

# INFORMATION ON THE PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NEW URBAN AGENDA GOALS

## Slovak Republic

Ministry of Investments, Regional  
Development and Informatization of  
the Slovak Republic

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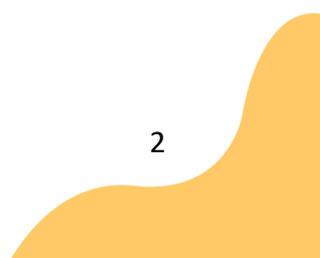


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# Introduction

The New Urban Agenda (hereinafter only as the “NUA”) is the result of United Nations Organisation (hereinafter only as the “UNO”) Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development Habitat III, which was held on 17 – 20 October 2016 in Quito (Ecuador). It was the first global agenda after adopting the sustainable development goals formulated in Agenda 2030 (Sustainable Development Goals – hereinafter only as the “SDGs”). The NUA represents a joint vision of a better and more sustainable future of urbanisation that if is well planned and managed can become an important instrument of sustainable development for both, developing and developed countries. A document titled NUA was officially approved by the UNO in the form of Resolution 71/256 at the 68<sup>th</sup> plenary session of the 71<sup>st</sup> session of the General Assembly that was held in December 2016.

The NUA contains particular proposals of how to respond to challenges resulting from urbanisation and development as well as how to transform them into opportunities that will support economic, social and environmental dimension of the sustainable development. The way how development of cities will be managed in the following decades will play a key role in implementation of the sustainable development agenda until 2030. The Habitat III Conference was a significant impetus, in particular for sustainable development goal 11 – sustainable cities and communities, according to which “cities and human settlements: should be “inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable”. The NUA is also relevant for implementation of multilateral frameworks agreed in 2015: 2030 Agenda, Addis Abeeba Action Agenda, Paris Agreement on the Climate Change as well as several decision of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

In its initial part, the NUA declares that, until 2050, the population of urban agglomerations will approximately double, which brings about important impacts on the development of all aspects of life. Even despite efforts to increase the quality of living conditions, since previous Habitat II Conference, there has been growing inequality, social and spatial segregation of the poorest, which is a material obstacle to sustainable development. The NUA reminds that solution of problems must be approached in an integrated manner, involving all stakeholder groups.

The NUA describes the desirable condition that will enable maintaining and development of values that form urban agglomerations. Emphasis is put on basic postulates, such as: maintaining and development of social and environmental functions; participation in decision-making; gender equality in the availability of enforcement and values; sustainability of economic development, functioning of cities beyond their administrative borders; prevention of disasters and maintenance of ecosystems.

According to Act No. 575/2001 Coll. on organisation of the government activity and organisation of central state administration as amended, the Ministry of Investments, Regional Development and Informatization of the Slovak Republic is the central state administration authority that is in charge of development and implementation of the urban development policy and it submitted the “Information on the progress in implementation of the New Urban Agenda goals”, in line with Resolution of the Government of the SR No. 137 of 22 March 2017.

Development of the “Information on the progress in implementation of the New Urban Agenda goals” for the Slovak Republic (hereinafter only as the “SR”) focused on identifying topics that contribute to implementation of the NUA and tasks central state administration authorities and their relevant agencies play in its execution. The stakeholders were requested to send their written statements on how their activities contribute to the implementation of the NUA. The submitted document is based on materials provided by stakeholders in October and November 2024. Inputs were provided (in alphabetical order):

- Ministry of Transport of the SR (hereinafter only as the “MT SR”)
- Ministry of Finance of the SR (hereinafter only as the “MF SR”)

- Ministry of Economy of the SR (hereinafter only as the “MEcon SR”)
- Ministry of Investments, Regional Development and Informatization of the SR (hereinafter only as the “MIRDI SR”)
- Ministry of Culture of the SR (hereinafter only as the “MC SR”)
- Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the SR (hereinafter only as the “MLSAF SR”)
- Ministry of Education, Research, Development and Youth of the SR (hereinafter only as the “MERDY SR”)
- Ministry of Interior of the SR (hereinafter only as the “MI SR”)
  - Migration Office
  - Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Government of the SR for Development of the Civil Society
- Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the SR (hereinafter only as the “MFEA SR”)
- Ministry of Health of the SR (hereinafter only as the “MH SR”)
- Ministry of Environment of the SR (hereinafter only as the “MEnv SR”)
- Statistical Office of the SR (hereinafter only as the “SO SR”)
- Authority for Spatial Planning and Construction of the SR (hereinafter only as the “ASPaC SR”)

The submitted information is structured into several chapters reflecting UN-Habitat “Reporting on the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda”.

## The Slovak Republic and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme – UN-Habitat

From November 2019 until October 2024, there were 11 ordinary sessions of representatives of the Executive Board of UN-Habitat held in the organisation headquarters in Nairobi, where the SR was regularly represented in the position of an observer. The SR submitted, in 2023, its nomination for the position of a member of the Executive Board of UN-Habitat for one of 4 positions assigned for the East-European regional group. Eventually, the election did not take place and tenures of ordinary members of the Executive Board of UN-Habitat have been extended until May 2025, when the second UN-Habitat Assembly will be held. Along with the election, the Strategic plan of UN-Habitat has been extended until 2025, in order to synchronise the planning cycle of UN-Habitat with the four-year tenures in the UNO.

SR attended the historically first session of UN-Habitat Assembly in 2019 and, in 2023, it was represented at the level of the head of Slovak Embassy in Nairobi. The topic of the session was “Sustainable urban future through inclusive and effective multilateralism: achieving the sustainable development goals in times of global crises”.

In 2022, the SR was represented at the summit of the New Urban Agenda (NUA) in New York by the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of MIRRI SR. simultaneously, the SR announced, together with Botswana, Kenya and Grenada, the launch of a new initiative of the so called “Group of Friends of UN-Habitat, Sustainable Urbanisation and New Urban Agenda”. The SR also received the post of deputy executive director of UN-Habitat, taken by Slovak diplomat Michal Mlynár since 2023. From January to August 2024, Michal Mlynár served as the acting director of the UN-Habitat Programme.

The SR has been actively involved in the UN-Habitat agenda as the coordinator of negotiation on the UN-Habitat Resolution, which is heard every two years by the UNO General Assembly at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Committee.

The SR intensified its intervention towards UN-Habitat in the form of its membership contribution. In 2023, the SR provided UN-Habitat with financial contribution of EUR 250,000.00 (out of that, EUR 200,000.00 on UN-Habitat activities intended for Ukraine, EUR 50,000.00 as a voluntary contribution).

