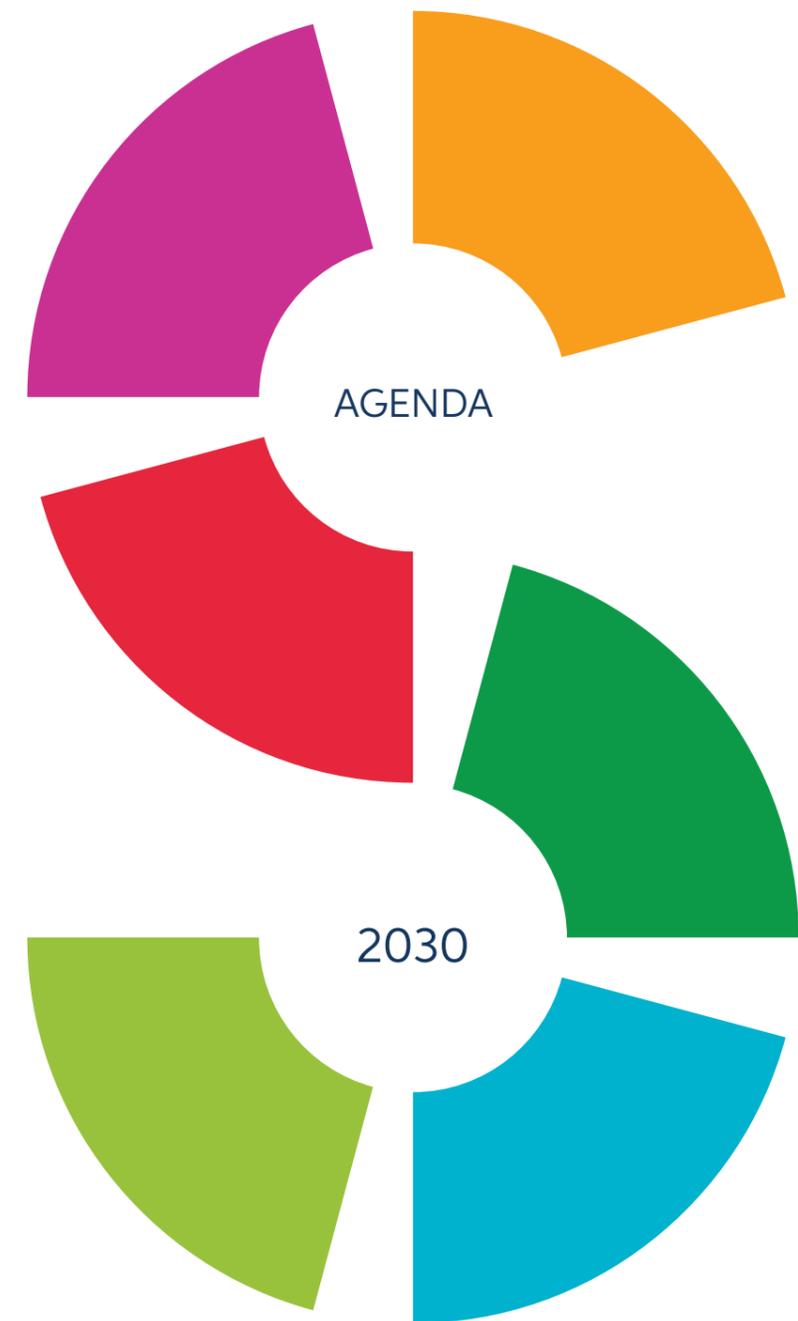


Voluntary National Review of the Slovak Republic
on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda
for Sustainable Development

SUSTAINABLE SLOVAKIA GOOD IDEA



FOREWORD BY THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER FOR INVESTMENTS AND INFORMATIZATION OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC



EVERY ACTION COUNTS

Sustainable development is our duty towards future generations. Slovakia is devoted to add its share to the common endeavour of the international community towards reaching Agenda 2030 and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals. The level of ambition has never been as high as in this Agenda, which calls for no poverty, clean water and peace for all around the world, including the most vulnerable people. This level of ambition corresponds with the unprecedented level of urgency to address challenges which are hindering progress towards sustainability objectives. Slovakia, as a small but committed country, wants to demonstrate that every action counts on the way towards sustainable and resilient societies.



The first Voluntary National Review of the Slovak Republic is a result of two years of concentrated effort to establish the 2030 Agenda as the core of the country's strategic governance framework. The preparation of the Voluntary National Review provided strong momentum to bring all relevant stakeholders and partners on board, both within and outside of government. It created a sense of shared ownership of the 2030 Agenda implementation process among various groups of society, which often struggle to reach common ground.

Slovakia perceives the 2030 Agenda as a tool as well as an objective. The Agenda represents a unique engine and opportunity to strengthen the elements of strategic planning and enhance coherence among economic, social, and environmental policies, domestically and internationally. At the same time, the Sustainable Development Goals are objectives in themselves. They draw our attention to a number of elements which are crucial for sustainability but tend to be overlooked. To mention only a few, one of these is the pledge to leave no one behind, which prevents countries from falling into a trap of averages. The second is an increased focus on the global implications of national policies and actions.

In today's interconnected world, shared problems require shared responses. Slovakia is eager to learn about the progress made and tools used by other countries, and offers its own best practices

in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, as well as the system of Voluntary National Reviews, significantly support this exchange, and provide the international community with an opportunity to take stock of what has been achieved and how far we are from reaching our goals. Slovakia welcomes this effort and calls for a continued open and honest exchange, involving all stakeholders, which is indispensable for making sustainability work for all.

RICHARD RAŠI

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Sustainable development has been an established concept on international fora for decades. The adoption of the 2030 Agenda, however, transformed it profoundly, both in terms of its global significance and in terms of complexity. In order to achieve these new and comprehensive sustainability objectives, innovative approaches are in great need. Slovakia, a small but committed country, contributes to sustainable development at home and abroad through the following four **main principles of implementation**:

01

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT MUST LIE AT THE HEART OF ALL PUBLIC POLICIES.

Slovakia is dedicated to implement the 2030 Agenda by integrating it into all public policies at the national, regional, as well as local level. To accomplish this ambition, Slovakia has established the 2030 Agenda as the centre point of its strategic governance framework, which is currently being developed.

02

INDIVIDUAL COMMITMENT AND CROSS-GENERATIONAL ENGAGEMENT IS VITAL.

Slovakia's dedication, as a country, to the 2030 Agenda is necessary but not sufficient to achieve sustainable development ambitions. The effort must be shared and owned by all –women or men, young or elderly. Slovakia strongly supports and is committed to fostering such engagement by its people.

03

PARTNERSHIPS ARE ESSENTIAL FOR FINDING SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS.

Slovakia's government attaches great importance to building partnerships with stakeholders, ranging from the private sector to the scientific community and NGOs. It recognises that partnerships and synergies between various stakeholders can supplement missing capacities and bring additional resources necessary for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Slovakia is therefore dedicated to sustain an enabling environment for the creation of partnerships.

04

GLOBAL RESPONSIBILITY

Slovakia has been working intensively to maintain the momentum to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development not only domestically but also internationally, through its Official Development Assistance as well as by way of its position within international and regional organisations.



NATIONAL PRIORITIES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2030 AGENDA

In its Voluntary National Review, Slovakia introduces its set of six national priorities for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, which exhibit its tailor-made road towards a more resilient and sustainable society. Committed to the principle of partnership, Slovakia has defined its priorities in a broad stakeholder participation process, involving civil society representatives, the private sector, or regional and municipal administration.

The six national priorities integrate the 17 global Sustainable Development Goals along with country-specific objectives. Slovakia's Voluntary National Review contains an account of the main challenges that the country is facing with respect to each priority. Existing policies and good practises to tackle these difficulties are presented as well. Finally, each key area is followed by a brief example of how Slovakia contributes to them in an international environment through its Official Development Assistance.



The first national priority focuses on education. It incorporates SDGs 4, 8 and 10, and as such contains aspects of decent employment as well. More than that, however, this priority emphasises that education is a life-long process, which should enable a life in dignity under rapidly changing circumstances and requirements.



The second key area is centred on transformation towards an environmentally sustainable and knowledge-based economy in the context of demographic change. It integrates above all SDGs 7, 8, 9, 10 and 12 but also adds a significant local factor – population aging.



Priority three focuses on poverty reduction and social inclusion. It integrates SDGs 1, 2 and 10, but even more importantly it underscores the pledge of the 2030 Agenda to leave no one behind. On a global scale, Slovakia performs very well on eradicating poverty and hunger. Averages can be deceptive, however, therefore this priority highlights the need to achieve sound results in the most vulnerable groups of society as well.



The fourth national priority pertains to the sustainability of settlements, regions and the countryside in the context of climate change, and incorporates SDGs 6, 7, 11, 13 and 15. While a relatively wideranging priority, it lays special emphasis on diminishing regional disparities.



Key area five underscores the significance of rule of law, democracy and security, once again in the Slovak context. It supports SDGs 5 and 16, and moreover, it emphasises that implementing the 2030 Agenda is impossible without strong institutions and without decision-making based on reliable data.



Good health was determined as the sixth priority area for Slovakia's sustainable development. Achievements in this priority shall contribute mainly to SDGs 3 and 10. Apart from addressing health issues in the aggregate population, it accentuates the disparities in the health status of various groups of inhabitants and the need to identify the root causes of such incongruence.

WAY FORWARD

The next step will be to integrate the outlined national priorities into a National Development Strategy until 2030, as well as into sectoral strategies and investment plans, in order to ensure a whole-of-government approach to their implementation, as well as adequate financing. To turn this ambition into practice, a robust institutional framework involving key stakeholders is inevitable. In Slovakia, the coordination of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda is shared by the Deputy Prime Minister's Office for Investments and Informatization and the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs. A Government Council involving key line ministers, as well as representatives of NGOs, academia, the private sector, and associations of cities and regions has also been established.

Finally yet importantly, Slovakia recognises that continuity is essential for the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda. To this end, a stronger involvement of the national Parliament is foreseen in the coming period and partnerships with the non-governmental sector will be reinforced to safeguard Slovakia's steadiness on the way towards sustainability objectives.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of sustainable development has been intensively discussed on international fora for decades, and correspondingly it has been reflected in Slovak policies and strategic orientations. However, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by the United Nations member states in September 2015, has significantly expanded this concept and transformed sustainable development into the most important commitment of the international community.

Slovakia has committed itself to implement the 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals. Due to the complexity of this agenda, its implementation requires innovative approaches and coordinated action by central administration bodies, regional authorities and municipalities as well as other stakeholders. To ensure such an integrated approach, it is essential to integrate the 2030 Agenda into all public policies.

POLICY INTEGRATION

In early 2017, the Slovak government adopted a roadmap which outlined the most important steps towards integrating the 2030 Agenda into the overall strategic planning and governance framework of the Slovak Republic. With regards to the country's limited resources and capacities, as well as specific needs and context not reflected by the 2030 Agenda, the first milestone was to "nationalise" the 17 Sustainable Development Goals by clustering them around six national priorities for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The next step will be to transform these national priorities into strategic goals with measurable target values and outcome indicators. According to the roadmap, these goals should form the base of a National Development Strategy until 2030. The development strategy

will serve two main purposes: to increase coherence of sectoral strategies by creating a long-term, overarching strategic framework, and to limit proliferation of strategic documents by integrating national, regional and territorial development plans. Last but not least, the development strategy will feed into a National Investment Plan, which should bolster financing for sustainable development.

PARTNERSHIP AND VOLUNTARY ENGAGEMENT

Slovakia's commitment, as a country, to sustainable development is indispensable but not sufficient to achieve it. All segments of society need to be involved in the process of implementing the 2030 Agenda – representatives of the non-governmental and private sector, the academic community, interest groups, regions and municipalities as well as the general public. In line with the principle of partnership, a robust institutional framework for the 2030 Agenda has been created which includes all the above-mentioned stakeholders.

The main coordinating body for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Slovakia is the **Government Council of the Slovak Republic for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**. In particular, the Government Council coordinates the creation of policies and strategies related to sustainable development, both at the national and regional level, and assesses the progress made in implementing the 2030 Agenda. The Government Council is chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister for Investments and Informatization of the Slovak Republic, in charge of the national implementation of the Agenda. The Deputy Chairman is the Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, who is responsible for implementing the Agenda in an international environment. Members of the Government Council include key line ministers, representatives of other relevant state institutions, regional administration, cities and municipalities, employers, trade unions, academia, non-governmental organisations and relevant government advisory bodies.

The working body of the Government Council is the **Working Group for the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the preparation of the National Investment Plan of the Slovak Republic for the years 2018 - 2030**. It consists of two chambers, namely the Government Chamber, which involves analytical units of line ministries, and the Chamber of Stakeholders, where key non-governmental actors are represented.

Consistent with international best practice, the Slovak Republic has decided to define its national priorities for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in a broad stakeholder participation process, respecting the principles and values of open government. The priority-setting process met the criteria of participation, inclusiveness and transparency and was overviewed by the Government Council of the Slovak Republic for the 2030 Agenda, in intensive cooperation with stakeholders.

The starting point for discussions about the national priorities was an OECD baseline study, "Measuring Distance to the SDG Targets: an assessment of where OECD countries stand", which evaluates the distance countries need to travel to meet each SDG target and provides a high-level overview of strengths and weaknesses.

