



SLOVAKIA

COUNTRY PROFILE

DRIM

Danube Region
Information
Platform for
Economic
Integration of
Migrants

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SHORT INTRODUCTION

Slovakia in its modern history (since the 18th century) always manifested larger emigration movements, resulting in several mass movements. Emigration generally became a typical attribute of the Slovak population development. The country experienced negligible stocks or flows of immigrants even at the time of its establishment as an independent State (1993).

Nevertheless, subsequent societal transformations in Slovakia, its accession to the European Union and the Schengen Area, and its deep international economic and political integration began to modify the existing migration patterns. As a consequence, the country witnessed the rising importance of the flows of immigrants and their activities. During the past two decades, Slovakia thus became a transit country, and is increasingly changing into a migrant-receiving country- still with a relatively low share of migrants but a rather high growth rate.

Such development has raised the necessity to create proper approaches and policies. The country thus prepared its first comprehensive migration policy as late as 2011. The first special document on migrants' integration was adopted in 2009, and considerably reworked into a policy in 2014. However, persisting immigration, asylum and especially integration challenges clearly suggest that in practice there remain many shortcomings in the country's migration and integration policies.

TABLE WITH BASIC INFORMATION¹

Capital: Bratislava
Official language(s): Slovak
Population (end of 2016): 5,435,000
Foreigners as percentage of total population (end of 2016): 1.7%
Percentage of foreigners in the labour force (end of 2015): 1.3%
Unemployment rate (end of 2016): 9.1%
Degree of urbanisation, number of cities over 100,000 inhabitants: 54%, two cities (Bratislava and Košice)
Country's accession to the EU and the Schengen Area: 1 May 2004 and 21 Dec. 2007, resp.

¹ Accessed at: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic, www.statistics.sk (6 April 2017).

THE MIGRANT POPULATION

Within the EU, Slovakia is among the countries with a low share of migrants, who are defined as persons born abroad. By the latest census (2011), they constituted only about 2.8% of the entire country's population (i.e. 150,443 persons). The concept of migrants is, however, not used for further statistical, legal, administrative or research purposes in Slovakia – instead, a less unambiguous category of “foreigners” is preferred.

At the end of 2016, the total stock of foreigners amounted to 93,247 individuals; this was just 1.7% of Slovakia's total population. Nevertheless, the number/share of foreigners intensified remarkably in 2004-2016 – up to 4.2 times (Table 1), which was the 3rd fastest pace of growth in the EU in that period.² The continuous influx of foreign citizens apparently followed the country's accession to the EU and the full opening of its labour market to EU workers. Simultaneously, net migration has been a significant factor in the stabilisation of the total population, successfully competing with the natural increase of the population (Table 1).

The further key immigration trends in Slovakia in the 2000-2016 period are: Firstly, a considerable drop in the share of persons from third countries and a rise in the proportion of persons from the EU (EFTA) in the total numbers – the latter have prevailed since 2005. This fact implies the country's preference for immigration from other EU States. Secondly, a higher representation of men (62.9 %) and a marked dominance of adults in the entire stock of foreigners suggest a preference for labour migration as opposed to other forms of migration. Spatially, ever increasing numbers of foreigners concentrated in the region of Bratislava and other big Slovak cities can be observed. Lastly, Slovakia exhibited the lowest naturalisation rate (i.e. 0.07 in 2012) within the EU over recent years. One might argue that this mirrors the existing administrative obstacles and the lack of a naturalisation policy.

The structure of the most represented countries of origin of legal migrants in Slovakia underwent modifications in the analysed period. Besides the persistently significant neighbouring countries (Czech Republic, Ukraine, Poland), stocks/shares of persons from the main “old” EU Member States were dynamised after 2004 (country's accession to the EU). After the accession of Romania and Bulgaria to the EU (2007), the inflows of their citizens became important for Slovakia too. Other relevant groups of foreign citizens in the country are the Serbs, Russians, and communities from Asian countries (Vietnam, China and South Korea) – Table 2.

After relatively large movements of asylum seekers to Slovakia in the mid-2000s, their figures dropped dramatically by 2016 (Table 1). The strict state asylum policy persisted (though the year 2016 may have brought on some changes). Hence, the number of persons under international protection in Slovakia is minimal. However, the participation of Slovakia in humanitarian transfer programmes is worth appreciating – since 2009 over

² Calculated by the author from Eurostat on-line data, 2005-2017.

1,000 persons in need were peacefully resettled through Slovakia in cooperation with the UNHCR and IOM.³

The qualitative development in the category of apprehended undocumented migrants follows the trends of asylum seekers. However, a principal structural change has occurred in this area – the share of migrants crossing the border without authorisation has reversed substantially in favour of those overstaying. This fact suggests that Slovakia has been increasingly attractive to (undocumented) migrants as a country of destination.