The purpose of the contribution was to support the “UN-Habitat Response to the Crisis in Ukraine” Programme and served to support solutions of aftermaths of the war in Ukraine as well as to increase the international prestige of the SR.

UN-Habitat focuses on coordination of renovation of Ukraine in cooperation with EU Member States neighbouring Ukraine. In the given context, the SR initiated, in 2023 and 2024, negotiations aimed at providing voluntary contributions in the form of premises for the office and employees of UN-Habitat in Košice. Simultaneously, it is in the final stage of the process of cooperation between UN-Habitat and the MEnv SR in project titled SURGe – Sustainable Urban Resilience for Future Generations.

## Data and statistical information

The main goal of the SO SR is to provide users with relevant and reliable statistical information in a timely manner, required structure, quality, consistency and comparability, including metadata. The SO SR also makes effort to provide statistical information at the lowest possible level of aggregation, including outputs at the regional and local levels.

Recently, the SO SR strongly focused on improving and developing of dedicated websites for selected areas and public databases. The purpose of those changes is to streamline access to important statistical information for users. The SO SR puts emphasis on continuous updating of provided statistical information reflecting needs of users and the main portal is regularly updated with new statistical information. The SO SR also focuses on the development of statistical literacy in order to attract the young generation, secondary school students (European Statistics Competition) and university students by means of memoranda on cooperation, in particular, with universities and colleges.

Statistical data of the office are available in the uniform public database DATAcube., which is an interactive database enabling making outputs from multidimensional cubes. It contains data broken down to individual statistical areas, arranged in time series, depending on various territorial levels, ranging from national level to municipalities, depending on availability of data.

## Collection of data, mapping, analysis and dissemination of data

Data collection in the form of statistical inquiries is carried out by the Office for relevant statistical areas in order to process statistical information enabling assessment of demographic, social and economic and environmental development. The Office put into operation new, optimised website titled Statistical Data Collection. Part of the content of the main website of the Office was transferred to the new location in order to make the new website the principal information space for users of electronic statistical data collection (eZber). The website is optimised in line with the Uniform Design Manual of Electronic Services and Websites ID-SK Frontend. Based on the context of the data collection, websites feature concentrated information on the National Statistical

System, European Statistical System, State Statistical Surveys Programme, European Statistical Programme, metadata and register of entities. Intelligence units receive guidelines arranged in a transparent manner into sections ranked in the order of importance and significance. There was a new module implemented as part of the development of the statistical information system that supports automated or semi-automated collection of data from information systems of enterprises in order to streamline provision of data for state statistical inquiries.

The scope of performed statistical inquiries is reviewed regularly every year. For the purposes of preparation of the official statistics, there is an increasing use of administrative sources of data and other external sources that are satisfactory from the viewpoint of methodological concept, quality and that are available at the required time. For the “urban statistics”, the SO SR has been involved in European project titled Subnational statistics since 1999, whose goal is to collect comparable quantitative information about the quality of life in European cities and regions to support European Union policies. The project includes European cities with the population over 50 thousand. In Slovakia, the project covers eight regional cities. Besides the collection at the level of cities, there are also selected indicators monitored for broader urban regions that have been defined at the level of district in Slovakia (LAU 1 (NUTS 4)). The full statistical data are available in the Eurostat database as well as in the public database of the Office.

The SO SR extended the dissemination of statistical information with new forms of dissemination, such as videos, dynamic diagrams, quiz, etc. Along with traditional forms of publication of data by means of the public database, summarised, thematic publications and informative news, the portal also contains new presentation platforms (for more, see Data platforms). One very important part of dissemination of statistical information is active communication by means of social networks (Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, Youtube, Twitter), where the Office provides statistical information to various groups of the public.

There is a consistent protection of confidential statistical data guaranteed for provided statistical information, in line with Act No. 540/2001 Coll. on State Statistics as amended. The effort of the Office is to publish statistical information at the lowest possible level of aggregation. Publication of information at the level of municipalities, e.g. in statistics of tourism, statistics of waste, is subject to granting written consent of respondents with publication of selected data provided by them.

The Office supports goals of sustainable development, it has set up and it operates Agenda 2030 website. At the website, users can find information about monitoring of performance of sustainable development goals at the global, European and national levels.

The population and housing census is one of the most demanding and extensive statistical inquiries and it provides essential information about the condition of the society, its demographic, social and economic and cultural structures, about housing and households. Basic outputs of the most recent census of 2021 are the so called basic databases, composed of all inquired variables at the level of individual records about each monitored object, i.e., each housing unit, each inhabitant, each household. Dissemination of results is thematically broken down to objects of monitoring: Inhabitants, Houses, Flats, Households and to types of information: Basic results (two-dimensional tables), Extended results (multi-dimensional tables with 3 and more dimensions) and Geospatial data (cartograms, cartodiagrams). A separate folder is assigned to My municipality with substantial data on inhabitants and housing units. The data can be processed in various combinations of content dimensions, thanks to the new concept of census in 2021, ad hoc processed to the level of municipalities as well as to the level of basic settlement units and grids (e.g., 1 km x 1 km).

## Data platforms

Besides the standard publication of statistical information, the SO SR also focused on its presentation on various digital platforms. Since 2018, the Office has been running an interactive

web application My municipality in statistics (Moja obec v štatistikách), which contains selected statistical indicators on all municipalities of Slovakia.

The SO SR prepared visualisation in the form of dashboards titled Current information panel (Aktuálny informačný panel), which contains more than 30 key indicators from five statistical areas that are relevant for monitoring of current economic and social development of Slovakia and, which, inter alia, map the impact of the pandemic. Dashboards work as a separate website and they are interactively connected to source data in the DATAcube database.

There was the Flourish application used for the first time for interactive animated graphs for regional cities. It features three selected indicators out of statistical information about regional cities in Slovakia, namely, the share of seniors in the population, volume of generated household waste and average price of real estates in 2010 to 2020. Motion graphs also contain short text comments to the progression of displayed data.

In cooperation with Eurostat, we prepare digital publications at the European level, such as Demography of Europe. It is an interactive web publication of Eurostat in Slovak version, which provides, by means of visualisation and interactive features, a view of demographic statistical data from the Eurostat database for each Member State of the European Union.

The template of the Current information panel served as a basis for development of visualisations, such as Bratislava Information Panel website, which focuses on presentation of the progress of selected key indicators for the Slovak capital city. Interactive graphs are linked to source data in the DATAcube database. The site was developed as one of the forms of dissemination of the Statistical Yearbook of the Capital City of the Slovak Republic Bratislava 2021, prepared by the Office, which also includes and interactive memory card game.

