

SLOVAKIA

This information on national public-health research structures has been gained from country key informants and internet searches for STEPS (Strengthening Engagement in Public Health Research www.steps-ph.eu), a project funded by the European Commission Seventh Framework Research Programme. It builds on the country profiles and reports from Ministries of Health and Ministries of Science that were created previously for SPHERE (<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/public-health/sphere/sphereprofiles.htm>).

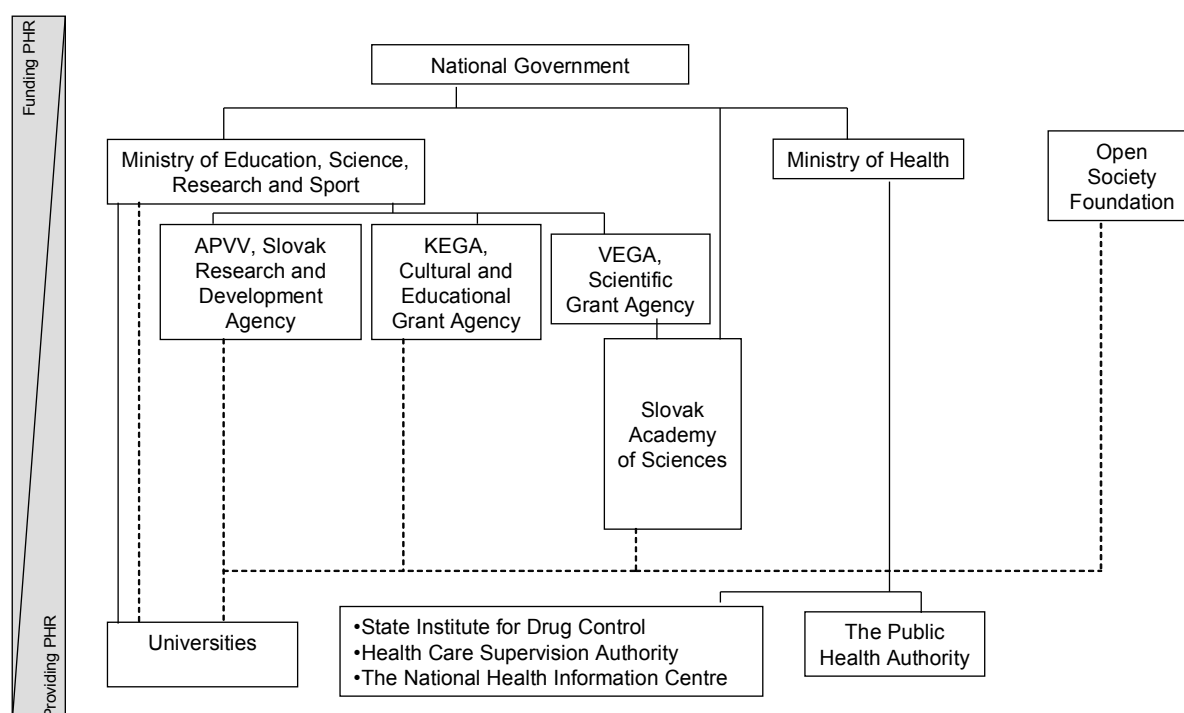


The organogram shows the structure for managing and providing public-health research from the perspective of financial flows.

The main organisations are also briefly described. The main organisations are also briefly described, with their URLs, and other relevant national documents and information on public-health research.

Note: 'Public-health research' includes all health research at population, organisation and system level broadly relevant to health and health-care policy and practice. It excludes clinical and laboratory (biomedical) research.

1. Organogram



PHR: Public Health research;
 —————> funding negotiated between government and agency/organization; includes direct commissioning
 - - - - -> funding competitive process where rules are more or less explicit and known in advance

2. Research Commissioners

From the state budget of the SR financial support for science and technology is secured through the state budget chapters of: (1) the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the SR; (2) other ministries and central authorities that ensure the solution of their sectoral problems through research and development; and (3) the Slovak Academy of Sciences. The state budget funds designed for the support of science and technology are provided as institutional support and designated support (via public competitive calls – so-called “grants”).