Inspired by this study and based on existing analytical materials, the Institute for Forecasting of the Slovak Academy of Sciences suggested a set of key areas for the development of Slovakia by 2030, identifying major challenges and priorities for the country in the context of the Sustainable

Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda. Given the specificities of Slovakia as a developed country, authors also took into consideration a set of global challenges defined by the World Economic Forum. Based on the relevance of these challenges for Slovakia as well as the ability of the country to influence them, individual challenges were clustered into five thematic areas. Analytical units of the central administration bodies also took part in this exercise. The draft national priorities were approved by the Government Council of the Slovak Republic for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and subsequently became a base for expert discussions during the participatory process.

The **participatory process** itself took place at the level of stakeholders, who were representatives of civil society organisations, institutions and associations, think tanks, universities, academia, municipalities, regions, business associations and trade unions. Approximately forty key players were invited to be part of the newly created Chamber of Stakeholders, which was established as a partner of the Government Chamber within the Working Group for the 2030 Agenda and the National Investment Plan. The main responsibility of the Chamber of Stakeholders was to actively monitor and link the participatory activities taking place in each thematic area, and at the final stage of the process to formulate the proposed wording of the national priorities. Early on in the process, the members of the Chamber of Stakeholders proposed to expand the originally suggested five priorities by adding a sixth national priority focusing on the rule of law, democracy and security, with an objective to highlight the normative and human rights aspects of sustainable development.

Discussions with a wider group of stakeholders took place in two stages. In the first phase, thematic meetings were organised in the regions

of Slovakia, in order to bring the debates closer to the relevant actors. Following the first regional stage of participatory meetings with stakeholders, the proposals and ideas from discussions were reviewed by the Chamber of Stakeholders and incorporated in the proposed wording of the national priorities. This consolidated version subsequently became the basis for the second phase of participatory meetings that took place in the capital of the Slovak Republic, Bratislava.

Participants have unanimously expressed the view that in order to elaborate relevant national priorities in the horizon of the year 2030, it is inevitable to actively engage the "2030 generation" itself – young people, who are currently preparing for their professional career, but who will be in 2030 already determining the political, economic, but also value orientation of the country. For this reason, debates with high school students were organised focusing on the national priorities, the results of which were afterwards presented at the meetings of the Chamber of Stakeholders.

The final proposal of the national priorities as well the corresponding main challenges were formulated by the Chamber of Stakeholders. Subsequently, they were presented to the representatives of line ministries at a joint meeting of both chambers of the Working Group for the 2030 Agenda and the National Investment Plan. The draft national priorities were thereafter subject to inter-ministerial consultations and were adopted by the Slovak government on 13th June 2018.

The following key conclusions and lessons learned emerged from the participatory process:

1.

The participatory process has confirmed that the citizens of the Slovak Republic wish to be engaged in decisions about the country they live in and where their children will live. Their ideas about the future may differ in detail, but they are united in their desire to live in a country with good governance, high-quality education and healthcare as well as environmentally friendly economy.



2.

Participants expressed an ambition to continue in joint discussions, which should result in the formulation of a National Development Strategy until 2030. They agreed that the proposed national priorities need to be further developed into specific measurable targets and indicators that will allow us to measure the country's progress in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. They underlined that the principle of partnership, which is also the 17th Sustainable Development Goal, must overarch the entire implementation framework of the 2030 Agenda and all national priorities. Enabling the participation of stakeholders in the next phase of implementation is therefore as important as at the initial stage of the process.



3.

The third and the most important message of the participatory process was that the 2030 Agenda as well as its values and goals are universal, and they should be implemented continually throughout government cycles. Participants emphasised that if there is a genuine effort to implement the 2030 Agenda in the Slovak Republic, the principle of sustainable development must be adopted by governments, local authorities and all members of the society. At the same time, the national priorities for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda must be reflected in all public policies as well as in budgetary planning, otherwise the 2030 Agenda will remain a formal commitment.



Apart from the above described formal mechanisms, the Slovak government recognises the crucial importance of **individual commitment and cross-generational engagement** to implement the 2030 Agenda. To foster and scale up citizens' voluntary activities aimed at sustainability, the Slovak government has approved a microgranting scheme, which will support microprojects focusing on sustainable development implemented by local communities, schools and civil society organisations. In addition, voluntary engagement is promoted through the Volunteer of the Year award, which was in 2018 for the first time presented also in a special category devoted to contribution to the 2030 Agenda.

Voluntary commitment to sustainability by the **private sector** is crucial as well. Companies can change Slovakia for the better by treating their employees, their suppliers, the environment, and the local community fairly. To foster socially and environmentally responsible business conduct and to raise awareness among companies on the 2030 Agenda, a new award praising contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals was presented this year as a part of the Via Bona Slovakia award, which has been bestowed upon responsible businesses since 1998.

GLOBAL RESPONSIBILITY

The Slovak Republic recognises that while it is crucial to set up an effective framework for implementing the 2030 Agenda within its national borders, its responsibilities stretch further. Slovakia utilises two main tools to contribute to sustainable development on a global level. Firstly, as an exceptionally active member of a number of international and regional organisations, Slovakia has been utilising its position to mainstream sustainability in all areas of global concern. Most remarkably, the Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, has determined sustainability as one of the priorities of his Presidency of the ongoing 72nd UN General Assembly. The country follows the same course with respect to its membership of the UN Human Rights Council for the period

2018-2020. Slovakia is determined to maintain the momentum to implement the 2030 Agenda also as part of its ongoing presidency of the Visegrad Four, as well as its upcoming first presidency of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe in 2019.

The second major instrument to support the accomplishment of the Sustainable Development Goals abroad is the provision of Official Development Assistance (ODA). Slovakia is committed to support its partners along their development path and is eager to share its experience with transformation and reform processes. In the interest of developing a coherent approach towards promoting sustainability, Slovakia has acted to align its

provision of ODA with its six national priorities for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Interlinkages will be further strengthened in the currently discussed Medium-term Strategy for Development Cooperation of the Slovak Republic for 2019 – 2023. Development activities towards partner countries should as a result generally focus on the following areas:



vocational training focusing on access to the labour market and self-employment as well as upgrading educational facilities,



creating conditions for the availability of quality employment opportunities in the open labour market for all population groups,



access to potable water and sanitation for all, while respecting environmental sustainability and quality waste management,



adapting human settlements and the countryside to the adverse effects of climate change, good governance and civil society capacity development,



quality healthcare along with the education of healthcare personnel.

NATIONAL PRIORITIES FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2030 AGENDA



As a result of the stakeholder participation process outlined above, Slovakia has defined its six national priorities for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. They exhibit the country's tailor-made road towards a more resilient and sustainable society by integrating the 17 global Sustainable Development Goals along with country-specific objectives. All six national priorities are closely interlinked and are regarded as equally significant.

Progress in any domain is only possible through the identification of key challenges and bottlenecks, followed by the application of targeted solutions. The Slovak government in consultation with stakeholders has therefore determined a set of main challenges within each national priority, delimitating areas which will receive special focus in Slovakia's National Development Strategy until 2030. The country's current performance in each priority area has also been assessed, along with best practices for implementation at home and abroad.



EDUCATION FOR A LIFE IN DIGNITY

Slovakia considers human capital to be the most important asset in today's world, the value of which is expected to further increase in the future. Therefore, education has been selected as the country's first national priority for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Education, in this context, is regarded as the basic prerequisite for an accomplished life in dignity that involves satisfactory employment for adequate reward, quality leisure time, lifestyle choices that are healthy and harmonious with the environment as well as the ability to perceive and influence the direction taken by society in a way that conforms to the principles of humanism and solidarity.

Given the rapid technological advances and the presence of other global megatrends, one of the basic tasks of education is to support individuals' adaptability and willingness to learn continually, since the only certainty of future development is the high degree of uncertainty and change which will need to be accommodated.

The first priority also takes into consideration the trend of deepening inequalities between individual groups of people. Therefore, issues of equal opportunities in education and in the labour market for all population groups, irrespective of their ethnicity, health or social status, resonate strongly within this priority.



MAIN CHALLENGES:

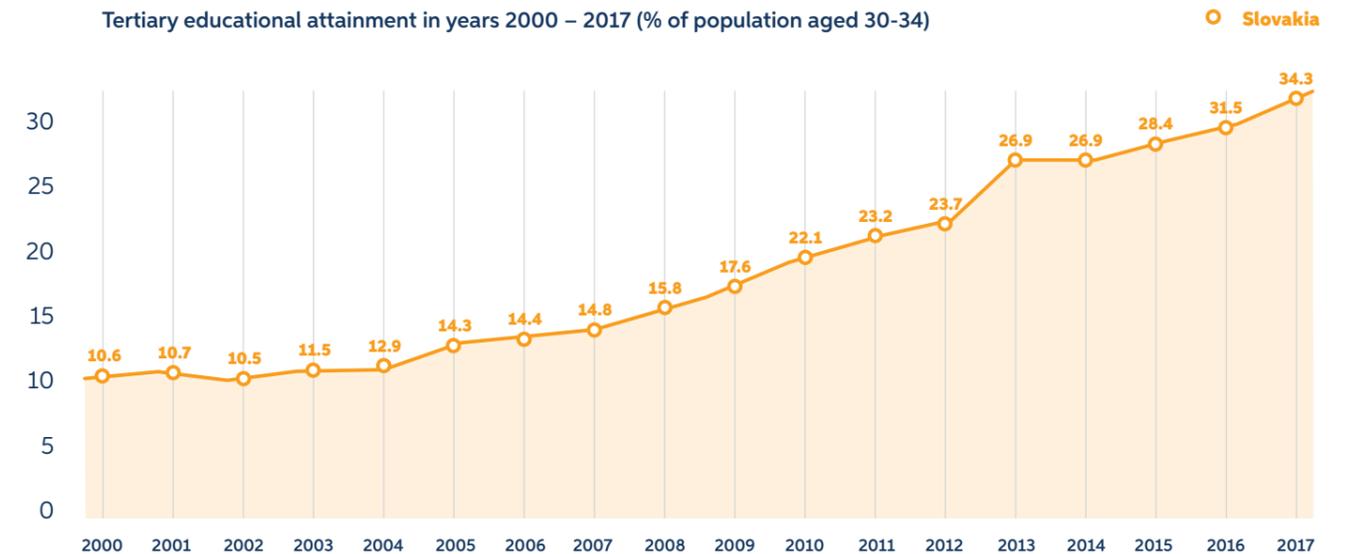
Improving the quality of education and enhancing the social status of teachers in the context of international comparison, global megatrends and the application of the principles of the knowledge economy.

All children are enrolled in primary education in Slovakia and tertiary educational attainment has been increasing steadily in recent decades, reaching 34.3 % of the population aged 30-34 in 2016. The quality and flexibility of the education

system remains a challenge, however, especially as the need to adapt the education system to rapid changes as well as to the requirements of a knowledge-based economy increases.



Tertiary educational attainment in years 2000 – 2017 (% of population aged 30-34)



Source: Eurostat.

Strengthening the principles of inclusion in the education system and ensuring equal opportunities for all children, pupils, and students, regardless of their social background, disability or nationality / ethnicity, with an emphasis on increasing opportunities for the application of positive social mobility.

In terms of educational attainment, Slovakia is performing very well in global comparison. At the same time, however, the education system faces great challenges in compensating for socio-economic disadvantages. On average, children coming from districts with the highest unemployment rates perform significantly worse at school than children with more advantaged backgrounds. Slovakia recognises that fulfilling the potential of all individuals irrespective of their ethnicity, socio-economic, or health status is crucial, as the engagement of all groups of

society is a precondition for a more sustainable future. The Slovak government will therefore put special emphasis on increasing opportunities for positive social mobility by 2030.

Creating conditions for the availability of quality employment opportunities in the open labour market for all population groups.

Despite current economic growth, historically low registered unemployment at 5.42 % in April 2018 and the relative openness of the labour market, the availability of quality employment opportunities for all population groups remains a challenge. On the labour market, inequalities and stigmatisation persist, especially in case of

marginalised Roma communities and people with disabilities. As people who are most likely to encounter difficulties under open labour market conditions often face multiple marginalisation, the state’s response needs to be manifold and coordinated as well.