## Sustainable urban development for social inclusion and ending poverty

### Reduction of inequality and support to social inclusion and strengthening of the position of vulnerable groups

#### Social inclusion of vulnerable groups and urban poverty

The MLSAF SR supervises performance of measures defined in the National framework strategy on social inclusion and poverty reduction (hereinafter only as the “NFS”). The NFS represents the cornerstone framework strategic document on social inclusion and poverty reduction. It has a significant declaratory format used at the government level to present thematic areas and strategic approaches to reduction of poverty and social exclusion that have the potential to positively influence the development in that respect. The first NFS was adopted by the Government of the SR in 2015. The NFS is regularly reviewed and updated as necessary. On 30 November 2024, the Government of the SR was submitted the information on performance of the strategy in years 2020 -2023.

The poverty in Slovakia is regularly monitored in the Report on the social standing of the population of the SR, which is published annually. Based on EU SILC survey, there were app. 943,000 people in the risk of poverty or social exclusion in Slovakia in 2023, which amounts to 17.6% of the total population. In year-on-year comparison it was an increase by 1.1%, in the total number, it is app. 55,000 people at risk of poverty or social exclusion. Compared to EU SILC 2019 (starting period), the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion increased by app. 148,000 people. The Slovak Republic has set a goal to remove at least 70,000 people from the risk of poverty or social exclusion until 2030.

Every household that faces adverse social situation with low income or without any income can request for provision of aid in material need, which is an available form of assistance in a situation when a household cannot have or cannot increase its income by means of work, assets or application of legal claims. Its purpose is to guarantee basic living conditions as well as help overcome the adverse financial situation of the household. It is provided on the basis of Act No. 417/2013 Coll. on assistance in material need and on amendment to other acts as amended (hereinafter only as the “Material Need Aid Act”).

In an effort to review the setting of the material need aid and enhance the effect of its motivating stimuli there were significant modification made to the Material Need Aid Act in 2023 which positively influenced the financial standing of households in material need.

Another option is to request for a one-off allowance that can be provided to a person in material need for partial settlement of extraordinary expenses. Such allowance is intended primarily for necessary clothes, shoes or necessary household appliances. The power to decide on providing a one-off allowance in material need is vested with the municipality, where the request for the allowance is to be raised.

A form of assistance available to low-income families whose children attend school is the possibility to provide a subsidy to support performance of school attendance obligations of a child, which is intended for purchases of school utensils for children and a subsidy to support education of dietary habits of children during the classes. In 2023, there were changes passed in providing aid to families with children in the form of subsidies to support education of dietary habits of children. The amount of provided subsidy increased, on one hand, and, on the other hand, it started to be provided to all children at primary schools and in the last year of pre-school education. At the same time, the target group for providing the subsidy was extended with children attending the 1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> year of 8-year grammar school and children in the first year of 5-year secondary schools that completed 8-year primary schools.

The Food and/or basic Material Assistance Operational Programme (OP FEAD) – assistance was provided in the 2014 – 2020 Programming Period in the form of three measures, namely, by providing food and hygiene packages to selected recipients of material need aid, by providing warm meals to homeless people.

The national project for providing food and/or basic material assistance is a follow-up of the OP FEAD and contributes to a continuous provision of food and basic material assistance to the neediest persons. The goal of the project is to provide assistance and support to groups of inhabitants affected by material and food deprivation, such as homelessness, child poverty and material deprivation. Implementation of the goal will be made possible by means of activities such as distribution of food and hygiene packages to selected groups of recipients of material need aid, providing warm meals and distribution of basic material assistance to homeless people.

In order to increase social guarantees as well to mitigate negative impacts of growing inflation that have significantly reflected in a steep growth of prices of basic life needs and expenses of households, there were several inflation measures taken in 2021 to 2023 to provide assistance to

low-income households. The principal goal was to provide low-income households with material welfare.

Rising interest rates on housing loans increased the financial burden on low-income households. In order to prevent serious reduction of the ability to pay back their loans, the state adopted legislation on assistance with repayment of housing loans with the effect as of 1 January 2024, which introduced a contribution to increased monthly instalments of housing loans in the amount of 75% of the increased amount of the loan instalment, up to EUR 150. One of the requirements to qualify is that a housing loan was entered into before 1 January 2024.

The fund for supporting culture of national minorities, which, as an independent public institution, supports and stimulates culture of national minorities in the field of cultural and scientific activities of national minorities, in particular, by setting up supporting mechanisms for creating and spreading cultural and scientific values. By doing that, it contributes to implementation of the cultural policy of the Slovak Republic and the European Union in the field of supporting development of national minorities. The support to social interaction, cohesion and inclusion with regard to specific needs of persons in vulnerable position in the field of culture is provided by the MC SR by means of its Culture of disadvantaged groups of the population programme budget.

## Social and legal protection of children and social curatorship and social services

In the field of social and legal protection of children and social curatorship (hereinafter only as the "SLPC SC"), there was a call notified for national project "Development of performance of measures of social and legal protection of children and social curatorship I." The call is a response to the need to continue the process of deinstitutionalisation of foster care by means of improving the quality of measures to prevent placement of children in facilities (network of expert assistance to children, parents and (foster) families on the voluntary basis) and measures aimed at providing suitable foster care to children and conditions for returning children to families (extension and improvement of methods of working with children placed in facilities and their families). The goal will be accomplished by completing the process of deinstitutionalisation of the Centre for children and families Veľké Kapušany.

There was another call notified in the field for national project "Life in a community for every child". The goal of the call is to set conditions for improvement of the quality of life of children/young adults who fall under SLPCSC measures in the form of stays in centres for families and children, as well as children in their natural families or foster families, in particular, by means of changing of the living conditions in centres for families and children and overall improvement of conditions of the care for children and young adults living in centres for families and children, including children and young adults living in professional foster families, by improving conditions of social inclusion of children with health disadvantages for whom SLPCSC measures are carried out, by improving the standard of measures in households of children and their families/foster families as well as improving the conditions for performance of professional work of employees, including professional foster parents.

Other calls were notified for the field of social services. The goal of demand-oriented call "Support to providing of early care" is to focus the support, starting in 2026, on effective solution of adverse social situation of families with children of early age. The call of the MLSAF SR will follow-up call of the MERDY SR "Support to providing of early care and early intervention for children aged 0 to 6 living in marginalised Roma communities and generational poverty", which will end in 2025.

Another planned call will focus on the “Support to personnel capacities of existing and newly-established facilities of care for children under three years of age”, as well as completion of facilities for care for children under three years of age as well as completion of those facilities from ERDF sources.