Apart from the resources of the national budget, in the period of 2007 to 2013, the resources of the Structural Funds are an integral part of the public expenditure participating in the support of science and technology in the SR, namely from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), and the European Social Fund (ESF).

Based on the Regulation No. 27/2006-R of the Ministry of Education [scientific](#) fields are grouped into the following categories: natural, [engineering](#), health, agricultural, social and humanitarian sciences. Public health is included in health sciences category and main national research commissioners that participate on funding public health research in Slovakia are:

- Scientific Grant Agency (VEGA)
- Cultural and Educational Grant Agency (KEGA)
- Slovak Research and Development Agency (APVV) within e.g. “General Calls” (Research and development support in all scientific areas)
- Ministry of Health of the SR

2.1 Ministry of Health, <http://www.health.gov.sk/>

2.2. Ministry of Science

Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic (<http://www.minedu.sk>).

The central state administration body for the field of science and technology is Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport.

As it is stated in the main national strategic document (see also part 4. Research Strategies), in the period of 2007 – 2015 the science and technology in the SR is supported mainly from the following sources of support: state budget of the SR, resources of the Structural Funds of the EU, business sources, and international sources.

The institutional support for research through the Ministry of Education is implemented through the Scientific Grant Agency and the Cultural and Educational Grant Agency.

The designated support through the Ministry of Education is provided through the following forms: state programmes; state programmes of infrastructure development; programmes and projects of the Agency for the Support of Research and Development (APVV); and investment assistance for building major technical infrastructure. Beneficiaries of these funds are: organisations of the higher education sector, state sector of research and development, business sector of research and development, not-for-profit sector of research and development, natural persons of research and development within the meaning of the Trade Act; domestic and foreign investors.

2.2.1. VEGA, the Scientific Grant Agency

(<http://www.minedu.sk/index.php?lang=sk&rootId=1765>) was established by mutual consent between the Ministry of Education and Slovak Academy of Sciences and serves as a joint advisory body of the Deputy Prime Minister of the SR and the Minister of Education and the President of the Slovak Academy of Sciences (SAV) for the selection of

institutional projects of public and state higher education institutions and the SAV for the support from the state budget (the budget chapter of the Ministry of Education, and the budget chapter of the SAV). In 2008 the VEGA supported some 1722 projects with €9.7m.

2.2.2. The Cultural and Educational Grant Agency (KEGA, <http://www.minedu.sk/index.php?rootId=499>) is internal grant's agency focused on financial support of projects on applied research concerning education, pedagogy and creative arts. It is an advisory body of the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Education for the technical assessment of projects applying for support on publishing of university study texts, textbooks, and for other activities securing the teaching process in higher education institutions.

2.2.3. APVV, Slovak Research and Development Agency (<http://www.apvv.sk/>) is the research and development grant agency in the SR. It was established by the Act No.172/2005 in July 2005 and it is a successor of the previous agency functioning since 2001. APVV is the instrument for distribution of public finances for research and development on the competitive basis in Slovakia. APVV is responsible for research and development promotion in all research fields, including international research cooperation. APVV holds open competition for funds once a year (total funds in 2008, €30m). In 2007, there were 529 proposals submitted and 80 accepted (medical sciences: 52 submitted, 9 funded). Other funding schemes in APVV include support for universities (e.g. equipment), networks, science-in-society.

2.2.4. The Agency of the Ministry of Education for the Structural Funds of the EU (<http://www.asfeu.sk/aktuality/aktuality/>) was founded by the Ministry on January 1, 2007. Its main objective is to provide assistance for the implementation process of EU Structural Funds, in the program period 2007 – 2013.

The resources of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) are provided via the Operational Programme "Research and Development" (<http://www.government.gov.sk/4875/operacny-program-vyskum-a-vyvoj.php>) and those from the European Social Fund (ESF) are provided via the Operational Programme "Education". The Ministry of Education is the managing authority for both operational programmes through this agency. The goal of the Agency is to provide for the continuous process of the acceptance, assessment, and financial management and monitoring of projects.

