents an increase in the number of pupils by 32%;
- The number of teachers has been increasing on the year-to-year basis since 2005, except of 2009, when it decreased;
- The number of teachers increased from 416 in 2005 to 557 in 2011, which represents an increase by 33.9%;
- The pupil-teacher ratio was decreasing on the year-to-year basis until 2008, in 2009 it increased and since then it has been decreasing again;

The increase in the number of pupils and teachers is related to an increased interest of students in art education.

**Secondary vocational schools**

- The number of pupils has been decreasing over the years, it was reduced from 235,337 in 2004 to 192,509 in 2011, which represents a decrease by 18.2%;
- The decrease in the number of pupils was the greatest in 2006 (by 7,136) and in 2007 (by 7,560); since 2008, the year-to-year decrease in the number of pupils was approximately 5,000 pupils;
- The number of teachers was decreasing on year-to-year basis since 2004, but as of 2008 this decrease diminished;
The pupil-teacher ratio was increasing since 2004 until 2008, since 2008 it has been decreasing; when compared to 2004, in 2011 it decreased only by 0.4 pupil per teacher;

The decrease in the number of pupils is connected to the development in the size of the population in the monitored period and with a reduced interested of pupils in secondary vocational education. Reduced maximum class sizes did not largely affect the decrease of the pupil-teacher ratio.

**Special primary schools**

- The number of pupils has been slightly oscillating over the years, and since 2007 it has been between 18,312 and 18,609;
- The number of pupils decreased from 20,516 in 2004 to 18,312 in 2011 which represents a decrease by 10.8%;
- The number of teachers was decreasing on the year-to-year basis since 2004, since 2008 it has been slightly increasing, when compared with 2004, in 2011 it is more only by 69 employees when compared with 2004;
- The pupil-teacher ratio was the lowest in 2004 (4.2) and 2005 (4.1); until 2008 it was increasing (5.5) and since then it has gradually been decreasing until 2011 (5.0);

The slight decrease in the pupil-teacher ratio is related to the approval of the new school act, mainly in connection with the reduced maximum class sizes.

**Special Secondary Schools**

- The number of pupils increased from 4,654 in 2004 to 5,831 in 2011 which represents an increase by 25.3%;
- The number of teachers has been oscillating on the year-to-year basis, but since 2009 it has been gradually increasing; when compared to 2004, it increased only by 54 employees in 2011;
- The pupil-teacher ratio was the highest in 2008 (5.5); since this time until 2011 it has been gradually decreasing (5.0);

A slight decrease in the pupil-teacher ratio is connected with the approval of the new school act, mainly in connection with the reduced maximum class sizes. It is a positive trend in terms of increased interest of children with disability in acquiring the highest degree of education possible.

c) **teacher qualification**

The qualification prerequisites of teachers as well as other educational (trainer, caretaker) and professional staff are governed by generally binding legal regulations, mainly the Act No. 317/2009 Coll. on Educational and Professional Staff and on amending and supplementing certain acts, as amended by the Act No. 390/2011 Coll. (Article 7) and the Decree of the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic No. 437/2009 Coll. stipulating qualification prerequisites and special qualification prerequisites for individual categories of educational and professional staff, as amended.

d) **working conditions for teachers and their professional development**
We could denote working conditions more appropriately as the legislative environment created for professional development and career growth of teachers as well as other educational (trainer, caretaker) and professional staff through

- **System of continuous education** (accredited programs of continuous education);
- **Credit system** (awarding credits for accredited programs of continuous education, creative activities – writing a textbook, teaching texts, methodological materials, developing teaching aids, writing articles etc., studying abroad);
- **Career system** (passing of the first and the second attestation after fulfilling the condition of acquiring 60 credits and reaching a higher career stage);
- **System of remuneration** (acknowledging a credit bonus of 6% or 12% - after fulfilling the condition of acquiring 30 or 60 credits; after passing of the first or the second attestation, the employee reaches a higher salary class);

**e) school curricula content and pedagogical materials**

Education in kindergartens, primary schools, primary art schools, and secondary schools follows the school curriculum that must be developed in line with principles and aims of education in the relevant state curricula. The school curriculum is the basic school document defining the aims and focus of the school, its teaching plan and teaching outline. The teaching outline of the individual subjects defines the education goals, content and scope of teaching matter minimally within the scope set by the education standard of the relevant state curriculum. Education standards can be divided to performance standards (level of mastering of knowledge, skills and abilities) and to content standards (scope of required knowledge and skills).

**f) teaching-learning processes**

Stipulated by the Act No. 245/2008 Coll. on Education (the school act) and on amending and supplementing of certain acts, as amended; Act No. 596/2003 Coll. on State Administration in Education and School Self-Governing Bodies and on amending and supplementing of certain acts, as amended, as well as by the Decree of the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic No. 231/2009 Coll. on details of the school year organisation in primary schools, secondary schools, and primary art school, in practical schools, vocational schools and language schools as amended by the Decree No. 518/2010 Coll.