The goal of project titled “Support to relieve caregivers” is to contribute to improvement of the quality of life of families with health disadvantaged children, mitigate the financial burden they face and provide parents with relax. In the project, offices of labour, social affairs and family pay the contribution for social services for children as part of the care relieve service under Act No. 448/2008 Coll. on Social Services and on amendment to Act No. 455/1991 Coll. on Trade Licensing (Trade Licensing Act) as amended (hereinafter only as the “Trade Licensing Act”). The project is intended for people receiving the financial contribution for care for (based on Act No. 447/2008 Coll. on Financial Allowances for Serious Health Disability Compensation and on amendment to other acts as amended) children aged 6 – 18, who have been provided social service as part of the care relieve service.

National project “Support to providing community and quality social services” focuses on supporting providers and beneficiaries of social services in the process of improving social services and transition to community services and it will be implemented by means of three sub-activities:

1. increasing the quality of provided social services and inspection of social affairs,
2. supporting providers of social services in transformation of selected social service facilities,
3. increasing the quality of work by means of innovative methods and supporting activation and employment of social service beneficiaries with the emphasis on persons with mental disabilities and autistic spectrum disorder.

The intention of the national project “Support to the caregiving service” is to support providing caregiving service and to serve as a pilot to verify the mechanism for providing a new care allowance to beneficiaries of the social service by means of supporting the caregiving service and thus contribute to a systemic solution of social services financing. The project was available to all registered providers of social services.

The need to connect providing of social services and health care, in particular, nursing care and physiotherapy, is currently one of the most urgent topics in providing assistance and support to several groups of inhabitants, in particular, seniors, disabled persons, people with chronic diseases and persons dependent on assistance of other persons in managing everyday activities. One of responses to the need for a coordinated approach in providing assistance to such persons is the system of long-term social and health care, which is missing in the SR. Therefore, the Slovak government, reflecting the declaration of solution of social and health care in the Government Manifesto for 2020 – 2024, Resolution of the Government of the SR No. 546 of 29 September 2021, adopted the Strategy of Long-Term Care in the SR. The purpose of the Strategy is to propose solutions that will be later reflected in the legislation changes in order to set up an effective and functioning system. The Strategy has been developed in line with the Recovery and Resilience Plan of the SR, to which it is directly linked. All parts of the Strategy have been developed in order to improve the quality of life of persons dependent on long-term social and health care as well as by means of increasing the attractiveness and enhancing the position of formal and informal social and health care.

On 28 June 2022, the Government of the SR adopted the National strategy for development of coordinated services of early intervention and early care 2022-2030. The document focuses on creating adequate conditions to support comprehensive development and social inclusion of all children with the need for help in full development of their development potential, including children with disabilities and children in adverse social situation. The goal of the strategy is to



contribute to the development of coordinated and integrated services of early intervention and early care. On 24 May 2023, the Government of the SR adopted the Action plan for 2023-2025 to the strategy, which focuses on implementation of particular measures and tasks resulting from the strategy. Implementation of goals will contribute to availability and sustainability of services, which, eventually, will influence the quality of life of children and their families as well as of the entire society.

As part of implementation of measures and tasks arising from the National strategy for development of coordinated services of early intervention and early care 2022-2030 and Action plan for 2023-2025 to the strategy, there was a working group set up, whose members worked on the preparation of document titled Path of a child at early age. This document provides a unifying framework that serves for the experts and well as the general public. The document provides an overview of possibly necessary interventions for children aged 0-7 and their families. The document describes the way how children and their families can access universal, targeted and indicated interventions in the system of support and assistance covered by departments for labour, social affairs and family, health and education.

The Trade Licensing Act, §79(1)(a) that came into effect on January 2009, modified the competence of the MLSAF SR to prepare and publish national priorities for development of social services (hereinafter only as the “National priorities”). The goal and purpose of the National priorities is to repetitively positively influence the development of social services in the SR by means of defining the social services policy at the national level and, subsequently, formulate the basic priorities of such development and assumptions for accomplishing the priorities. Municipalities develop and adopt their community plans of social services on the basis of National priorities and self-governing regions develop and adopt concepts of social services development on the basis of the National priorities and community plans of municipalities in their territories (§83(3) of the Social Services Act).

In the field of social policy, an important role is played by Act No. 447/2008 Coll. on Financial Allowances for Serious Health Disability Compensation and on amendment to other acts as amended, which came into effect on 1 January 2009. Its purpose is to help mitigate social consequences for natural persons with disabilities that arise in their everyday lives due to serious disabilities. For the purposes of the act, a consequence of serious disability is any disadvantage a natural person with disability has compared to a natural person without a disability at the same age, sex and under equal conditions. It is a compensation of disadvantages in the field of mobility and orientation, communication, increased expenses and self-servicing. Forms of compensation are financial allowances provided individually or in combinations, however, always depending on individual needs. Financial allowances for compensation are provided from the state budget. In order to mitigate effect of rising inflation on selected groups of most vulnerable persons with disabilities, a resolution of the Government of the SR of 2022 provided the inflation assistance.

The MLSAF SR makes continuous effort to improve conditions for persons providing personal assistance or giving care for persons with serious disabilities. Since 2019, the rate per hour of personal assistance has increased every year as of 1 July as well as the basic amount of the financial allowance for caregivers at productive age and for caregivers receiving any type of retirement payments. The measure has a positive influence on incomes of households of persons giving care for persons with serious disabilities as well as on incomes of households of persons providing personal assistance to persons with serious disabilities.

National project titled “Innovation in providing care for persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion” launched in January 2024 contributed to increasing the quality of the process of integration of persons to the society as well as their employment. The principal goal of the national project is to ensure access to assistance by means setting up and developing networks of assistance at the local and regional level, methodological guidance to performance of field work in networking

at offices of labour, social affairs and family, professional growth of their employees performing work in households of such persons and strengthening of multidisciplinary cooperation.

The goal of national project titled “Together for communities” is to provide tailor-made support in dealing with difficult life situation and activate persons at risk of poverty and social exclusion in order to improve their social inclusion. The principal activity is to ensure providing of field social work, community centres, low-threshold daily centres and low-threshold social services for children and families.

Nation project titles “Free counselling activities for debt management” focuses on ensuring access to professional services to persons at risk of poverty or social exclusion by means of providing free counselling activities (46 workplaces). At the same time, support is provided to social integration that will contribute to functioning debt management by means of combining interests of debtors and creditors, increasing chances of debtors to qualify for loans and chances of creditors to their repayment.

