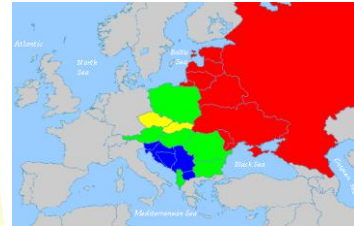


## Introducing Accreditation in (Central) Europe: Lessons from Slovakia

Pavol Návrat  
Chairman, Accreditation Commission  
of the Republic of Slovakia

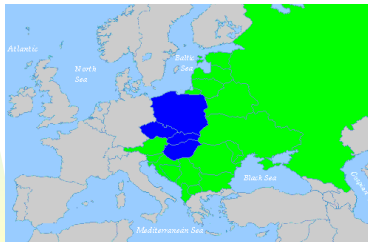
## Europe



Yellow: former Czechoslovakia. Red: former USSR (of CEE).  
Blue: former Yugoslavia.

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## Visegrad countries: Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia



Blue: member states.

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CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN NETWORK OF  
QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

- [Albania](#)
- [Austria](#)
- [Bulgaria](#)
- [Czech Republic](#)
- [Croatia](#)
- [Estonia](#)
- [Bavaria/Germany](#)
- [Hungary](#)
- [Latvia](#)
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- [Slovenia](#)

[http://www.mab.hu/cee/a\\_website.html](http://www.mab.hu/cee/a_website.html)

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## How it all Started ... (in Slovakia, but similarly in some other countries in the region)

- 1989, totalitarian communist regime was overthrown
- 1990, Higher Education Law
  - ◆ academic liberties
  - ◆ institutional autonomy
  - ◆ a provision for 2-tier Bc/Mgr degree system was made
  - ◆ Accreditation Commission was established

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## ... and Why

- A guess on law-maker's intention:
  - ◆ to overcome the past
  - ◆ to open door for the future
  - ◆ to make transition viable
- (in plain text):
  - ◆ away from state control
  - ◆ towards quality control
  - ◆ checks and balances

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## Slovak legislation

- ◆ a provision for 2-tier Bc/Mgr degree system was made in 1990
- ◆ compare:
  - German Hochschulrahmengesetz from 1998: § 19 Bachelor- und Masterstudiengänge
  - THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA  
Joint declaration of the European Ministers of Education, convened in Bologna in 1999
- ◆ a consequent implementation of Bologna, including the 3 level degree system and credit transfer and accumulation system in 2002

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## Accreditation Commission

- Mission:
  - ◆ to assist in development of higher education system in Slovakia by evaluating level of educational and research activities of institutions and by accrediting courses
- Legal Status:
  - ◆ advisory body of the Government
    - both before and after the new Law 131/2002 on HE

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## Principal Tasks

- to accredit newly proposed degree courses and re-accredit the running courses
- to accredit institutions
  - ◆ to evaluate institutions
    - (Faculties before April 2002)

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## Principal Tasks

- to give opinions on proposals to establish / close down institutes / institutions (Faculties or HE institutions)
- to make recommendations regarding the status of the higher education institution

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## Principles

- accreditation is compulsory for all degree courses at all three levels
  - ◆ note: also PhD programmes
- accreditation is performed periodically
  - ◆ 6 years period

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## Principles

- composition of the Commission:
  - ◆ both from academia and industry, including research institutes
  - ◆ members from abroad
  - ◆ similar pattern applies for the working groups

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## Principles

- programme accreditation criteria are based:
  - ◆ (inputs:) mostly on evaluating resources: human, infrastructure, information, material, financial, laboratory etc.
  - ◆ (process:) programmatic reviews
  - ◆ (outputs:) quality, employability of graduates

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## Principles

- institutional accreditation
  - ◆ is based on a mission (as declared by each institution)
  - ◆ concerns principal activities
    - research
    - education
  - ◆ involves
    - self report
    - peer review
    - on site visit

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## Institutional accreditation

- results in report
- recommendation regarding the status of the higher education institution
  - ◆ university
  - ◆ research university
  - ◆ polytechnic

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## Evaluation

- Principles:
  - ◆ evaluation is based:
    - comprehensive report on outcomes of principal activities (mainly research, publications, projects)

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## Procedures

- accountability with respect to its outcomes:
- accreditation criteria:
  - ◆ proposed by the Commission
  - ◆ discussed with the representative bodies of HE
  - ◆ adopted by the Ministry

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## Procedures

- transparency:
  - ◆ Rectors have the right to comment panel reports before decision are made
  - ◆ Rectors and Deans of institutions on agenda are invited as a rule
  - ◆ documents including minutes of meetings on public web site
  - ◆ meetings are public;
    - frequently Minister, President of Rectors' Conference, President of HE Council, President of Students' Council take part

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## Outcomes from Accreditation

- recommendations to the Minister:
  - ◆ to grant the right to confer degrees
  - ◆ to grant the right to nominate professors
  - ◆ to suspend the rights ...
  - ◆ to establish a new university
- recommendations to the Rector:
  - ◆ to establish a new Faculty

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## Outcome from Institutional Accreditation

- a detailed report that
  - ◆ identifies strengths and weaknesses
  - ◆ makes recommendations to the Institution
  - ◆ evaluates research
- recommendation regarding the status of the higher education institution
  - university
  - research university
  - polytechnic

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## A broader view on situation

- ◆ similar situation in several countries in the region, including Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland
- ◆ the situation has been, and for some time will remain specific (to a lesser and lesser extent)
  - starting point: non-market, or a completely controlled market of HE
  - "standard" rules in still not completely standard conditions do not always work
    - students seek diploma, not quality
    - universities are so under financed they compromise quality
    - universities do not have a fully functioning QA system
    - very few overseas students
    - very few teacher mobilities

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## Lessons

- accreditation has been introduced
  - ◆ to address "standard" issues of HE quality
  - ◆ by novel approaches
  - ◆ in a specific context
- fits this purpose
  - ◆ the ultimate safeguard of a minimum quality
  - ◆ its role has been strengthened in the new legislation

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## Lessons

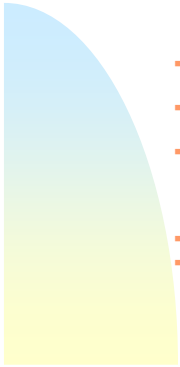
- accreditation is a flexible concept
- as the situation is becoming more "standard",
  - ◆ more focus on recommending, supportive approach
  - ◆ less stress on (non-)approving

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## Discussion

- Quality of education:
  - ◆ Accreditation Commission serves as a kind of "safeguard" against attempts to open new courses below any reasonable
    - threshold of quality
    - amount of resources available
  - ◆ How do the attempting institutions assure their quality?
  - ◆ New Law requires: university has a QA system

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## Issues for the future

- Implementation of changes in the legislation
- further promoting the concept of quality in HE system and institutions
- strengthening international dimension
  - ◆ more experts from abroad – from region
  - ◆ mutual recognition of qualifications through meta-accreditation
- strengthening professional dimension
- discussing relation of quality and financing

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