Beneficiaries of funds are organisations of the higher education sector, the state sector of research and development, business sector of research and development, not-for-profit sector of research and development, natural persons of research and development within the meaning of the Trade Act.

The first active year was 2008 - six calls. Majority of proposals were from universities (60%) and the rest were academies (25%) and institutes (15%).

2.3. Other ministries

The institutional support of science and technology through other ministries and other central authorities is provided to secure the performance of the activities of the state sectoral research institutes, founded by the cited bodies and having the budgetary (fully subsidised) or contributory (partly subsidised) economic form. Beneficiaries of funds are state sectoral research institutes with budgetary or contributory form of economic management set up by other ministries or central authorities.

The designated support of science and technology through other ministries and other central authorities is provided from the chapters of other ministries and central authorities via a new category of so-called "sectoral projects of research and development". This category

of designated support is stipulated in the amendment of the Act No. 172/2005 Coll. and enables sectoral ministries and central authorities to ensure the development of specific needs of the sector concerned through research and development.

Beneficiaries of funds are organizations of the higher education sector, the state sector of research and development, business sector of research and development, not-for-profit sector of research and development, natural persons of research and development within the meaning of the Trade Act.

2.4. Regions

2.5. Foundations

2.5.1. NOS-OSF, Open Society Foundation (www.osf.sk)

Besides the resources of the national budget, public health research funding is partially covered through the Open Society Foundation which is a non-governmental organization that has operated in Slovakia since 1992. NOS-OSF is part of the Soros Foundation network (see www.soros.org for more details).

3. Research Performers

3.1. State Institutes

3.1.1. State Institute for Drug Control: www.sukl.sk

3.1.2. Health Care Supervision Authority: www.udzs.sk

3.1.3. The National Health Information Centre (www.nczisk.sk) helps to standardise the health-care information system, gathers, analyses and provides statistical data and provides library and information services in medical sciences and health care.

3.2. Mixed organizations

SAV, the Slovak Academy of Science (<http://www.sav.sk/>) has five divisions, 74 organisational units with a budget of €46.7m and employs 3300 people. One division is medicine with 8 institutes, including oncology and heart disease, but no institute covers public health research. Academies receive funding direct and also apply for research project funding. Jointly with the Ministry of Education, they also have a research grant-making capacity, the VEGA Grant Agency. In 2008 the VEGA supported some 1722 projects with €9.7m.

3.3. Universities

There were 23 public and 10 non-state Higher Education Facilities in Slovakia in 2008. The 2008 total public university funding was €434.057m.

Some of the Higher education institutions which are involved in Public Health research are: Slovak Medical University in Bratislava, Faculty of Public Health; Comenius University in Bratislava, Faculty of Medicine; Comenius University in Bratislava, Jessenius Faculty of Medicine in Martin; Pavol Jozef Safarik University in Kosice, Faculty of Medicine; University of Trnava in Trnava, Faculty of Health Care and Social Work. Private institutions: St. Elisabeth University College of Health and Social Work in Bratislava; John Paul II. Faculty of Missionary Work and Tropical Health Care

3.4. Health Services

3.4.1. The Public Health Authority of the Slovak Republic (<http://www.uvzsr.sk/en/>) participates, by the Act No. 355/2007 Coll. on Protection, Support and Development of Public Health, “in the solution of national and international programs significant for public health and carries out scientific research in this field”. Public health research carried out by the Public Health Authority and regional public health authorities is linked to other research institutes (e.g. the regional institutes of public health), universities or non-governmental organizations. These are traditional public health activities including environmental control, infectious disease control and care for special groups.

3.5. Independent organizations

4. Research Strategies

4.1. The main strategic document on research and development in Slovakia is “Long-term Plan of the State Science and Technology Policy by the Year 2015”, approved by the Government of the SR on September 12, 2007.