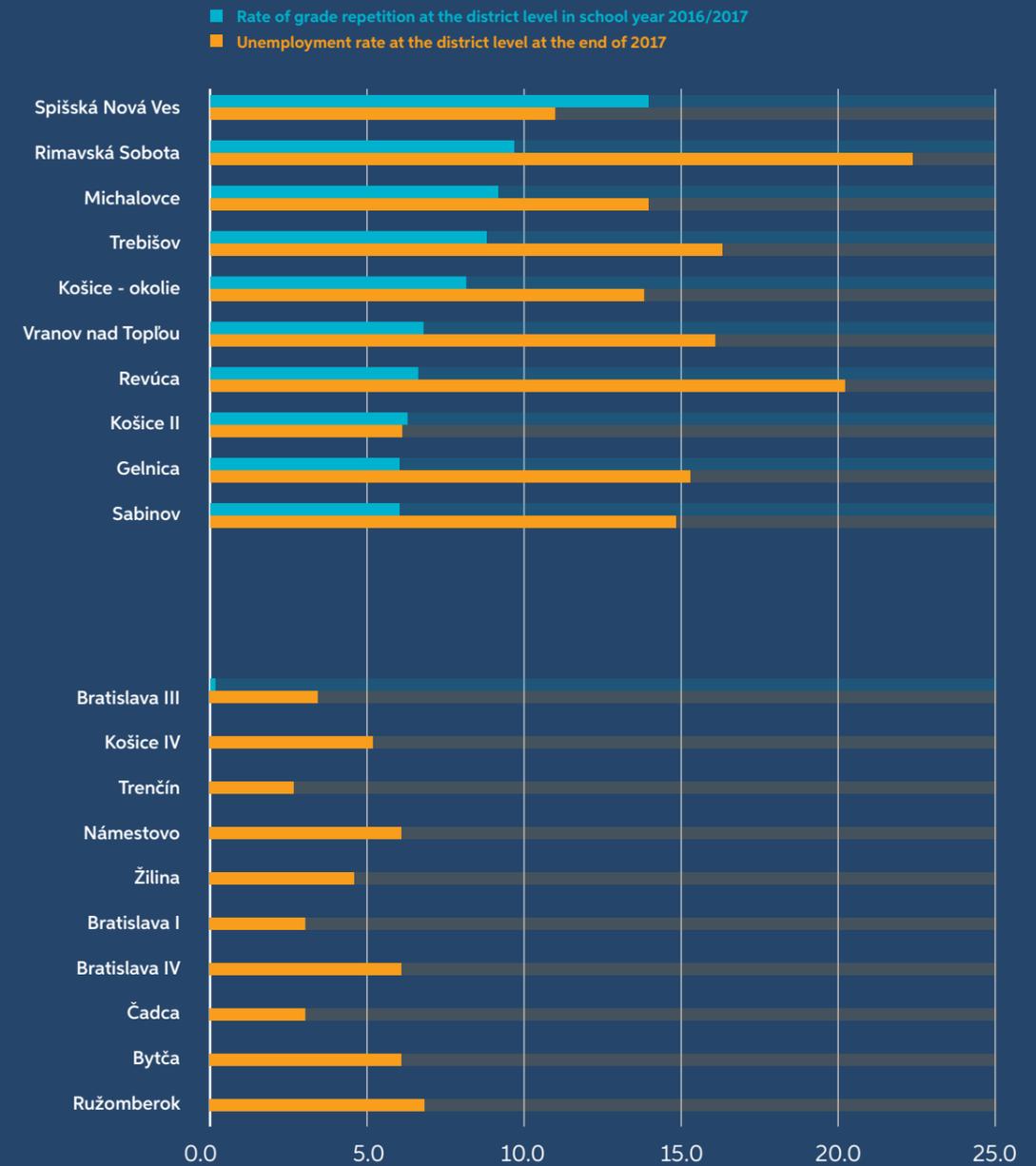
Overcoming structural imbalances between labour force supply and labour market demand, increasing the readiness of workforce for current as well as future labour market needs, and providing sufficient opportunities for the lifelong learning of individuals.

The labour force participation rate in Slovakia is relatively high at 59.9 % based on 2017 data and has been gradually increasing over recent years. Long-term unemployment, which stood at 5.8 % in 2016 compared to an EU average of 4 %, remains a challenge, however, along with structural unemployment (when labour force supply does not correspond to demand). The employment rate of people with a low level of education is particularly low, reaching only 4.3% in contrast with 16.9% in the EU.

A quality lifelong learning system can contribute to tackling the problems of structural unemployment and exclusion from the labour market. In the Slovak Republic, the rate of participation in lifelong learning remains relatively low, however, at 3.4%, creating a pressing need to scale up lifelong learning activities significantly by 2030.

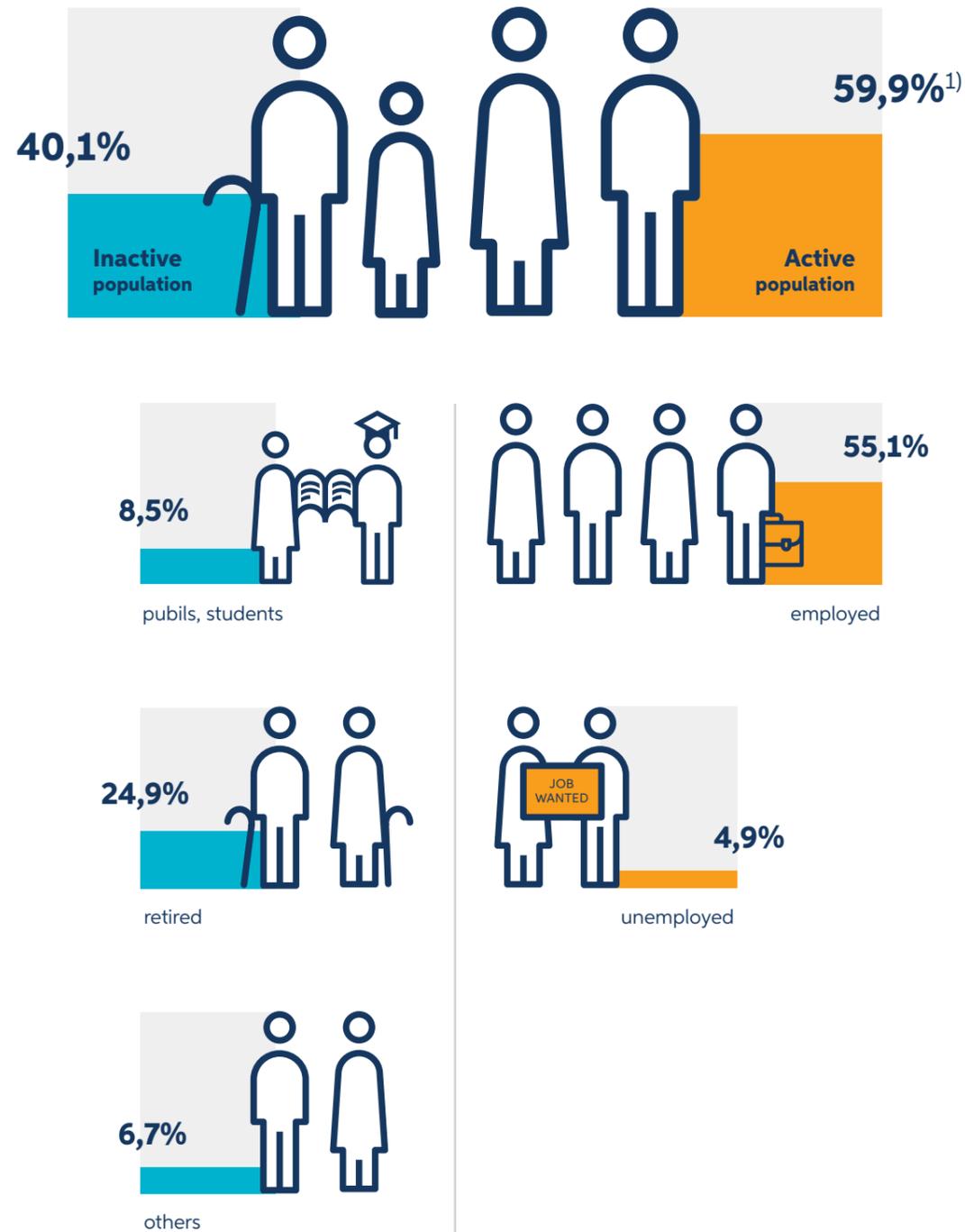


Proportion of grade repetition in correlation with the unemployment rate in selected districts in 2017 (%)



Source: Slovak Centre of Scientific and Technical Information and Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family.

Working age population (15+) in 2017



¹⁾ The total does not add up due to rounding.

Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic.

Creating social conditions, which ensure the stabilisation of talent and qualified workforce.

The flight of qualified labour force is a major challenge for Slovakia. According to estimates, about one in ten graduates left the country between 2010 and 2013, with experts in medicine and technological fields leaving most frequently. Attracting and retaining highly qualified and talented individuals has been a major difficulty in recent years. According to analyses, higher earnings are not the most important pull factor, while the importance of working conditions and environment tend to be underrated. To stabilise

and attract talent, more systemic measures are necessary, based on real needs instead of supposed ones.

The tackling of these challenges will be Slovakia's utmost priority until 2030. While specific targeted measures will be the subject matter of the National Development Strategy until 2030, which is currently being prepared, a number of good practices are already in place.

Best practices:

1.

In order to improve the quality of education in the context of global megatrends and the requirements of building a knowledge economy, the Slovak Methodological and Pedagogical Centre – an institution providing further education to pedagogical and professional staff – offers accredited **training programs on global issues**, including development cooperation, environmental education, or human rights. Training courses are designed to support teachers in integrating global issues in various subjects and curricula. Courses on improving functional literacy and on developing critical thinking abilities are also offered.

2.

The education system in Slovakia is based on the assumption that **the best school is the nearest school**, and that an equal standard of education must be provided for children in whichever part of the country. To turn this premise into reality, the Slovak government supports the engagement of schools within successful international networks and initiatives. To mention only a few, The Slovak Republic has joined the common project of the Council of Europe and the European Commission "Inclusive Schools: Making Difference for Roma Children" or shortly INSCHOOL. The aim of this initiative is to enhance the social inclusion of marginalised Roma communities through supporting inclusive education. Another example is participation in the internationally renowned Teach For All program.

Best practices:

2.

As a part of this global network, Teach For Slovakia, with support from the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic, brings promising future leaders to teach in under-resourced schools and disadvantages.

3.

In order to ensure equal opportunities in education for children belonging to **national minorities and ethnic groups**, schools and classes with the language of instruction of a national minority are exempt from the rationalisation of the school network as a result of a decline in the number of pupils. Furthermore, the legal representatives of pupils belonging to a national minority have a right to reimbursement of travel expenses connected to transporting children to the nearest school with the language of instruction of the respective national minority, if the municipality in which the pupil has a permanent residence does not have an elementary school or kindergarten with the language of instruction of the respective national minority.

4.

With respect to creating conditions for quality employment on the open labour market, Slovakia has in recent years stepped up efforts towards the comprehensive implementation of a **dual education** framework in all appropriate study fields. The primary goal is to deepen the relationship between employers, secondary schools and pupils, and thus enhance not only the pupils' their employment opportunities, but also the balance between labour force supply and demand.

5.

To confront **brain drain** and an increasing shortage in technical experts, the Slovak government has launched an initiative to motivate citizens working abroad to return to Slovakia. Through a dedicated platform run by the Slovak Investment and Trade Development Agency, professionals mainly in the field of ICT and research and development are provided with information on employment offers with a high added value. A similar initiative, developed by the Slovak non-governmental organisation LEAF, encourages the return of young adults studying abroad by being an intermediary for attractive employment opportunities not only in the private but also in the public sector (especially in analytical units of central administration bodies).



International development cooperation:

In the framework of a comprehensive **educational project in Iraq**, Slovakia contributes to increased attendance, quality of education and overall well-being of conflict-affected children and their parents. Basic access to education has been improved through the construction of additional classes, provision of refresher courses for school drop-outs, and contextualized teacher training on conflict sensitive education.





TRANSFORMATION TOWARDS A KNOWLEDGE-BASED AND ENVIRONMENTALLY SUSTAINABLE ECONOMY IN THE FACE OF CHANGING DEMOGRAPHY AND GLOBAL CONTEXT

After 1989, Slovakia has undergone a transition from a centrally planned economy to a market economy. This enabled the rapid integration of the Slovak Republic into the global economy and supported the inflow of foreign direct investment accompanied by a high rate of growth in labour productivity.

However, the current economic model is not neutral in demographic and environmental terms. Extensive sources of growth (supply of new labour and foreign direct investment) are gradually being exhausted, mainly due to the rapid aging of the Slovak population. In 2030, the ratio of working age population relative to people over 65 will be 1.38, whereas in 2013 the same figure stood at 1.75. This will increase pressure on funding the state's social services (especially in the healthcare and retirement sectors). The high proportion of population working and studying abroad is also a closely related demographic challenge.

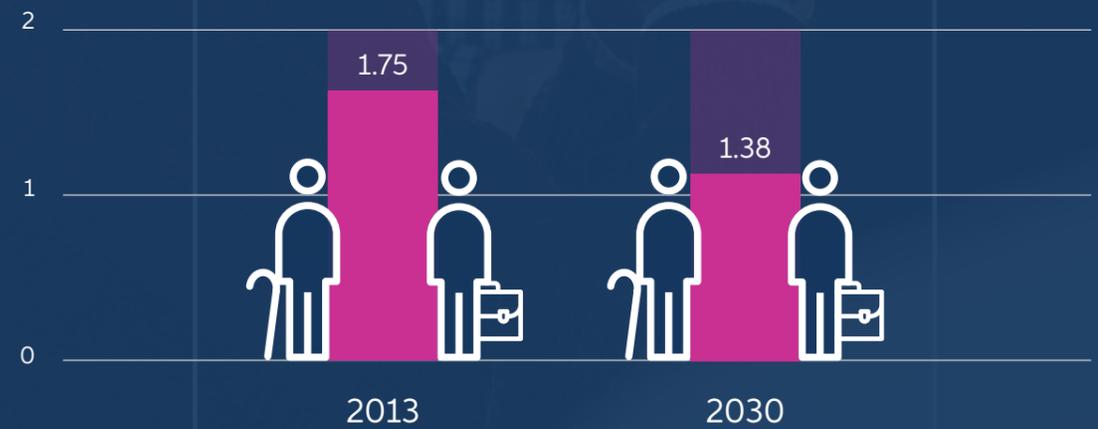
The current economic model also entails environmental risks, endorses wasting in the area of production and consumption and contributes to biodiversity loss, the degradation of ecosystems and their services as well as the depletion of natural resources. The implementation of the 2030 Agenda is an opportunity to promote

transformation towards an environmentally sustainable economy.