The strategic plan for increasing efficiency of counselling services includes implementation of national project “Professional counselling network”, which will combine personnel and material capacities of family counselling centres and free debt counselling centres and establish a network of 46 Counselling centres of comprehensive assistance. Such integrated “in house” approach will let expert work from one place, which will result in a synergy effect for the benefit of clients. The goal of the project is to provide comprehensive professional counselling for problems in the family, marriage and relations between people, including psychological counselling and problems with debts, which will be provided in premises of counselling centres as well as in households of clients. The project will also include innovative features, such as engagement of people with personal experience (peer counsellors) to work with families with disadvantaged children, which will increase the quality and diversity of provided services.

In Resolution of the Government of the SR No. 158 of 12 April 2023, the Government of the SR approved the National concept for preventing and ending homelessness. The concept contains systemic solutions for homelessness because, until then, most strategic documents did not exclusively focus on people without home, mostly they were subsumed under other target groups. The importance of expressed specification of the target group of people without home has been recently demonstrated in several analytical documents that map living conditions of homeless people and provide an important underlying base for development of such strategic document. In particular, it is reports from research tasks of the Institute for research of labour and family. The Concept is followed up by Action plan for 2024-2026. The Action plan presumes strengthening of integrated approaches that combine prevention, access to health and social care, increased support in employment or increased access to housing. The Action plan contains global and partial goals further developed into measures and activities with defined measurable indicators, promoters and partners and identification of necessary financial needs and suitable resources to cover them. The Action plan was developed in cooperation with representatives of stakeholders from state administration, regional and local government as well as representatives of NGOs, operating in the field of working with the target group of homeless people.

Resolution of the Government of the SR No. 657 of 16 November 2021 approved “National agenda of active ageing for 2021 – 2030”, which covers all areas of life of people in the process of ageing and its vision is to support building of a sustainable society, i.e., a society where current and future generations have a chance to enjoy high quality living conditions. The document was prepared in a participative manner, i.e., its preparation involved representatives of various sectors of the society – state administration, local government, NGOs and independent experts. The goal was to develop a sustainable and feasible document that represents a general commitment of relevant stakeholders adopted and accepted by a broad spectrum of social and political stakeholders under auspices of the Government of the SR.

The MH SR, based on Agreement on partnership No. 1081/2023, got involved, as a partner, with effect as of 17 January 2024, to national project “Prevention and elimination of violence and social exclusion by means of national help lines”, which is funded from Programme Slovakia, priority: 4P5 Active inclusion and available services and specific objective: ESO4.8 Support to active inclusion in order to support equal opportunities, non-discrimination and active involvement and improvement of employability, in particular for disadvantaged groups. MH SR is, inter alia, the promoter responsible for implementation of sub activity 1.3: Support to mental health by means of National line for supporting mental health, with the duration of implementation of 36 months (01/2024 – 12/2026). The free national line will be operated from 10am to 10pm 7 days a week.

Resolution of the Government of the SR No. 109 of 24 February 2021 adopted “National programme for development of living conditions of persons with disabilities for 2021 – 2030”. In the sense of the Resolution, the Government of the SR imposed members of the government to guarantee performance of tasks resulting from the National programme for development of living conditions of persons with disabilities for 2021 – 2030 as part of approved expenditure limit of their respective budgets until 31 December 2030. It was prepared as an open document with updating and reviewing every year. The report on implementation of measures resulting from the National programme for development of living conditions of persons with disabilities for 2021 and its draft update were approved by Resolution of the Government of the SR No. 610 of 5 October 2022. The report on implementation of measures resulting from the National programme for development of living conditions of persons with disabilities for 2023 and its draft update are available on: <https://www.slov-lex.sk/legislativne-procesy/SK/LP/2024/330>.

Healthy regions (Zdravé regióny), an agency of the MH SR, is the promoter of the National project Healthy communities (Zdravé komunity) 2B, whose objective is to improve the health conditions in Roma communities. In particular, it concerns elimination of barriers in access to health care (including increasing access to health care services and awareness of inhabitants of Roma communities of health care and prevention) and increase of health literacy (including increasing health care awareness of inhabitants of Roma communities). The core of activities of Healthy regions rests in activity of Health education assistants in Roma communities by means of health mediation, specific type of community work focused on overcoming communication barriers, health education of people living in excluded locations. On average, 85% of employees of Healthy regions are Romas with command of Roma language that is principal for working with inhabitants of Roma communities. The Healthy regions agency tries to manage the situation and, in cooperation with InTYMYta (earlier Society for planned parenthood), it prepared and implemented education project in the field of reproductive and sexual health in marginalised Roma communities since 2021. During 2021, the education project was attended by total of 246 health assistants. It was a 12-hour experience course, where people could receive an overview of matters concerning planned parenthood, adolescence, sexual-based violence, overview of variability of sexual orientation and also issues related to relationship education. Each participants received a high quality handbook as well as professionally prepared methodological documents with the description of starting points of the programme.

## Migration policy

Migration policy of the Slovak Republic with the outlook until 2025 (hereinafter only as the “Migration policy”) was approved by Resolution of the Government of the SR No. 496 of 8 September 2021. Currently, it is the most topical document regulating general approach of the SR to migration and integration of foreigners. It is the basic document and starting point for building a modern and self-confident policy of the Government of the SR in the field of migration and expression of readiness and willingness to take part in harmonising of migration policies of individual Members States of the European Union. According to the Migration policy, the SR is

inclined to the integration model, which is based on adherence to Slovak legislation as well as respecting cultural features, language and traditions of the SR by foreign nationals. For the field of integration, the document titled Migration policy defines eleven priorities, such as strengthening of integration at the local level, access to education and housing, support to social inclusion and social integration, build-up of a systemic solution for integration of vulnerable groups, support to intercultural and inter-religious dialogue and access to adequate health care.

In 2023, the MI SR prepared and submitted to the session of the Government of the SR, the Summary report on the progress of performance of tasks, intention and goals of the migration policy along with the report on the activity of the Steering committee for migration and integration of foreigners in 2021 and 2022. The Steering committee for migration and integration of foreigners was set up in 2009, since when it has performed the role of coordination of tasks resulting from the migration policy, including monitoring and reporting of their performance. The current situation led to a need to transform the committee, increase efficiency of its activity and expand its scope of activity. In November 2022, the committee was renamed to the Steering committee for migration, integration and inclusion of foreigners and a new statute was adopted that enabled simplified appointments of representatives of individual institutions and setting up of expert working groups depending on the situation.

The Steering committee for migration, integration and inclusion of foreigners is a joint platform and advisory body where matters of migration are discussed but it cannot impose any tasks on other entities or inspect their performance. It rather serves for sharing information and discussion on strategic issues. The chairman of the committee is the Director of the Migration Office of the MV SR (hereinafter only as the "Migration office").