“Health – quality of life” is stated as the first substantive priority with following annotation in the Plan: *“The research and development designed to ensure health of citizens will focus on the prevention and treatment of the most prevalent life threatening diseases and the diseases frustrating full involvement in work and societal life. It involves in particular the prevention and treatment of cardiovascular diseases, early diagnostics and treatment of oncologic diseases, which are diseases with highest mortality rates in Slovakia. Attention will be devoted also to virology and infectious diseases, clinical immunology, chronic degenerative metabolic diseases, applied microbiology, respiratory diseases, geriatric diseases, allergies, etc. Special attention will be paid to the prevention and treatment of mental disorders, particularly depression, as the most prevalent condition in Slovakia obstructing the full quality life. The core themes will include:*

- *the promotion of a healthy life style – prevention is the best cure, knowledge is the best prevention;*
- *the transfer of knowledge of molecular medicine into clinical practice – the implementation of the knowledge potential of the human genome;*
- *genetics and medical biotechnologies.*

Food products and their primary source, agriculture, are a factor that substantially affects the individuals' health and hence also their quality of life. In this respect attention will be given to the research and development in the areas:

- *safer, healthier and better quality food products – increased consumption and global food processing industry as potential risks to health;*
- *ecologisation of agriculture.*

The individual's health and his work capacity are to a large extent affected by the working environment, working conditions, and good working relations. It is therefore necessary to direct the attention of research and development to the areas of good or decent work from the aspect of technical equipment, interpersonal relations, updating of vocational knowledge and skills of employees linked to the scientific and technological progress, and the creation of a system of social security allowing smooth and safe transitions between jobs”.

Other substantive priorities defined in the Plan are: Progressive materials and technologies; Biotechnologies; Knowledge technologies supported with information and communication technologies; Infrastructure of the society; Energy and energetics; Civilisation challenges; The cultural and artistic heritage of Slovakia; Security and defence; Exploitation, protection and reproduction of biologic sources; Environment protection; Exploitation of domestic mineral resources.

(Source: Long-term Plan of the State Science and Technology Policy by the Year 2015,

<http://www.minedu.sk/index.php?lang=en&rootId=20&col=true>, in English)

4.2. In 2007, the latest “State Health Policy Concept of the SR” has been approved by the Government of the SR. This document in the field of science and development prescribes:

- To create a long-term science and research strategy within health care for 10 years at least in cooperation with the Ministry of Education of the SR, the Ministry of Health of the SR, the Slovak Academy of Science and universities concentrate the education and science-research capacities of the Slovak Academy of Science and other education and research institutions in joint research teams in order to prevent duplicity of research and partial solutions in several workplaces;
- To improve cooperation between the scientific-research institutions and the State institutions, through the activities of which the knowledge achieved by research is put into practice (preventive measures, preparation of legislation, informing the public);
- To adapt the research fields to the current health problems of the population.

(Source: State Health Policy Concept of the SR

http://www.uvzsr.sk/docs/kspz/koncepcia_SP_zdravia_SR.pdf, in Slovak;

http://www.uvzsr.sk/docs/kspz/koncepcia_SP_zdravia_SR_EN.pdf, in English)

4.3. The newest strategic governmental document is the “Statement of Government of the SR for 2010–2014”, approved on August, 2010. In this document, three statements are important (among others) from perspective of further public health research development:

- Government of the SR will be regularly support financially grant system in the field of health science and research;
- Government of the SR will transform the Agency for Support of Research and Development (APVV) to independent organization and will support its increasing importance in funding research and development in Slovakia;
- Government of the SR will develop systemic measures to increase fruitfulness of Slovak subjects in EU Communitarian Programs and will simplify system for using structural funds on research and education.

(Source: Statement of Government of the SR for 2010–2014, <http://www.vlada.gov.sk/data/files/6257.pdf>, in Slovak)

5. Programmes and calls

6. European contacts

6.1. National FP7 Contact point (Health area)¹

6.1.1. Slovak FP7 Contact point (Health area): Vanda Benkovičová, Slovak Research and Development Agency, vanda.benkovicova@apvv.sk

6.1.2. Delegate: Ján Slezák, slezak@up.upsav.sk

6.2. National DG SANCO Contact point²

6.2.1. Edmund Škorvaga, Ministry of Health of the SR, edmund.skorvaga@health.gov.sk, info.php@health.gov.sk

¹ Source: http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/ncp_en.html, assessed in February 2010

² Source: http://ec.europa.eu/health/programme/policy/index_en.htm assessed in February 2010