To sum up, the objective of economic development must be (i) to move from an economy based on low wages and taxes to a knowledge-based economy grounded on higher wages, well-adjusted taxes and innovations and (ii) to move from the current economic model to an environmentally sustainable economy while minimising undesirable externalities.



Number of employed per one retired



Source: European Commission (2015). The 2015 Ageing Report.



MAIN CHALLENGES:

Transition to intensive sources of economic development – domestic research, development and innovation. Restructuring the economy towards greater added value and sustainable use of domestic resources. Strengthening the economic self-sufficiency of regions and regional development aimed at meeting the needs of inhabitants.

The Slovak economy is highly globalized. In 2017, the share of exports relative to GDP was more than 96%. The integration of the Slovak Republic into the global economy has encouraged the inflow of foreign direct investment into a limited number of sectors, accompanied by massive technology transfers. To balance such developments, it is necessary to strengthen domestic sources of development, the economic self-sufficiency of

regions and domestic research and development. Development based on innovations is impossible without a creative and productive workforce, therefore Slovakia must pay special attention to improving its capacity to maintain and attract talent. Greater involvement of the private sector is also crucial as the share of research and development spending by private businesses in Slovakia is the lowest in the European Union.

Heading towards environmentally and socially sustainable production and consumption, as well as circular economy, while reducing subsidies to problematic sectors and internalising external social and environmental costs.

Circular economy has a potential to transform the current economic model in a way that preserves ecosystems and encourages the state and businesses to use people’s innovation and creativity to solve sustainability challenges. A potential driver for transitioning to a circular economy is the effective implementation and application of the principles of green public procurement, which must become a natural part of the agenda at all levels of governance.

account the life cycle of products and materials and appropriate manufacturing processes. On the consumer side, education and awareness raising aimed at responsible and sustainable consumption, as well as waste management, needs to be enhanced.

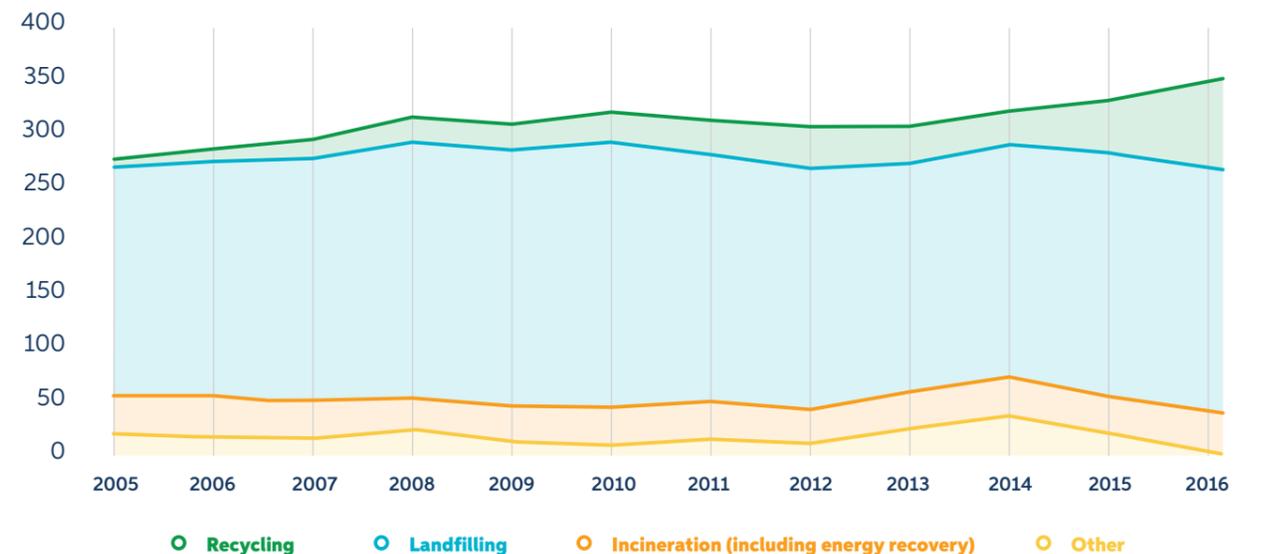
It is important to incentivise businesses to move towards more sustainable production models, by introducing tax regimes that stimulate green investments and regulations that encourage environmentally sustainable behaviour. It is also essential to minimize and prevent waste production, in particular through the appropriate selection of materials, eco-design, taking into



Per capita waste generation belongs in Slovakia to the lowest in the OECD. Over time, however, the municipal waste generation rate is showing an increasing trend (by 24 % since 2005). Despite an improving tendency, the level of recycling is inadequate and it reached only 23 % in 2016. In order to reach the target set for 2020 – a 50 % recycling rate for municipal waste – efforts need to be stepped up substantially. Landfilling remains a grave issue, as it is estimated that 66 % of all municipal waste ends up on landfills. Even though between 2005 and 2016 the share of landfills was reduced by 16.7 % with a year-on-year decrease of 3 % in 2016, this development is still insufficient to achieve waste management goals. Fees for the storage of municipal waste at landfills belong to the lowest in the EU, in spite of gradual increase. Higher fees, as well as interlinking municipalities’ recycling rates with landfilling fees, should serve as important motivational factors for a more sustainable waste management.

Municipal waste management in years 2005 – 2016 (kilograms per capita)

Source: Eurostat.



Building sustainable energy and transport infrastructures. Developing a low-carbon economy built on the principles of sustainable energy. Developing a low-emission transport and logistics system enhancing the economic self-sufficiency of regions.

Sustainable energy supply should be designed in a way to meet the needs of today's generation without compromising the needs of future generations. Sustainable energy technologies include, in particular, renewable energy as well as technologies to improve energy efficiency.

In the area of renewable sources, the Slovak Republic in line with the Europe 2020 strategy adopted a national target to generate 14 % of the gross final energy consumption from renewable energy sources in 2020. The share of energy from renewable sources has been gradually increasing from 6.7 % to 12 % between 2005 and 2016 and Slovakia is therefore on track to reaching this goal. Renewables also constituted 22.5 % of the produced electricity in 2016. Most of the electricity was produced in hydro-power plants, causing the amount of electricity produced from renewables in the Slovak Republic to be heavily depends on suitable hydrological conditions. Electricity

Adapting competitive agriculture and forestry to climate change while minimising negative impacts on health, environment and biodiversity.

Adaptation measures to climate change must focus primarily on areas that are highly dependent on climate in terms of their stability, functionality and productivity. In the context of the Slovak Republic, these are mainly agriculture and forestry.

Slovakia belongs to the countries with the highest proportion of forest area in the EU (40.3 %), but the health of forests is unfavourable. Forests are a basic component of the natural environment and landscape; they are multifunctional and serve

production in solar power plants has increased in recent years as well, mainly thanks to targeted state support. As for energy intensity, although it is on the decline, in 2015 it was still the seventh highest in the EU.

With respect to mobility, the state must resolve a contradiction when society, including companies, demands greater mobility and at the same time, it is increasingly less tolerant towards its negative social and environmental externalities. The way ahead is mainly to enhance the quality of public transport and to improve the balance between different means of transport.

economic, social and environmental purposes. They also play an important role in mitigating the adverse effects of climate change.

In the agricultural sector, unfavourable rainfall conditions and the adverse effects of climate change are making it necessary to develop irrigation and drainage systems and to put in place counter measures to prevent soil erosion.

Ensuring the fiscal sustainability of demographic change. Generating public revenues to maintain government social services for an aging population and to stimulate the outlined economic transformation.

Public finances play an important role in supplying basic services and public goods. However, the aging of the population and the resulting increasing burden on the healthcare and social system bring are producing major difficulties for the sustainability of public finances. Given that Slovakia is one of the fastest aging countries in the EU, systemic measures to ensure the long-

term sustainability of the social security system are essential. Therefore, the key for economic development in the coming years will be to transition from an economy based on foreign investment and relatively low wages and taxes to a knowledge-based economy grounded on a creative workforce, higher added value and domestic research and development.

Best practices:

1.

One of the most important tools to enhance domestic innovation and the economic self-sufficiency of regions is to improve business environment, especially for small and medium-sized enterprises. Since 2017 the Slovak government has adopted two **anti-red-tape packages**, containing specific measures to lower the administrative burden for businesses, with a special attention to SMEs. The measures are part of the government's **"Once and Enough" initiative**, under which authorities are obliged to use available registers to access various certificates and licences and businesses are required to file necessary documentation only once for all purposes.

2.

Slovakia's ambition is to be a central-European leader in transitioning to the green economy. In 2016, the **Bratislava Green Economy Process** was launched as part of the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the EU. As a part of this process, an information and learning platform was created, which aims to collect and share information relevant to the business community in the area of transitioning to a green economy, to present and disseminate examples of practical solutions and best practices, and to discuss open questions.

Best practices:

3.

Building a green economy is impossible without responsible consumers. Therefore, the Slovak government in cooperation with the business and non-governmental sector set up in 2017 a **Green Education Fund**. The fund represents a systemic, long-term solution and an innovative tool to promote environmental awareness and eco-educational projects in four main areas: climate change and low carbon mobility (1), circular economy (2), quality of life and green infrastructure (3) and eco-innovation (4).

A further channel to promote sustainability and environmental awareness is the **Ekotopfilm – Envirofilm festival**, which is the world's oldest international film festival focusing on sustainable development with 44 years of tradition. By means of attractive documentaries, it educates and raises awareness among a broad target group on current environmental issues. The festival is unique in linking the public, private, and non-governmental sectors. Thanks to numerous side events, such as presentations, workshops, or discussions, it does not only present the challenges but also tries to come up with solutions.

4.

In order to improve the traceability of the waste stream from its origin to its final treatment, and to enhance data-based decision making in waste management, a new **Waste Management Information System** is currently being developed. Most data will be processed in the form of open data and will be available to the public and third parties for further processing. Support schemes to promote domestic composting and sorted municipal waste collection are in place as well, with special attention to the least developed regions of Slovakia.

5.

Slovakia in co-operation with the World Bank is currently in preparation of a **study on the low-carbon growth of the Slovak Republic**, with a view to the year 2050. The study will identify potential ways for CO2 reduction in individual sectors of the economy, offer scenarios of economic development, and identify the most effective measures in terms of costs and benefits. The study will support the Slovak government in making evidence-based decisions promoting the development of a low-carbon economy.

Best practices:

6.

Electromobility is an important component of the low-carbon economy. To promote electromobility, measures were introduced to increase the use of electric and hybrid cars in the Slovak Republic, including a state subsidy for the purchase of electric and plug-in hybrid vehicles, the development of necessary infrastructure, the removal of administrative barriers and special support for municipalities and local authorities in the area of transitioning to electromobility.

7.

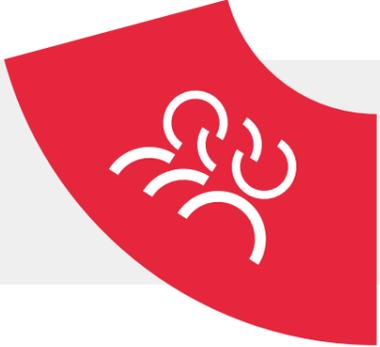
One of the mechanisms already in place to support the **fiscal sustainability of population aging** is the definition of the retirement age on the basis of average life expectancy.

International development cooperation:

Slovakia contributes to **capacity building in the energy sector in Afghanistan** through human resources development and transfer of Slovak know-how in the field.

In **Kenya**, Slovakia initiated a joint project with Visegrad Four partners, which supports **farmers** to produce fair trade cashew nuts and sesame seeds and to process them locally.