**g) school management, including student and parents participation**

Governed by the Act No. 596/2003 Coll. on State Administration in Education and School Self-Government, e.g.:

Article 2 **Performance of state administration in education and school self-government**

(1) State administration in education in the area of schools and school facilities is performed according to this act by:
   a) School principal or school facility director (hereinafter referred to as the “principal”);
   b) Municipality;
   c) Self-governing region;
   d) Regional school authority;
   e) State school inspection;
   f) Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic (hereinafter referred to as the "Ministry");
   g) Other central bodies of state administration, if so stipulated by a special regulation;

(2) School self-governance is performed according to this act by:
   a) School council or school facility council (hereinafter referred to as the “school council”);
b) Municipal school council;
c) Territorial school council;
d) Student school council (Article 26);

Article 25 Membership in school self-governing bodies

E.g. The school council consists of 5 to 11 members. School or school facility council founded by the municipality consists of two elected representatives of educational staff and one elected representative of other school employees, four elected representatives of parents that are not employed by the school or school facility, and four delegated representatives of the founder.

Article 26 Student school council

The student school council, if established, represents students of secondary school and speaks for their interest in relation to the director and school management. It consists of 5 to 11 members who received the highest number of votes in the elections of students participating in the elections. It participates in the development and following of a school code.

It represents students in dealings with the principal and school management, submits its statements and proposals to them, represents students also outside of school, elects and recalls the representative of students in the school council. The student council also gives its opinion on significant issues, proposals and measures of school in the area of education.

h) methods to evaluate student performance and assess learning outcomes


According to the Article 154 of the school act to carry out monitoring and evaluation of the quality of education at the level of state school programs, the Ministry of Education established the National Institute for Certified Educational Measurements. This institute fulfills the tasks in the area of monitoring, mainly of achieving performance and quality goals and impulses, external and internal evaluation and comparison of schools and school facilities. It also is responsible for the preparation and methodological management of external exams and testing of pupils in schools, for processing and evaluating and storing of results of external measuring and testing.

External testing of pupils in primary schools is carried out for the purposes of national examination of the level of educational results of pupils in primary schools in individual subject area. Relevant year, teaching subjects, dates on which testing takes place are set for each year by the Ministry. All pupils of primary school of the relevant year are tested, including pupils with special education needs.

Methods to evaluate performance of pupils and results of education

Legislative framework for evaluation of pupils is created by the Act No. 245/2008 Coll. on Education (hereinafter the “school act”). It specified two levels of evaluation - internal and external. The framework of internal evaluation is according to this act created by national curricula, school curricula and educational programs. According to the school act, forms and means of pupil evaluation can be subject to experimental verification. Evaluation of pupils can be according to the school act in form of verbal evaluation, assessment by grades or a combination of these types.
In everyday school praxis, the most usual type of evaluation is **internal evaluation** of the work of pupils in classes, evaluation of oral and written home works, tasks assigned during lessons and written papers. These can be of larger or smaller extent, can be assigned in the course or when finishing individual thematic units (so called on-going evaluation), as well as at the end of half years or years (so called overall evaluation). In case of on-going evaluation, formative evaluation prevails, whereas in case of overall evaluation, summative evaluation. Internal evaluation provides feedback to pupils, teachers and parents. The teacher of the given subject is the only responsible for on-going evaluation; overall evaluation and assessment of pupils is examined and approved by the educational council of school. This praxis is legislatively prescribed by the decree on primary school.

**External evaluation** is based on nation-wide tests realised at the output from individual stages of education ISCED 2 (Testing 9, hereinafter referred to as T9) and ISCED 3 (external part of secondary school leaving exam, hereinafter referred to as EP SSLE). In line with the school act, the purpose of external evaluation is the monitoring and evaluation of quality of education at the level of national curricula or national examination of the level of educational results of pupils in primary and secondary schools in individual subject areas. External testing of pupils of primary school is carried out according to educational standards of the national curriculum. National Institute for Certified Educational Measurements (NICME) is according to the school act responsible for external evaluation of pupils.

External testing at the level of ISCED 2 (Testing 9) was introduced in Slovakia in 2005, while only teaching language (Slovak or Hungarian) and mathematics are tested. The aim is to compare schools in terms of work improvement (European Commission, 2009). It partially also serves as a criteria of admission to secondary schools. Interpretation of tests is normative (testing serves for comparison of pupils with the overall population of those tested); results serve partially as a feedback for parents (e.g. for the needs of choosing a secondary school) and based on secondary analysis, it is possible to use them also didactically (identification of problematic tasks, analysis of the process of solving etc.).

3. **Please identify the institutional mechanisms in your country used collect and process information and to assess adherence to norms and standards established to ensure quality of education**

Collecting of information in education is ensured by a directly controlled organisation of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports of the Slovak Republic and the Institute of Information and Prognosis in Education. Monitoring and evaluation of quality in education is carried out by an independent institution, which is the State School Inspection. When performing school inspection, it also checks the compliance of the school education program with the state education program, with the aims and principles of education, c) it checks the level of education quality in individual education.

4. **Please provide information on other relevant initiatives and developments aiming to promote quality in education**

The development in the area of school and education quality improvement on various levels of schools is realised in the Slovak Republic through participation in various projects on national or regional level, or through involvement in internationally coordinated projects, e.g. the competition “Quality in mobility projects of Leonardo da Vinci” announced by the National Agency for Life-Long Education of SAAIAC (Slovak Academic Association for
International Cooperation) involving secondary schools and universities in the Slovak Republic.