Integration of foreigners, in general, is a cross-sectional matter requiring cooperation of a broad range of stakeholders at all levels of state administration, NGOs, employers, universities, community of foreign nationals and the majority population.

Integration of foreigners in the Slovak Republic is not regulated by any legal regulation and, thus, is not subject to competences of any ministry or central state administration authority. The Migration office is the central state administration body that performs tasks concerning asylum, it has tasks specified by legislation in the field of primary integration of asylum seekers and foreigners who have been provided additional protection. In line with §28 of Act No. 480/2002 Coll. on asylum and on amendment to other acts as amended (hereinafter only as the "Asylum Act"), the Migration office provides the primary integration of persons who have been granted international protection. The purpose of the primary integration of such persons is their inclusion to the society, provision of adequate housing, employment and acquisition of the Slovak language. The state budget funds are used to pay one-off and integration (for the period of 6 consecutive months) allowances to such persons. Integration services (e.g., courses of Slovak language, cultural orientation, assistance with looking for suitable housing, employment, social, psychological and other counselling + additional services, e.g., supplementary health and material aid, financial contribution for vulnerable persons) are provided by an NGO that is implementing a project funded predominantly from sources of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF). The Migration office has two integration managers (Bratislava and Košice), who are in charge of integration of persons with granted international protection in cooperation with the NGO implementing the integration project. They work together on matters related to integration of persons with granted international protection as well as with relevant ministries and other central state administration bodies, local government authorities, schools, etc. With regard to integration projects, the Migration office performs material checks of provided services. It includes on the spot checks, regular exchange of information between the NGO and integration managers of the Migration office, weekly reports, case interpretations of persons with granted international protection who entered the integration project, checks of payment

applications submitted by the eligible group (by means of IS Migra). It also provides guidance and supervises adherence to the same standards in providing of integration services.

Besides the integration defined by the Asylum Act, the Migration office also takes part in preparation of migration and integration policy of the state, as it is in charge of the migration policy and serves as the secretariate of the Steering committee presided by the director of the Migration office. In 2022, the Migration office assumed, as part of the Recovery and Resilience Plan of the SR, the task to set up three One stop shops, where foreigners will be provided with relevant services, which, in principle, expands its competences in the field of integration of all foreigners (not only persons who have been granted international protection).

A separate challenge for the SR in 2022 was the military conflict in Ukraine, which put the SR, for the first time in its modern history, to the situation of unprecedented mass inflow of refugees, predominantly of Ukrainian citizenship and induced extreme burden and extraordinary effort of all affected state administration and local government authorities, NGOs and international organisations.

As a result of that, it was necessary to implement measures of economic mobilisation, in particular, provision of accommodation, transportation and health care to foreigners.

The arrival of refugees from Ukraine pointed out at problems in various fields, such as access to education, health care and access to the labour market in the SR.

Until 13 October 2024, the number of persons who entered the territory of the SR from Ukraine amounted to 2,848,206, out of whom, 90.4% were citizens of Ukraine (2,575,771). The number of persons who applied for temporary shelter from the beginning of the conflict until 13 October 2024 was 155,852. Majority of them (99.4%) were citizens of Ukraine (154,944). From the viewpoint of demography (persons who applied for temporary shelter), 30.7% were minors (47,896). Out of adults, women amounted to 69.1% (74,606). The number of Ukrainian citizens who applied for asylum in Slovakia as of 13 October 2024 was 188 persons.

Immediately after the outbreak of the crisis in February 2022, new legislation was adopted (so called Lex Ukraine), which made it possible to provide temporary shelter even without the decision of the European Union Council and authorised the government to provide an allowance for accommodation of refugees. At the same time, the scope of the mutual assistance fund, which was set up at the Office of the Government of the SR to mitigate effects of the spread of COVID-19 disease, extended also for mitigation of consequences of the humanitarian crisis in relation to the invasion in Ukraine.

On the same day, the emergency situation status was declared "in connection to mass inflow of foreigners to the territory of the SR caused by military conflict in the territory of Ukraine". At the end of March 2022, another act was adopted (so called Lex Ukraine II), which amended more than thirty other regulations in various ways in order to streamline practical lives of refugees from Ukraine in Slovakia. One day later, a regulation of the government set amounts of allowances per night for accommodation to refugees that were supposed to be applied no later than until 30 June. At the end of June, a new regulation was adopted modifying the amount of allowance per night for accommodation to refugees that guaranteed their payment until the end of September.

The MI SR provided accommodation capacities in the humanitarian centre in Gabčíkovo as well as in its asylum facilities in Humenné, Rohovce and Opatovská Nová Ves. During the stay in asylum facilities, refugees were provided with free accommodation, food, hygiene needs, social and psychological counselling. The activity of the humanitarian centre Gabčíkovo ended as of 31 October 2024. At the top of the refugee wave, the centre provided housing to more than 1,000 people. After 1 July 2024, the facility was subject to criteria specified in Lex Ukraine 4 – accommodation is provided to refugees in asylum facilities of the MI SR for no more than 120 days

of the first granting of the temporary shelter in the territory of the SR. The title to housing after that period was granted only to vulnerable persons define in the Asylum Act.

## Gender equality

Gender equality as one of sustainable development goals is of a broad-range and cross-sectional nature, including the field of urban agenda. The MLSAF SR, as the central state administration body for gender equality and equality of opportunities has developed a comprehensive strategic document – National strategy for equality of women and men and equality of opportunities in the Slovak Republic for 2021-2027 and resulting Action Plan for equality of women and men and equality of opportunities for 2021-2027 (hereinafter only as the “Strategy of equality” or “Action plan for equality”), whose objective is to achieve a more just society, a society without any forms of discrimination, violence and harmful practices that are, a priori, aimed against girls and women.

The Strategy of equality and the Action plan for equality adopted by Resolution of the Government of the SR No. 223 of 28 April 2021 reflected the need to eliminate discrimination more specifically even at the regional level already at its very origin. Therefore, the Self-governing regions of Slovakia-SK8 association has taken part in setting of several of the tasks in the Action plan for equality. The MLSAF SR has summarised the progress in the field of gender equality and thus, elimination of the discrimination, annually in its summary report on the state of gender equality in Slovakia.