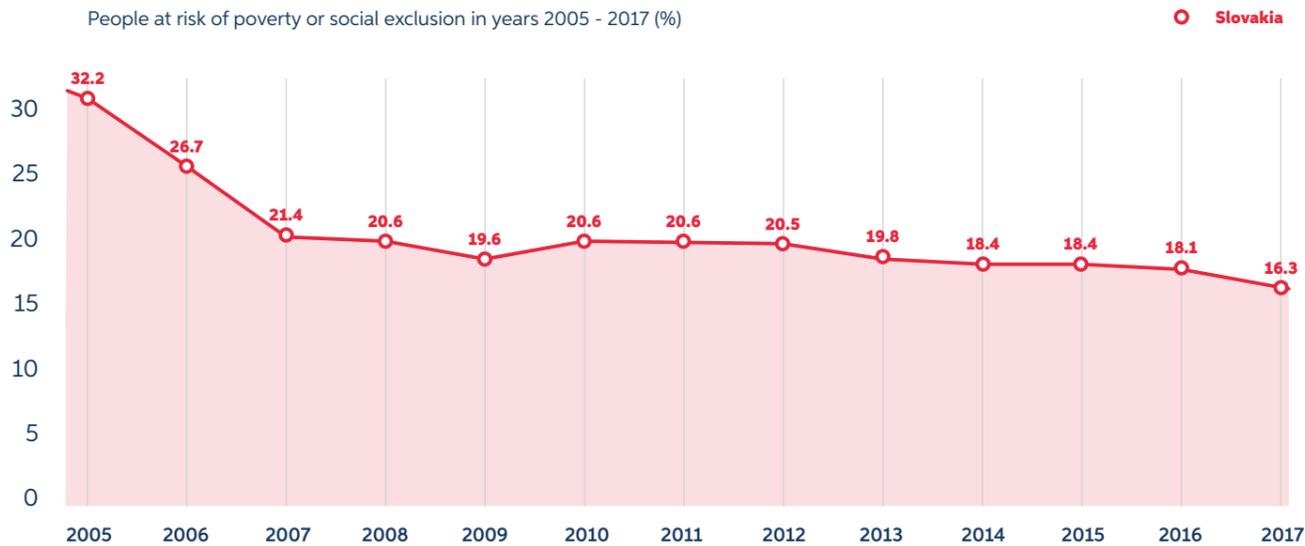


POVERTY REDUCTION AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

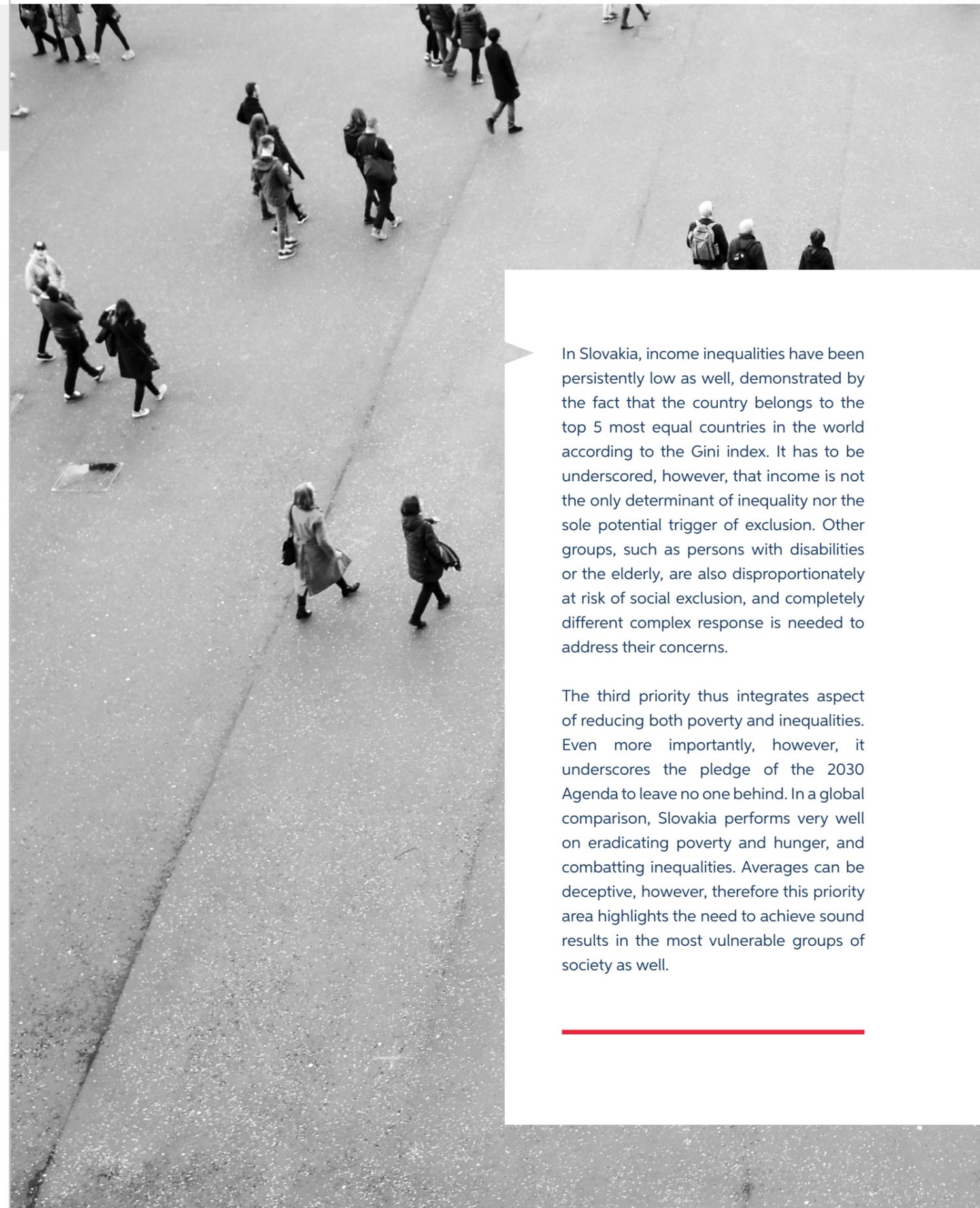
Poverty and inequality undoubtedly belong to the most serious global problems. According to the Global Wealth Report, one percent of the richest people in the world own 50.1 % of total asset, while in terms of asset, the bottom half of the world's population owns less than one percent of wealth. This proportion increases to the benefit of the rich each year. At the same time, however, between 2001 and 2015, the proportion of people in the world who has lived in the extreme poverty has decreased by half, and the size of the global middle-class has doubled.

In relative terms, Slovakia is one of the countries with the lowest levels of risk of poverty or social exclusion in the EU, as well as globally. From a chronological perspective, the share of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion dropped from 32.0 % in 2005 to 19.6 % in 2009, due to the economic crisis, this period was followed by a slight increase, but from 2012, the share of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion has gradually declined to 16.3% in 2017. Despite these successes, permanent attention needs to be paid to the issue of poverty and social exclusion, particularly in case of disadvantaged groups, many of which face an accumulation of different drawbacks and risks that are likely to be passed on from one generation to another.

People at risk of poverty or social exclusion in years 2005 - 2017 (%)



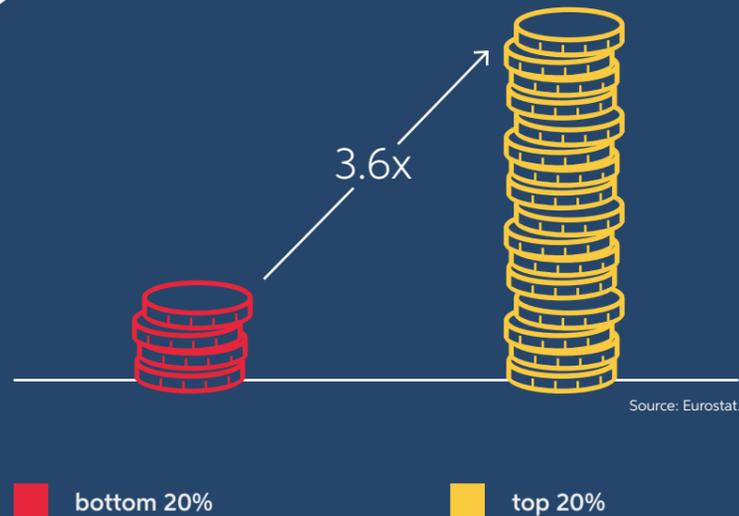
Source: Eurostat.



In Slovakia, income inequalities have been persistently low as well, demonstrated by the fact that the country belongs to the top 5 most equal countries in the world according to the Gini index. It has to be underscored, however, that income is not the only determinant of inequality nor the sole potential trigger of exclusion. Other groups, such as persons with disabilities or the elderly, are also disproportionately at risk of social exclusion, and completely different complex response is needed to address their concerns.

The third priority thus integrates aspect of reducing both poverty and inequalities. Even more importantly, however, it underscores the pledge of the 2030 Agenda to leave no one behind. In a global comparison, Slovakia performs very well on eradicating poverty and hunger, and combatting inequalities. Averages can be deceptive, however, therefore this priority area highlights the need to achieve sound results in the most vulnerable groups of society as well.

Ratio of total income received by the 20 % of the population with the highest and lowest income in 2017



2017



MAIN CHALLENGES:

Reducing social and economic inequalities between different population groups.

According to measurements of income inequality, 20 % of top earners in Slovakia had a 3.6 times higher income in 2017 than 20 % of people with the lowest income. While income inequality in Slovakia has steadily been among the lowest in the world, achieving satisfactory results in the aggregate population is not sufficient. Data need to be disaggregated in order to detect which population groups are affected disproportionately by income inequality.

Apart from economic inequalities it is important to consider social inequalities as well, which include a wide spectrum of situations, where people do not have equal opportunities on the basis of their social status. This also includes inequality in quality of life or unequal treatment, for example on the job market.

Increasing the integration rate of the marginalised Roma population.

Social exclusion, marginalisation and segregation of the Roma ethnic minority represents one of the biggest social problems in Slovakia. According to estimates from 2013, more than 400,000 Roma live in the country, representing around 7.5 % of the total population. Approximately 54 % of Roma live in some form of concentration in which living conditions can be considered as inappropriate. The geographical location of Roma settlements and limited social contacts are a genuine barrier to their full participation in the economic and cultural life of society.

Integrated and comprehensive measures are inevitable to improve access to quality inclusive and desegregated education, reduce long-term unemployment, and improve the access of marginalised Roma communities to social infrastructure, health services, and improved hygiene standards of housing. Particularly important is to raise the pre-school attendance rate of children from marginalised Roma communities, which should enable a more smooth transition to mainstream education and reduce the enrolment of Roma children in special schools and classes.

Enhancing equal opportunities for people at risk of poverty and social exclusion by enhancing the quality and accessibility of public services and by combatting discrimination, including institutional discrimination.

The quality and wide availability of public services, especially in the social and health spheres, are important factors in reducing the risk of poverty and social exclusion.

In Slovakia, in the area of social services the traditional institutional model is prevailing, needs to be gradually transformed to social-service provision on a community basis. In the area of healthcare and public health, it is desirable to increase access to quality healthcare, prevention and health education. Specific and targeted measures are especially important for disadvantaged groups such as marginalised Roma communities, persons with disabilities or the elderly.



Strengthening the principle of solidarity in the redistribution of available resources.

One of the key instruments to reduce poverty and strengthen social inclusion is a more solidary redistribution of available resources. The reason behind the relatively low risk of poverty in Slovakia can be found in the country's low income inequality rate, as well as social transfers for disadvantaged population groups, such as social assistance benefit in material and social deprivation, compensation for the social

consequences of severe disability, or old-age benefits. However, globalisation and demographic development pose significant pressure on the social system of the Slovak Republic. For this reason, the sustainability of the pension system, the philosophy of helping people in material need, and the extent and quality of social services need to become the subject of wide-ranging professional discussion.

Ensuring access to adequate housing for people at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

Promoting access to housing for vulnerable population groups is one of the key challenges of the policy of social inclusion and fight against poverty in Slovakia. Housing is a persisting problem, in terms of both physical availability and affordability. Almost 91 % of the housing stock is in private ownership housing and only 3 % is

made up of public rental housing with regulated rent and for tenants with low income. In an effort to reduce poverty, the Slovak Republic should therefore strive to increase housing support in the coming years, with special emphasis on disadvantaged population groups and on the development of the segment of social housing.

Best practices:

1.

In order to enhance the integration and equal opportunities of marginalised Roma communities in the long term, a special focus on children and youth is essential. Numerous projects are devoted to increasing the **participation of Roma children in inclusive desegregated education**. A methodological guide on preventing and removing the segregation of Roma pupils, developed in cooperation with the non-governmental sector and the Slovak Methodological and Pedagogical Centre, provides expert assistance to schools where signs of segregation appeared. Mentoring programmes aimed at helping Roma children to move from elementary to secondary education have also been supported.

2.

In case of adults from marginalised Roma communities, programmes are in place especially to **increase employment and improve health**. Municipalities receive

Best practices:

2.

support to recruit and employ members of marginalised Roma communities to supervise school attendance, avert illegal landfilling or logging, enhance road safety and raise awareness on health within their communities. Projects devoted specifically to improving the social determinants of health have been launched as well. Health assistants recruited from marginalised Roma communities receive training from health professionals, on the basis of which they raise awareness on the importance of prevention and hygiene, or provide health counselling and necessary first aid to the members of their communities.

3.

Access to **preschool education** is a crucial means to secure equal opportunities for children from disadvantaged population groups. At current, preschool attendance is not obligatory in Slovakia but plans have been unveiled to introduce compulsory preschool attendance for children above five years of age. Currently, these children can attend kindergarten free of charge and are prioritised in terms of admission. Compulsory preschool education will be an important step towards securing equal opportunities for children with disadvantaged social and economic backgrounds and it has a potential to improve their performance at elementary school significantly.

4.

In the area of **housing**, the Programme of housing development has for already two decades belonged to the most efficient instruments of supporting accessible and adequate housing. The subsidy schemes available through this programme to municipalities have supported the construction of more than 40,000 public rental dwellings in the period between 1998 and 2017, representing 10 to 20 % of annual housing construction in Slovakia.

International development cooperation:

As a part of a project to **support unemployed youth** until 35 years of age in **Georgia**, Slovak partners provides complex assistance for the establishment and functioning of small and medium-sized enterprises. The project focuses on selected regions of the country, which have great potential for tourism, for the practice of traditional arts and crafts and for organic agricultural businesses. The objective is to develop the entrepreneurship potential of youth and thus increase their employment and economic independence.