Table 1: Migrant population in Slovakia – development in the 2000-2016 period by main categories and basic indicators

Category, Indicator / Year	2000	2004	2008	2012	2016
Total end-year population	5,402,547	5,384,822	5,412,254	5,410,836	5,435,343
Natural increase	2,427	1,895	4,196	3,098	5,206
Net migration	1,463	2,874	7,060	3,416	3,885
Foreign citizens with a residence permit – end-of-year stocks and structures					
Number of foreigners	28,801 [#]	22,108	52,706	67,877	93,247
Year-on-year change (%)	-2.3 [#]	-24.3	27.9	2.5	10.0
Share in total population (%)	0.53 [#]	0.41	0.97	1.25	1.71
Share of foreigners from EU + EFTA (%)	NA	49.5	63.1	63.1	55.8
Share of foreigners from third countries (%)	NA	50.5	36.9	36.9	44.2
Share of males (%)	NA	55.8	65.0	64.0	62.9
Share of those aged 20+ (%)	NA	90.6	90.8	92.1	89.7
Asylum seekers – annual inflows and structures					
Inflow of asylum seekers	1,556	11,395	909	732	146
Year-on-year change (%)	17.9	10.0	-65.6	49.1	-55.7
Share of males (%)	NA	85.0	90.7	81.6	71.9
Share of those aged 18+ (%)	NA	89.8	87.5	92.5	75.3
Persons granted refugee status	11	15	22	32	167
Persons granted subsidiary protection	-	-	66	104	12
Refugee recognition rate* (%)	8.2	0.9	4.4	6.8	64.0

³ Accessed at: <http://iom.sk/en/activities/resettlement-of-refugees> (15 April 2017).

<http://www.interreg-danube.eu/drim>

Apprehended irregular migrants - annual inflows and structures					
Inflow of irregular migrants	6,062	10,946	2,355	1,479	2,170
Year-on-year change (%)	-24.7	-12.4	-65.2	21.3	-14.4
Share of those transiting (%)	NA	76.1	43.9	44.5	9.6
Share of those overstaying (%)	NA	23.9	56.1	55.5	90.4
Share of males (%)	NA	82.4	82.8	75.7	77.2
Share of those aged 19+ (%)	NA	85.4	86.5	80.7	89.6
Naturalised foreigners - annual numbers and structures					
Persons granted Slovak citizenship	4,241	4,016	679	360	608
Year-on-year change (%)	212.8	-0.8	-54.0	8.4	15.8
Number per 1,000 inhabitants	0.78	0.75	0.12	0.07	0.11

= data are partly exaggerated due to then incorrect methodology; NA = data not available;

* = the number of asylum seekers granted Convention refugee status divided by the total number of accepted (Convention status and subsidiary protection) and rejected cases

Source: statistics of the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic, Bureau of Border and Alien Police, Migration Office, Section of Public Administration at the Ministry of the Interior, Eurostat on-line data, and own calculations, 2001-2017

Table 2: Top 10 countries of origin of foreigners in Slovakia in 2004, 2010 and 2016

2004		2010		2016	
Country	Number	Country	Number	Country	Number
Ukraine	4,007	Czech Rep.	8,331	Ukraine	13,024
Czech Rep.	3,583	Ukraine	5,786	Czech Rep.	10,317
Poland	2,468	Romania	5,755	Hungary	7,813
Hungary	1,519	Hungary	5,184	Serbia	7,232
Russia	1,213	Poland	4,959	Romania	6,907
Germany	988	Germany	3,770	Poland	5,562
Vietnam	832	Serbia	2,894	Germany	4,380
U.S.A.	643	Vietnam	2,032	Russia	4,035
Bulgaria	633	Austria	1,948	Italy	2,757
Austria	576	Russia	1,942	Vietnam	2,580

Source: statistics of the Bureau of Border and Alien Police, 2005-2017

LABOUR MIGRANT POPULATION

So far, the influences of labour migration on the Slovak labour market can be considered only marginal, since the stock of labour migrants in the country is still quite low, compared to the domestic labour pool. However, it is an ever rising and promising segment with forecasted sizeable numbers for the future. We estimate that at present the contribution of foreign nationals to the Slovak economy amounts to around 2% of GDP.

As illustrated in Table 3, labour migration in the 2000-2016 period became the most rapidly developing (and most significant) component of all migration flows to Slovakia. The stock of employed foreigners grew 7.4 times, their share in all employed persons in the country jumped to 1.4%, and their total participation and employment rates were higher than those of native-born persons. Other cardinal trends observed in this field over the past years imply: the essential role of employed persons from EU countries, a sharp rise in remittance flows, the slow liberalisation of conditions for work for citizens of third countries, etc.

A certain occupational specialisation among employed foreigners is evident in Slovakia. Persons from “old” EU countries are typically employed in the tertiary and quaternary sectors as high-skilled, while persons from “new” EU countries most often hold high-skilled or middle-skilled jobs across the economy. Migrants from Ukraine and the Balkans usually work as low-skilled employees in construction and manufacturing. Asian communities (except Koreans) are mostly active in small entrepreneurship, retail and gastronomy.