The Summary report on the state of gender equality in Slovakia for 2023 also contained information on the state and progress of regional action plans and regional plans of gender equality; e.g., Žilina self-governing region adopted a new separate plan of gender equality in 2023 that focuses on six different areas related to equality in remuneration, gender-based discrimination, undesired conduct, equality in decision-making, etc. Positive progress in this field has been achieved thanks to systemic follow-ups and implementation of certain regional strategic documents because systemic and comprehensive approach has high potential to achieve progress and practical sustainability. The Action plan for equality in relation to urbanisation pro futuro (for 2025) explicitly specifies the task to develop methodology with examples of best practices in order to implement gender mainstreaming at the level of municipalities that is supposed to, subsidiary, help municipalities to push through aspects of gender equality and eliminate discrimination and violence.

## Unemployment

Currently, there is the historically lowest unemployment rate in the SR since the beginning of its existence in 1993. Conditions in the labour market in the SR have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic since 2020, however, the situation in the labour market started to stabilise and 2023, similarly to 2022, reported decline of the unemployment rate as well as the long-term unemployment. The gradual lowering of the level of the long-term unemployment in the SR was positively influenced by adopted measures for employability of particular vulnerable groups by means of implementation of several tools for integration of the long-term unemployed persons, including profiling and individualised counselling. While, as at the end of December 2021, there were 200,225 registered job seekers according to statistical data of the Central office of labour, social affairs and family (hereinafter only as the “job applicants”), out of whom 4,217 long-term unemployed persons and their share in the total number of job applicants amounted to 47.06%, the number of job applicants declined to 169,933 as of the end of December 2023. Also the number of long-term unemployed job applicants dropped to 69,953 and the share of long-term unemployed job applicants in the total number of job applicants amounted to 42.11%. Thus, during the monitored period, both, the total number of registered job applicants declined by 30,292 (decline by 15.13%) and the number of long-term unemployed job applicants declined by 24,264 (decline by

25.75%). The share of long-term unemployed job applicants in the total number of job applicants decreased in the 2021 – 2023 period by 4.95%.

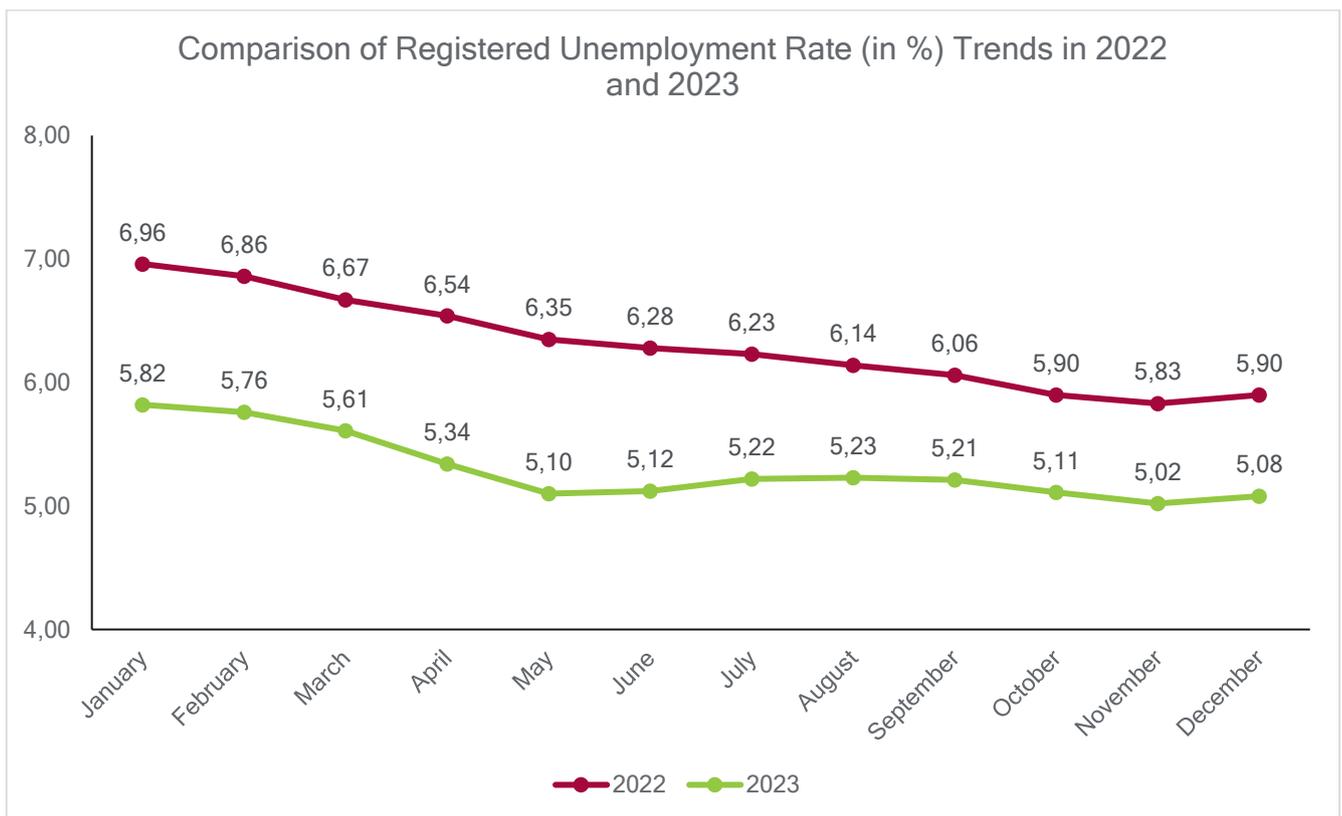
The average number of available job applicants in 2023 was 147,914 persons. In the year-on-year comparison, it is a decrease by 22,861 persons, i.e., by 13.39% (in 2022, the average number of registered available job applicants was 170,775). The number of available job applicants as of 31 December 2023 was 141,457 persons. It was a decline by 18,747 persons or 11.70% in the year-on-year basis (160,204 persons on 31 December 2022).

The unemployment rate calculated from the total number of job applicants amounted to 6.22% on average for 2023, which, compared to the same period of 2022 (6.95%) was a decline by 0.73%. The unemployment rate calculated from the total number of job applicants was 6.10% as of 31 December 2023. The year-on-year decrease was 0.46% (6.56% as of 31 December 2022). The unemployment rate calculated from the total number of job applicants as of 30 September 2024 was 5.96%, which means that the decline also continued in 2024.

The average registered unemployment rate in 2023 amounted to 5.30%, which, compared to 2022 (6.31%) represents a year-on-year decline by 1.01%. As of 30 September, the registered unemployment rate was 4.99%, with a slight declining tendency during the year.