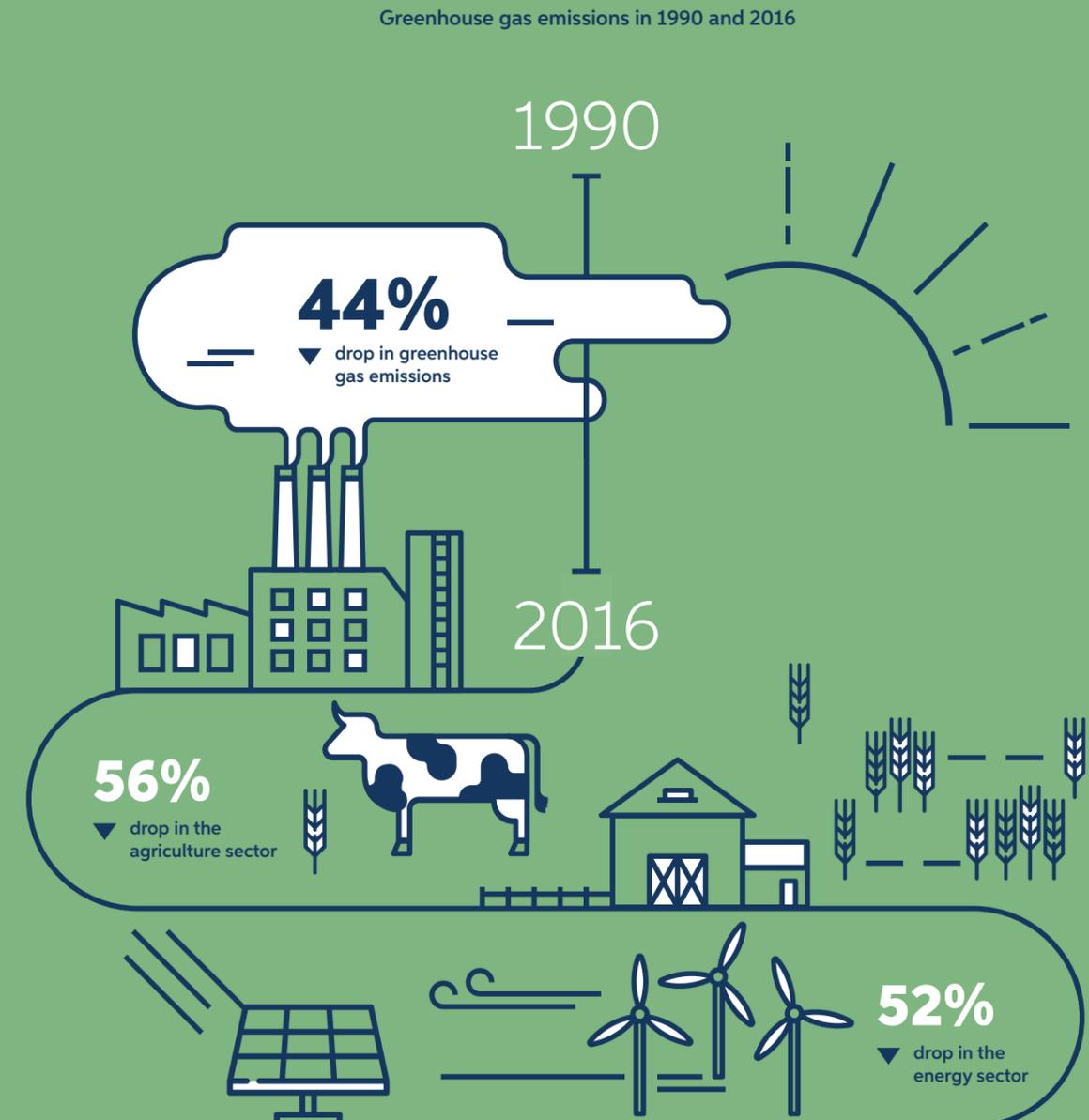


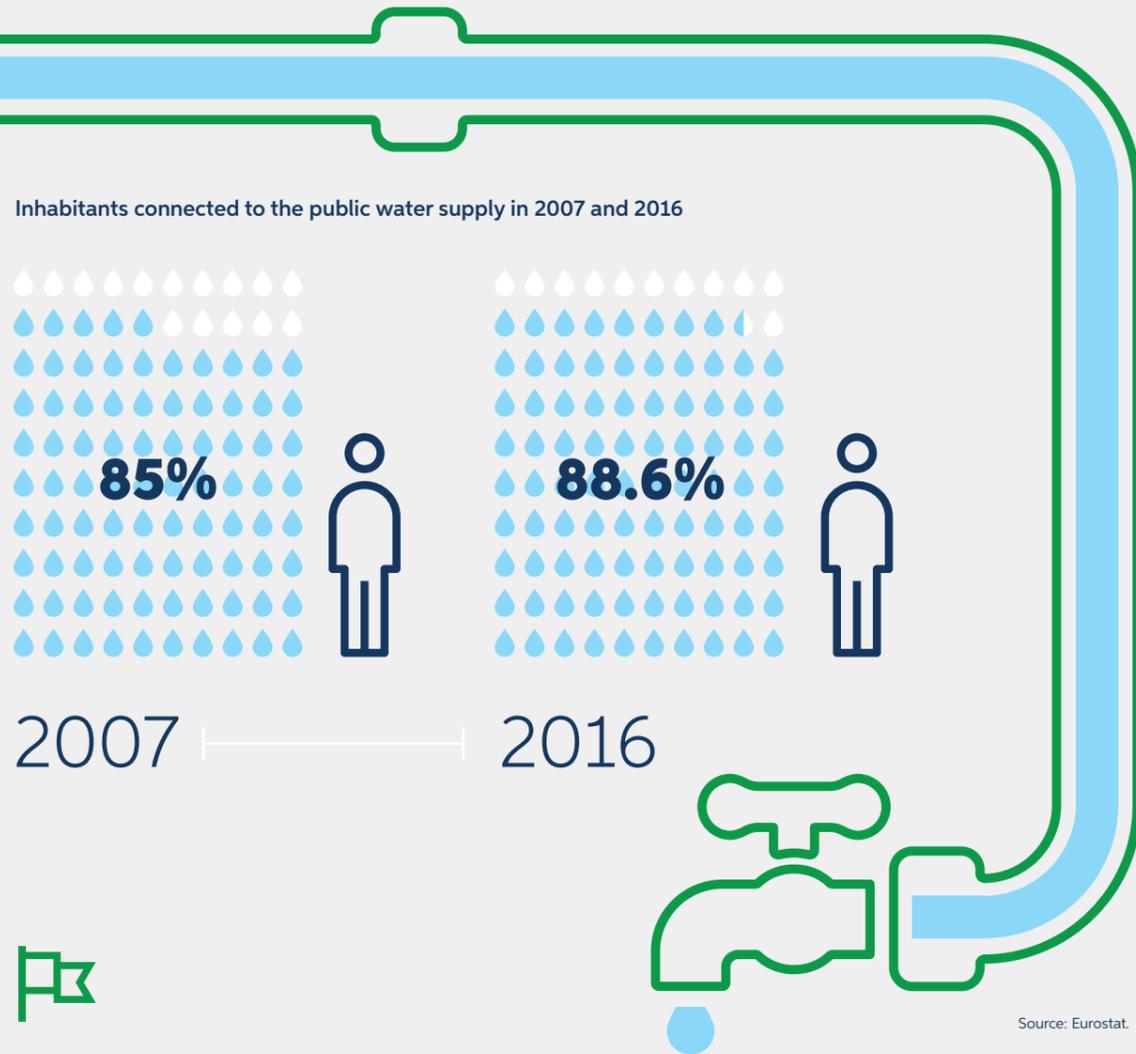
SUSTAINABLE SETTLEMENTS, REGIONS AND COUNTRYSIDE IN THE FACE OF CLIMATE CHANGE

According to key studies, such as the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, global warming is ongoing and is faster than it was expected. A solution for moderating these trends and eliminating the adverse effects of climate change is a combination of mitigation (notably by reducing greenhouse gas emissions) and adaptation. In the area of mitigation, Slovakia is fairly successful, with a 44 % drop of greenhouse gas emissions between 1990 and 2016. The largest relative changes occurred in the agriculture and energy sectors, where greenhouse gas emissions in the monitored period decreased by 56 % and by 52 %, respectively. Transportation (mostly road transport), with an ever-increasing total emission share, is an important exception. Adaptation measures, on the other hand, must be strengthened substantially. For both approaches, it is crucial to find ways to achieve the best results for optimal economic, social and environmental costs.

In connection with increasing urbanisation and demographic changes in Slovakia, it is increasingly important to focus on a high-quality regional and urban development policy based on strategic planning and high-performing public administration, while respecting the principle of partnership. The quality of citizens' lives and the guarantee of equal access to basic services and resources must be of primary importance.

It is essential to understand settlements in the context of the countryside. The main challenge with respect to the countryside is to protect ecosystems and their services, as well as to reduce significantly the pollution of all components of the environment.





MAIN CHALLENGES:

Inclusive and sustainable urban and regional development, as well as integrated and participative territorial and strategic planning.

Slovakia is facing the prospect of unfavourable demographic changes, internal migration and uneven distribution of the population across the country. These factors significantly affect the overall economic structure, the quality of the environment, as well as the availability of basic public services for citizens (e.g., transport accessibility, length of commuting time to work and school, availability of health care) and the cost of providing these public services in individual regions.

The key to resolving these challenges is quality integrated territorial and strategic planning, respecting the principles of partnership and participatory creation and implementation of public policies

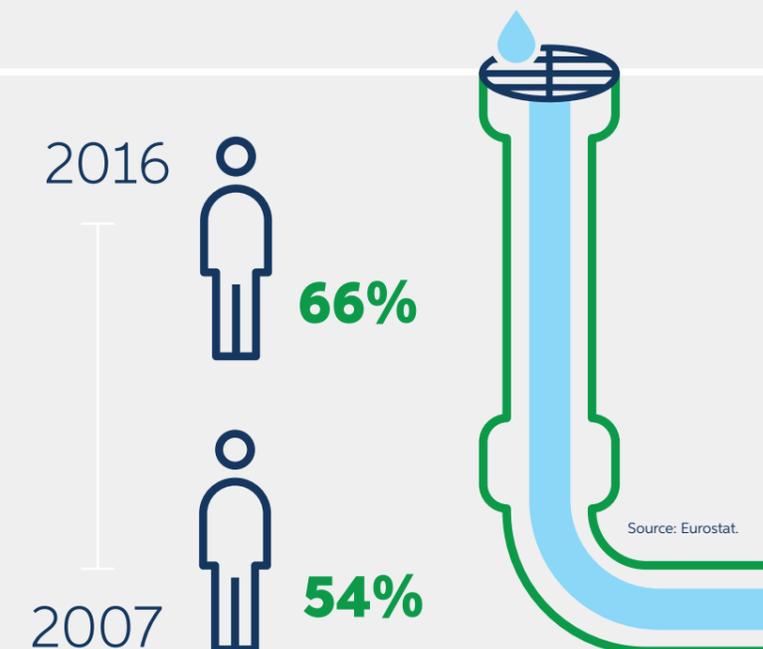
Ensuring access to basic services and resources, including affordable mobility, energy, potable water and sanitation for all, while respecting environmental sustainability and the principle of minimising emissions.

The role of the state is to provide its citizens with access to basic resources and services which are necessary for a high quality of life. One of the key services which ensure the quality and sustainability of urban and regional development, as well as the socio-economic stability of regions, is mobility. Therefore, priority needs to be given to the development of sustainable, innovative, affordable and accessible mobility for all, with a preference for public transport. Major tools for the systemic enhancement of public transport are the construction of Park&Ride facilities and reserved lanes for urban public transport, while simultaneously ensuring accessibility for persons with disabilities, affordability as well as the serviceability of remote areas.

discharge of hazardous chemicals) and increasing water recycling and water re-use. Slovakia also has significant resources of potable groundwater, which deserve special protection. A positive trend is discernible in the rising number of inhabitants supplied with water from the public water supply – in 2016 this value stood at 88.6% compared to 85 % in 2007. In the area of sanitation, the share of population connected to the public sewerage system increased from 54% to 66.4% in the same period. Nevertheless, the share of the population connected to public sewerage is still below the EU average, and Slovakia does not yet comply with its commitment to ensure wastewater treatment for agglomerations of over 2,000 inhabitants. Wastewater management therefore remains one of the main challenges in environmental policy planning.

Furthermore, it is crucial to implement measures aimed at ensuring sufficient and affordable water, including systematic measures aimed at reducing water pollution (in particular by reducing the

Inhabitants connected to the public sewerage system in 2007 and 2016



Adapting human settlements and the countryside to the adverse effects of climate change, with the objective of improving the quality of life of the population and maintaining stable and healthy ecosystems.

Slovak settlements and countryside will have to adapt to the ever more pronounced adverse impacts of climate change, especially extreme weather events, including heat waves, torrential rain and floods, as well as droughts, increased dustiness, increased risk of forest fires, and degradation of forest ecosystem health. Climate change also adversely affects human health and ecosystems, the availability and quality of water and soil resources, the ability to produce food, and the state of the infrastructure.

With respect to adaptation, close-to-nature measures should be preferred in both urban environments and the countryside. An example may be measures to slow water outflow from the countryside in combination with technical

solutions. In urban areas, integrated measures are key, introducing new approaches to territorial planning, settlement structures, or the parameters of buildings, public space and infrastructure.

In the countryside, it is crucial to stabilize ecosystems and promote their ability to cope with the adverse effects of climate change, such as weather and temperature changes or the spread of invasive species. Special measures are necessary in areas where productivity is heavily dependent on the climate, especially agriculture, forestry and water management. In the area of agriculture, support for ecological farming is essential. In 2016, 9.45 % of the total agricultural land of the Slovak Republic was included in organic farming, up from 8.11 % in 2012.