Table 3: Labour migrants in Slovakia in the 2000-2016 period by basic indicators

Indicator / Year	2000	2004	2008	2012	2016
Number of employed foreigners	4,721	3,351 [#]	13,979	11,547 [*]	35,090
Year-on-year change (%)	-2.8	-32.7 [#]	28.1	-48.0 [*]	37.4
Share of those from EU + EFTA (%)	17.9	66.1	74.3	63.3 [*]	68.5
Share of those from third countries (%)	82.1	33.9	25.7	36.7 [*]	31.5
Share of males (%)	NA	77.4	80.9	75.3 [*]	74.6
Share of persons with tertiary education (%)	NA	54.1	31.6	29.5 [*]	18.3
Share of employed foreigners in all foreigners in SK (%)	16.4	15.2 [#]	26.5	17.0 [*]	37.6
Share of employed foreigners in all employed persons in SK (%)	0.22	0.15 [#]	0.57	0.50 [*]	1.40
Share of employed foreigners in total labour force in SK (%)	0.18	0.13 [#]	0.52	0.43 [*]	1.27
Their total participation rate (%)	NA	67.2 [*]	75.4 [*]	77.0 [*]	69.1 [*]
Their total employment rate (%)	NA	61.9 [*]	75.4 [*]	66.2 [*]	63.1 [*]

[#] = data may be rather underestimated; ^{*} = data by Eurostat with low reliability; [•] = data may be rather imprecise, unsuitable for comparisons

Source: statistics of the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic, Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, Eurostat on-line data, and own calculations, 2001-2017

POLICIES AND APPROACHES TO (LABOUR) MIGRANTS

Slovakia defined its first comprehensive migration policy – entitled Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic: Perspective until 2020⁴ – as late as 2011. The Policy, with its regular Action Plans, represents a progressive instrument for migration management in the country. It deals with the more principal areas, e.g. issues of legal (economic) migration or the integration of immigrants, whereas several other important themes have been addressed insufficiently or not at all.

A special emphasis on migrants' integration was first laid down in the Government Resolution of 2009, which was revised to a great extent in 2014. The document named Integration Policy of the Slovak Republic⁵ presents a detailed framework for tasks in the integration of immigrants in the country, to be done in coordination with governmental authorities, self-government bodies, migrant communities and NGOs. However, the situation in this field is still rather unsatisfactory, as corroborated by international comparisons (e.g. MIPEX⁶).

Institutionally, the Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family with its local labour offices is the main authority responsible for employing foreign citizens in Slovakia. The crucial legal norm regulating this area is Act No. 5/2004 on Employment Services. Through legal/administrative measures and practical approaches, the migration of (qualified) workers from EU/EFTA countries is supported at the expense of persons from third countries.

⁴ <http://www.minv.sk/?zamer-migracnej-politiky-slovenskej-republiky> (20 April 2017).

⁵ <https://www.mpsvr.sk/en/integration-foreigners-slovakia/documents/> (20 April 2017).

⁶ <http://www.mipex.eu/slovakia> (22 April 2017).

OVERVIEW OF INFORMATION SERVICES FOR MIGRANTS

Comprehensive information services for migrants in Slovakia are quite limited; however, one may find basic information primarily from certain central state institutions and IGOs (NGOs). Most of the information is both in Slovak and English, but the latter is often in a reduced, i.e. insufficient, form.

For instance, the [Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family](#) provides information on labour market access, employment policies, and integration policy. [The Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family](#) informs about labour market services, work permits, contact information for local labour offices, etc. The Ministry of the Interior, its [Bureau of Border and Alien Police](#), gives information on the conditions for entry and stay, related acts, documents and forms, undocumented migration, or removals. [The Migration Office](#) under the Ministry deals with asylum issues, state migration policy, and EU funds. The [Administrative Section](#) of the same Ministry covers the naturalisation agenda.

[The Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs](#) offers contact information for embassies and consular offices, information on visas, on conditions for stay, development aid, etc. The [Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport](#) addresses the education issues, recognition of diplomas, and super legalisation.

[The International Organization for Migration in Slovakia](#) deals with the comprehensive migration agenda, services and campaigns. Through its [Migration Information Centre](#) it provides a multitude of useful information, a helpline, free consultancies and services for migrants, also offering a rich [on-line source](#) of various information for them.

The most used link of embassies and Slovak cultural institutes abroad is https://www.mzv.sk/ministerstvo/slovenske_zastupitelstva-vsetky_zastupitelstva.

KEY STAKEHOLDERS (STATE/INTERNATIONAL/NGO SECTOR)

Besides the above-given essential stakeholders providing information and services to (labour) migrants in Slovakia, several other related key actors may be mentioned.

State institutions:

- Ministry of Economy, <http://www.economy.gov.sk/home/126312s>
- Ministry of Culture, <http://www.culture.gov.sk/>
- Office for Slovaks Living Abroad, <http://www.uszz.sk/sk/>

Crucial non-governmental organizations:

- Human Rights League, <http://www.hrl.sk/en>
- The Slovak Humanitarian Council, <http://www.shr.sk/>
- Marginal, www.marginal.sk
- Centre for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture, <http://cvek.sk/en/home/>
- Milan Šimečka Foundation, <http://www.nadaciamilananasimecku.sk/>
- Institute for Public Affairs, <http://www.ivo.sk/106/en/home>
- Slovak Catholic Charity, <http://www.charita.sk/eng>

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