Reducing the pollution and contamination of all environmental elements significantly, while respecting the principle of the polluter's financial responsibility.

Water is a strategic resource of Slovakia and a common national treasure. Its protection and reduction of pollution must be ensured continuously at all levels, across sectors of the national economy as well as by individual citizens of the Slovak Republic.

A serious problem for Slovakia is air pollution, which has ramifications for the health condition of the population and the health of ecosystems. In some regions, selected pollutant emissions (especially PM10 and PM2,5 dusty particulates and NOx) exceed the limit values, having a significant negative impact on human health. The largest sources of such pollution is the transport sector and residential heating, emissions must be

therefore reduced by targeted measures in the energy sector, transport, as well as in industry and agriculture.

Simultaneously, Slovakia needs to make greater effort to remove old environmental burdens and to prevent the emergence of new ones, while respecting the "polluter pays" principle.

Nature conservation and landscape development, aimed at ensuring the health and stability of ecosystems, the abilities of the countryside to provide necessary ecosystem services, and at halting the loss of biodiversity.

In Slovakia, the health of its ecosystems has been deteriorating over the long-term and biodiversity is declining. Therefore, it is essential to promote nature protection and a comprehensive approach to landscape development, in synergy with climate change adaptation measures. It is also necessary to focus on effective systems of protected areas, based on the identification and updating of protected areas, the provision of

care for precious species and habitats, and the fight against environmental crime. At present, the national system of protected areas represents 23.39 % of Slovakia's territory.

Best practices:

1.

In 2018, Slovakia adopted its first **National Urban Policy** towards 2030. The policy reflects global trends in the field of urban development, especially Habitat III, as well as European developments in urban matters. It shifts attention towards the need to develop functional urban areas, and emphasises cross-municipal and cross-sectoral co-operation.

2.

In 2016, the Slovak Republic has launched a dedicated **support programme for lagging regions**, aimed at strengthening their capacities for planning and at creating partnerships in districts with the highest unemployment rate. The programme addresses mainly the issues of education, social entrepreneurship, housing and local infrastructure. Lessons learned from the evaluation of this programme will serve as a basis for designing Slovakia's National Development Strategy until 2030.

Best practices:

3.

To ensure access to clean and affordable energy, support schemes for renewable energy sources have been in place, mainly for the private sector and households. The private sector is entitled to receive support for the construction of installations using renewable energy sources. Households are supported through the **“Green to Households” initiative**, which supports the use of small renewable resources in single-family homes and apartment buildings, and thus contributes to increasing the share of renewables in energy consumption as well as to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Heat generators covering the buildings’ electrical energy demand, heat pumps, biomass boilers and solar collectors are entitled to support from this scheme.

4.

As a part of the effort to adapt settlements and the countryside to the adverse effects of climate change, **flood risk management plans** were developed in 2015, including measures to reduce the potential extent of territory affected by flooding and to diminish negative consequences on human health, the environment, cultural heritage and the economy. In 2016, a flood warning system called “POVAPSYS” entered into service. Slovakia is also a part of the European Flood Awareness System, which monitors and forecasts floods across Europe and provides flood early warning.

5.

In the area of pollution and contamination, the **“polluter pays”** and “extended producer responsibility” principles are applied in the Slovak republic. Financing for the Environmental Fund of the Slovak Republic is partially generated on the basis of these principles.

6.

In Slovakia, methods for the systematic **monitoring of species and habitats** of European importance have been developed and applied, including permanent monitoring sites, field monitoring and the public disclosure of data.

International development cooperation:

Slovakia contributes to increasing the number of the population with the access to **water and sewage infrastructure in Moldova and Georgia** by providing assistance in building a sustainable system of wastewater management.





RULE OF LAW, DEMOCRACY AND SECURITY



In 2018, Slovakia celebrates 25 years of independence. With regard to this anniversary, Slovakia has decided to use the stakeholder participation process aiming to determine the country's national priorities for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda also as a tool to evaluate and revise certain institutional and functional settings of the system of public power, after having been in place for a quarter century. The relationship of public authority and citizens, as well as the degree to which this relationship reflects the basic constitutional principles of rule of law, democracy, the protection of human rights, including gender equality, pluralism and participation, were also subject to debate. While participants agreed that Slovakia was a well-established democracy, firm member of the European Union and a responsible partner for the international community, a number of challenges and defects were identified that need urgent response.



25 years

IN 2018, SLOVAKIA CELEBRATES 25 YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE.



MAIN CHALLENGES:

Improving law enforcement, securing access to justice for all, and protecting and supporting human rights.

The perception of the independence of the judiciary by the public and entrepreneurs belongs in Slovakia to the worst within the EU, discouraging investment and hampering economic growth. The application of the principles of open justice has a potential to reinforce the justice system and increase the confidence of the population and the business sector in the legal system.

The application of human rights principles must be integrated in the activities of public authorities at all levels, and taken into account in decision and policy-making. Mechanisms need to be strengthened in particular to defend the rights of groups that are especially vulnerable to inadequate access to justice and violations of their human rights and freedoms.

Transparent, professional and effective public administration at all levels, oriented at results. Decision-making and policy-making based on relevant and credible data accessible to experts as well as the broad public, and implementation of the concept of value for money.

In comparison with other OECD member states public administration in Slovakia is relatively volatile to electoral cycles, in terms of personal changes at managerial posts. In order to foster high-quality public administration, more effective human resources management is needed at all levels, which should improve stability and professionalism.

It is important to strengthen analytical capacities at key central administration bodies with an objective to make a more effective use of available data, which should form the basis for strategic decisions and public policies. Applying the principle of open governance and the concept of value-for-money are strong tools to enhance results across all national priorities for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Ensuring effective control of public authorities, including transparent and independent control and inspection bodies, as well as institutions for the protection of rights and freedoms. Strengthening the mechanisms and methods of detecting and fighting gross corruption.

The performance of public power must be subject to effective internal and external control, focusing on the effectivity of public policies, the lawfulness of procedures and decision of public authorities, as well as on public spending efficiency. Current mechanisms need to be strengthened and reformed in order to be more transparent, open to the professional and broad public, and politically independent.

Supporting civil society, education towards democratic citizenship and mechanisms for participation in the creation, implementation and control of public policies.

The Slovak Republic is a diverse and pluralistic society that must respect the heterogeneity of interests and free public dialogue. It is the duty of public authorities to create and promote conditions and mechanisms for the active participation of citizens in governance, including the creation, implementation and control of public policies.

It is therefore necessary to support cooperation between the non-governmental sector and the public administration, as well as to promote diverse forms of public debate, including the

Ensuring public access to objective and diverse sources of information, enhancing the independence of public service media, critical thinking and media literacy.

Public access to pluralistic sources of information can be ensured primarily by effective rules to prevent multiple media ownership or dominance by individuals or groups. In providing objective information to all groups of recipients, public

investigative, inspection and control mechanisms of the state need to be adjusted to ensure their apolitical and professional nature, which is a prerequisite for increasing the extent of detection and repression of all types of crime, including serious corruption.

involvement of young people. It is clear that only an active and educated citizen can offer their potential for participation in policy-making and cooperation with public authorities. It is therefore necessary to promote education for democratic citizenship, human rights, and gender equality as a systematic component of education plans.

service media have an irreplaceable role to play. In order to ensure that public service media perform this role adequately, it is essential to guarantee their independence, in terms of finances as well as management.

Given the large extent of available information, as well as the diverse quality and credibility of its sources, a critical view is needed in processing information. For this reason, it is essential to strengthen the emphasis on media literacy in education.



Effective identification and systematic improvement of the society's resilience towards threats to the rule of law, democracy, internal and external security.

In today's rapidly changing world, complete resistance to all threats in all domains would be an overambitious goal. Instead it is crucial to consciously promote resilience, which makes society and the state capable of absorbing the negative impacts of various phenomena while preserving their original character.

Slovakia performs very well in the domain of cyber security, which is in our digital age closely interlinked with resilience and physical security. In 2018, Slovakia was ranked first on the National Cyber Security Index, highlighting the quality of cyber security legislation and protection of digital services and data.

Best practices:

1.

In recent years, **analytical units** have been established within Slovak central administration bodies, the role of which is to provide quality and reliable analyses and forecasts to support evidence-based decision making at the ministerial and governmental level. The analytical units form a network of independent government think-tanks, which work closely with international organisations and coordinate work on horizontal cross-ministerial agendas.

2.

In 2016, the "Best of All Possible Worlds – **Value for Money** in Slovak Public Policies" initiative was put forth, the aim of which is to make government spending more effective by revising expenditures in respective policy areas. The initiative supports better utilization of available resources and represents an important step towards a more performance-oriented public administration.

Best practices:

3.

Based on best practice from the spending reviews, which were conducted as part of the Value for Money initiative, an **Implementation Unit** was established in June 2017 to ensure that all structural, savings and managerial measures from spending reviews will be implemented fully and on time. The Implementation Unit supports ministries in setting outcome and output performance indicators and informs the government about both progress and problematic areas, where greater effort is needed. The Unit is directly involved in further extending the savings focus beyond existing commitments identified through the spending reviews, by means of “Experimentation Projects”. Such projects have so far been conducted especially in the area of healthcare, aiming to improve operational procedures in hospitals and to increase throughput and reduce waiting times.

4.

The **participation of civil society** and non-governmental organisations in the creation, implementation and control of public policies in various fields is promoted through the position of the Government Plenipotentiary for the Development of Civil Society. In the area of environmental policy, a “Green Tripartite” is in place to channel the suggestions and comments of non-governmental actors in the process of policy making and implementation.

5.

An important mechanism to support civil society organisations financially, is the possibility to **assign 2 % of** an individual’s annual personal **income tax** to a selected non-profit organisation. If an individual has been engaged in volunteering activities in the previous year, they have an opportunity to designate 3 % of their income tax.

6.

The participation of youth in public affairs is encouraged among others by **simulated** parliamentary and regional **elections** for high school students, or by supporting the creation of municipal youth parliaments. Non-governmental organisations play a chief role in these initiatives, and by means of especially non-formal education, they contribute significantly to educating youth in the principles of democratic citizenship. Global education, focusing mainly on global issues, development cooperation, environmental issues and human rights, as well as education towards democratic citizenship are incorporated in formal education as well, either in an integrated form within other subjects or as a separate subject focusing on cross-cutting themes, depending on the choice of individual elementary and secondary schools.

International development cooperation:

In the **Western Balkans region**, Slovakia supports countries to increase public sector effectiveness for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by utilizing new technologies, open data and alternative finance mechanisms in the framework of the Transformative Governance and Finance Facility.





GOOD HEALTH

For the sustainable development of society it is indispensable to ensure a healthy life and promote well-being for all people in all age groups. Special attention must be paid to disadvantaged and vulnerable groups of the population.

The main objective of health policy is to improve the health of the overall population. To accomplish this goal, all health determinants need to be taken into consideration, including factors related to the individual, diverse conditions and the environment. In addition to ensuring adequate healthcare, the state can also actively influence the environment and the behaviour of individuals, which both have a significant impact on their health status.



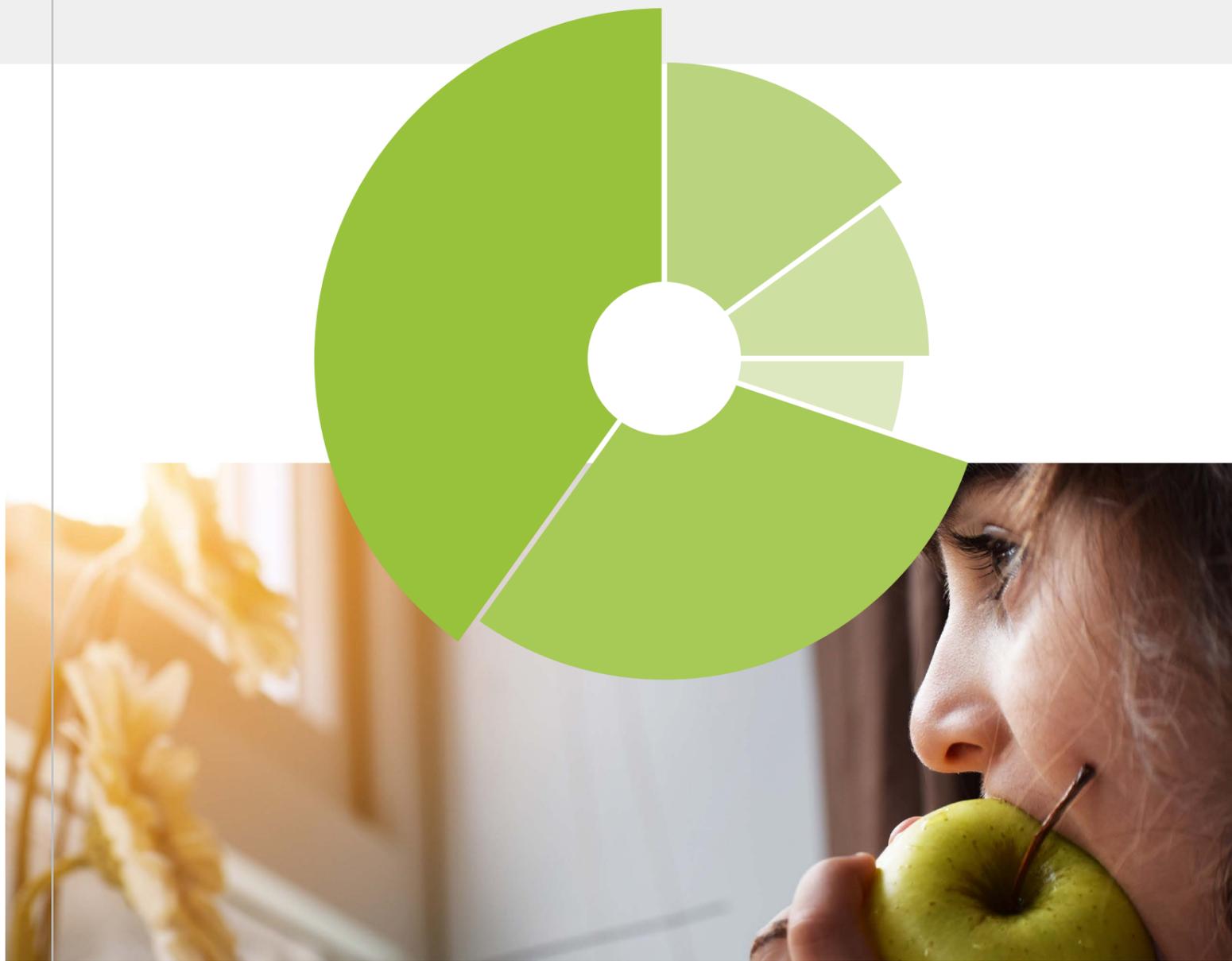
MAIN CHALLENGES:

Supporting healthy lifestyles, prevention and individuals' responsibility for their own health.

It is estimated that up to 40% of premature deaths in developed countries are caused by preventable causes that can be influenced by a change in behaviour (including lifestyle, physical activity, or diet). More than one third (35%) of all diseases in the Slovak Republic in 2015 was attributable to behaviour risk factors. Behavioural aspects play a key role especially in the case of non-communicable diseases.

The role of the state in this context is to promote healthy lifestyle choices by its citizens, through education, awareness raising, as well as by motivating the private sector to produce foodstuffs and products with a positive influence on the health of consumers. Apart from promoting primary prevention, it is the responsibility of the state to make systematic secondary prevention accessible to all.

Determinants of health and their contribution to premature death



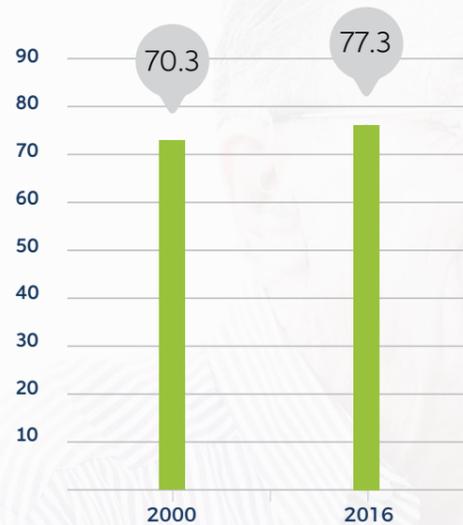
Source: McGinnis JM, Williams-Russo P, Knickman JR (2002). The case for more active policy attention to health promotion. *Health Affairs*.

Ensuring quality healthcare, which will be available to the whole population in terms of geography, time and finances.

The health care system in Slovakia is based on universal coverage, compulsory health insurance and a basic benefit package. On a global scale, Slovakia has a favourable number of doctors per one thousand inhabitants; in 2012, the figure

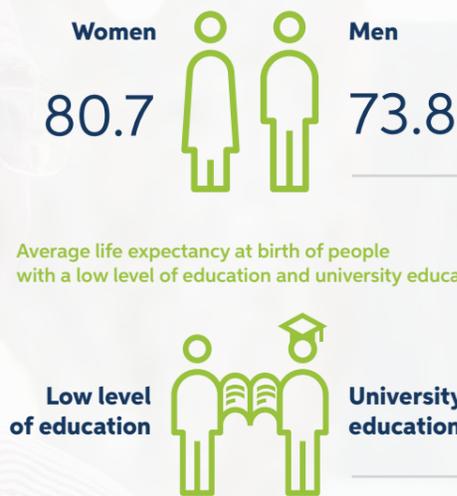
reached 3.33, which was one of the highest in the EU. What is problematic, however, is the relatively old age of doctors and the high proportion of doctors working abroad, which lead to a gradual decrease in their numbers. At the same time, as a

Average life expectancy at birth in 2000 and 2016



Source: Eurostat.

Average life expectancy at birth of men and women in 2016



Average life expectancy at birth of people with a low level of education and university education in 2016



Source: Eurostat.

result of the rapid aging of the Slovak population, it can be assumed that demand for doctors will rise in the coming years. Additionally, there is inequity in the distribution of health providers, resulting in lengthy travelling distances and waiting times

for patients. In order to tackle these challenges, Slovakia has rolled out plans to develop integrated centres of healthcare provision throughout the country.

Identifying inequalities in the health status of the population, detecting causes and finding targeted solutions.

The average life expectancy at birth in Slovakia in 2016 was 77.3 years, up from 73.3 in 2000, but is still almost four years below the EU average. A large gap between men and women persists, with Slovak men living on average over seven years shorter than women (73.8 years compared to 80.7 years). There are also large differences between socio-economic groups: people with a low level of education live on average ten years shorter than those with university education.

In this case, the disparity is caused mainly by the higher incidence of behavioural risk factors (e.g. smoking or obesity) in disadvantaged groups (with low levels of education or income). Geographic disparities are extant as well: there are significant regional differences in the incidence of circulatory diseases and cancer, which are the two most frequent causes of death in Slovakia.

The geographical availability of health services is uneven as well. Compared to EU countries, Slovakia shows one of the biggest differences in the offer of doctors in urban and rural areas. In disadvantaged areas, there are usually fewer doctors and health workers, especially in communities with a large proportion of Roma population who are more likely to suffer from poor health and a more limited access to healthcare.

The role of health policy is to identify these disparities and find targeted solutions. It is the only way to reduce inequalities and to improve the overall health of the population.

Best practices:

1.

In the area of healthcare and prevention, **standardised preventive, diagnostic and therapeutic approaches** are being developed. These guidelines help to unify, define the extent, and improve the quality of healthcare provision in a number of critical areas, such as oncology, psychiatry, pneumology or cardiology.

2.

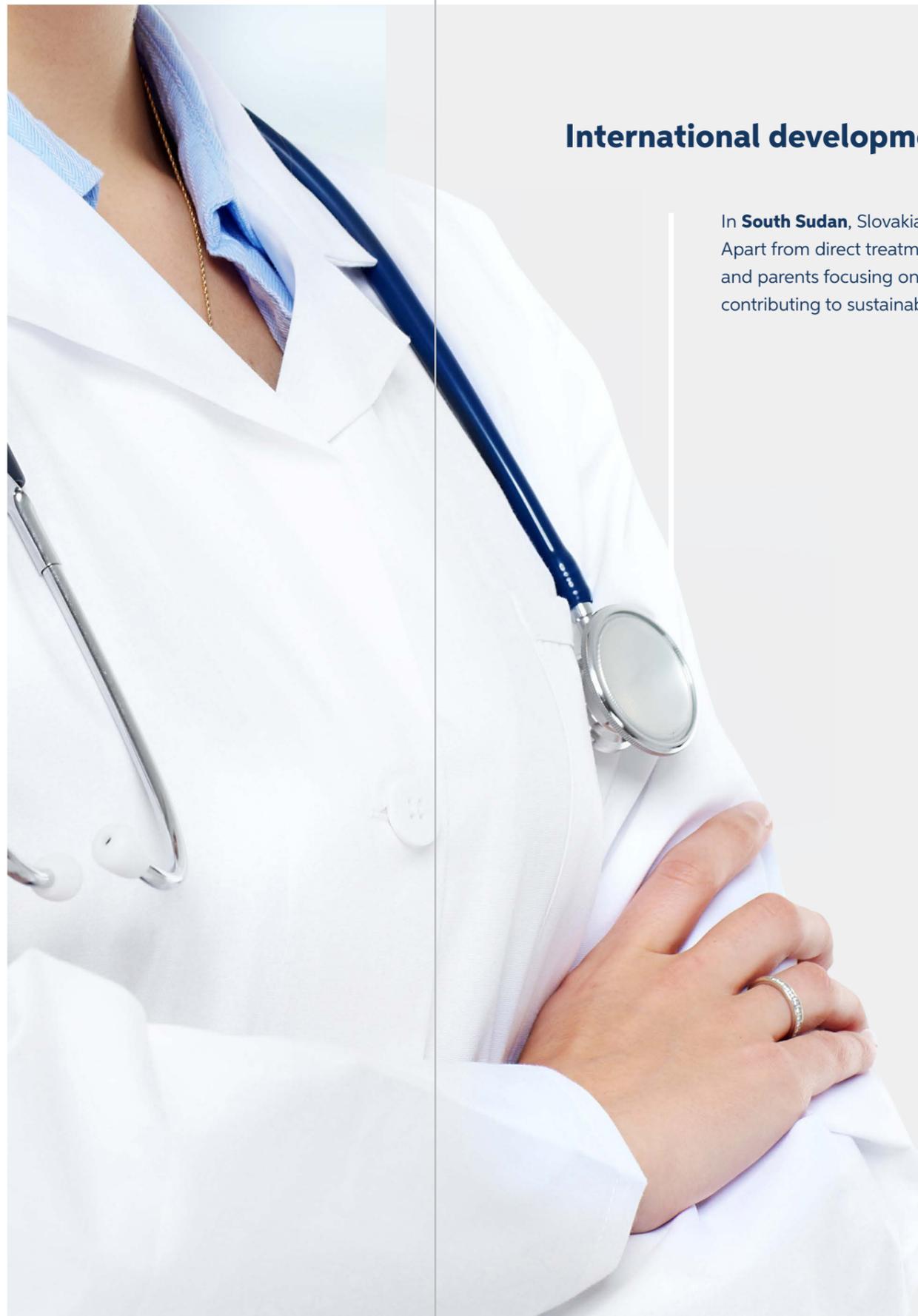
With respect to **medications**, several measures have been adopted to improve the availability and accessibility of innovative medicines, covered from public resources. Another set of measures is aimed at averting the speculative re-export of pharmaceuticals.

3.

Slovakia has recently stepped up efforts to **rationalise its network of hospitals**. In cooperation with World Bank experts, studies have been conducted on hospital profiling and stratification, based on geographical accessibility and the provision of specialised care.

4.

In the Public Health Sector in the Slovak Republic, a network of general and specialised **Health Advisory Centres** are in place, which provide counselling based on examining the main personal risk factors (such as smoking, nutrition, physical activity, or stress). They also serve to raise awareness, and increase turnout at screenings and preventive check-ups.



International development cooperation:

In **South Sudan**, Slovakia supports a project in the area of **children's nutrition**. Apart from direct treatment, the project provides training for health personnel and parents focusing on the principles of correct nutrition and hygiene, thus contributing to sustainable improvement in the local population's health.



WAY FORWARD



Slovakia has made significant progress in internalizing the 2030 Agenda and adapting the Sustainable Development Goals to local circumstances. In order to ensure effective implementation, however, the national priorities for the 2030 Agenda, defined by stakeholders, need to be developed in greater detail. The next step therefore will be the drafting of a National Development Strategy until 2030, including measurable goals and outcome indicators, which will enable effective monitoring of the country's progress in each national priority.

To avert a proliferation of strategic documents, the National Development Strategy will integrate aspects of national, regional and territorial development, creating a framework for strategic planning and governance at all levels. The strategy will also strive to establish a balance between economic, social and environmental interests and policies, and thus it will serve as the country's central tool to achieve policy coherence for sustainable development.

It is important to note, that the outlined national priorities will gain genuine significance only once they will be prioritised in terms of budgetary allocations. At the moment, the 2030 Agenda and the national priorities are not integrated into the sectoral strategies of ministries and thus are

not included in sectoral investment plans either. Therefore, as an essential part of the National Development Strategy, a National Investment Plan will be elaborated, which will be directly linked to the six priority areas for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.



It is clear that in order to turn the above outlined ambitions into reality a large degree of continuity will be inevitable. To this end, a biannual monitoring scheme has been proposed, which will ensure continual reporting and evaluation of Slovakia's progress in its six national priorities for the 2030 Agenda. The first report will be issued in mid-2020, while the preparation of Slovakia's first Voluntary National Review (VNR) in 2018 served as an important initial step in monitoring achievements. The VNR preparation was a key driver to bring all relevant stakeholders on board, to develop a deep insight of the current state of play in the respective priority areas, as well as to assess existing data, indicators and measures in a coherent manner.

Throughout this preparatory phase, Slovakia collaborated intensively with the OECD and received valuable methodological support in the domains of strategic governance, investment planning, programme budgeting and indicators. International best practice in these areas could thus be applied to Slovakia's implementation

framework for the 2030 Agenda. The cooperation with the OECD and resulting baseline analyses clearly showed that a considerable distance needs to be covered to reach the Sustainable Development Goals. While the tasks ahead of us may entail innumerable challenges, the VNR process serves as a proof that we do not have to face them alone. We have precious partners – international organisations, individual members of the international community and committed citizens – who are willing to take the road less travelled along with us and search for innovative approaches to reaching the Sustainable Development Goals.



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