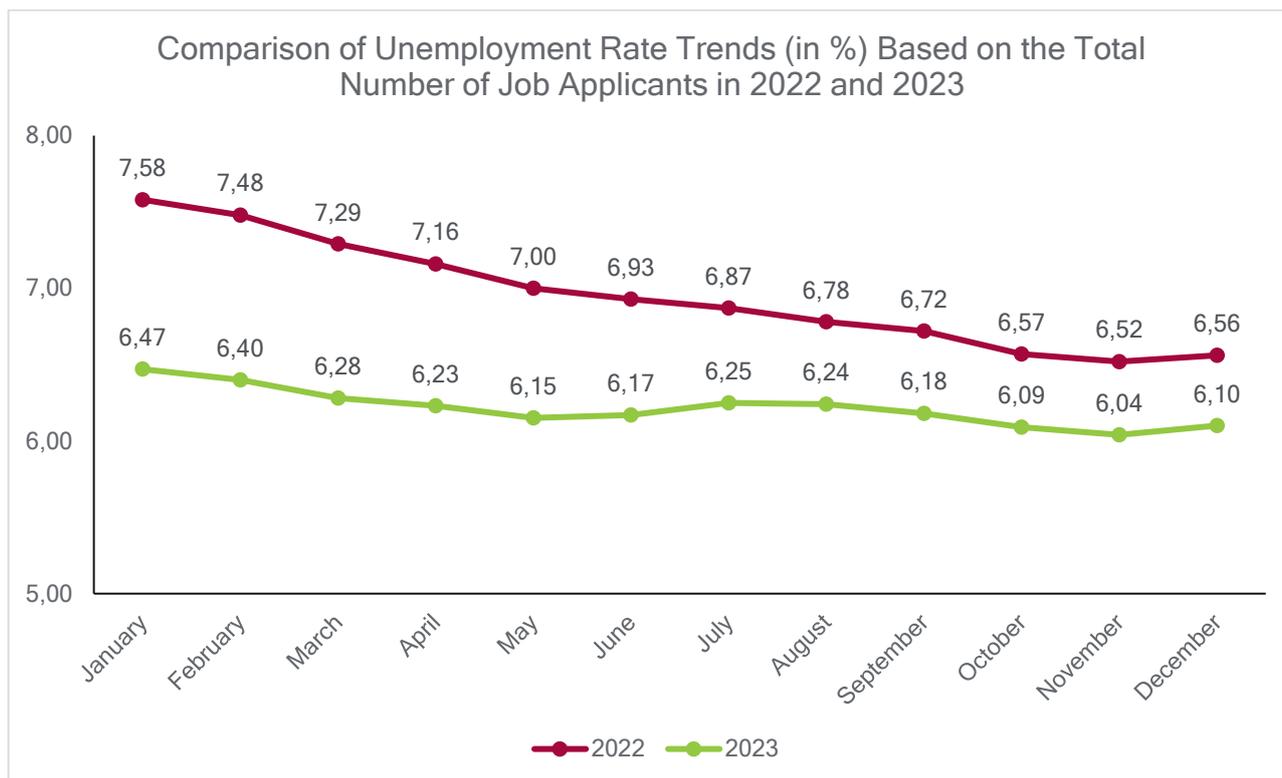
Comparison of the unemployment rate in 2023 and 2022 broken down to months can be seen in Graph 1 and 2.

Graph 1



Source: Central office of labour, social affairs and family

Graph 2



Source: Central office of labour, social affairs and family

In the long-run, the registered unemployment rate can be viewed in the following table.

Tab. 1: Registered unemployment rate

Registered unemployment rate 1997 - 2023													
Year	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	Average
1997													12.48
1998	13.44	13.56	13.39	13.16	12.90	13.51	14.10	13.76	13.76	13.90	14.50	15.62	13.80
1999	16.33	16.52	16.72	16.43	16.52	17.68	18.31	18.21	17.77	17.73	18.31	19.18	17.48
2000	19.53	19.51	19.30	18.77	18.59	19.07	19.41	17.39	16.58	16.13	16.70	17.88	18.24
2001	19.79	19.68	19.22	18.26	17.49	17.75	17.95	17.79	17.39	17.32	17.72	18.63	18.25
2002	19.69	19.57	19.12	18.07	17.67	17.62	17.61	17.21	16.61	16.44	16.75	17.45	17.82
2003	17.76	17.07	16.48	15.44	14.81	14.60	14.49	14.31	13.87	13.75	14.19	15.56	15.19
2004	16.60	16.51	16.01	15.25	14.47	13.91	13.65	13.24	13.14	12.72	12.58	13.07	14.26
2005	13.39	13.08	12.71	11.87	11.33	11.09	11.03	10.88	11.20	10.93	10.86	11.36	11.64
2006	11.82	11.66	11.42	11.04	10.56	10.36	10.20	9.85	9.75	9.27	9.12	9.40	10.37
2007	9.45	9.20	8.89	8.50	8.33	8.33	8.30	8.19	8.30	7.92	7.76	7.99	8.43
2008	8.06	7.84	7.59	7.38	7.44	7.42	7.47	7.36	7.54	7.51	7.80	8.39	7.65
2009	9.03	9.72	10.33	10.92	11.39	11.81	12.07	12.05	12.45	12.40	12.40	12.66	11.44
2010	12.89	12.97	12.88	12.52	12.24	12.34	12.33	12.19	12.42	12.29	12.22	12.46	12.48
2011	12.98	13.16	13.13	12.94	12.84	12.98	13.15	13.12	13.37	13.29	13.33	13.59	13.16
2012	13.69	13.76	13.69	13.40	13.19	13.34	13.27	13.19	13.44	13.69	13.94	14.44	13.59
2013	14.80	14.71	14.68	14.41	14.26	14.25	13.99	13.70	13.84	13.66	13.50	13.50	14.11
2014	13.61	13.49	13.28	12.96	12.80	12.78	12.67	12.56	12.44	12.35	12.25	12.29	12.79
2015	12.39	12.32	12.06	11.68	11.48	11.55	11.46	11.32	11.38	10.98	10.77	10.63	11.50
2016	10.39	10.09	9.89	9.64	9.45	9.45	9.44	9.43	9.42	9.08	8.78	8.76	9.48
2017	8.64	8.39	8.04	7.74	7.35	6.90	6.70	6.54	6.42	6.14	5.95	5.94	7.06
2018	5.88	5.72	5.55	5.42	5.37	5.43	5.47	5.42	5.38	5.23	5.09	5.04	5.42
2019	5.26	5.16	5.03	4.90	4.88	4.97	4.97	4.97	5.04	4.94	4.92	4.92	5.00
2020	4.98	5.05	5.19	6.57	7.20	7.40	7.65	7.60	7.43	7.35	7.38	7.57	6.78
2021	7.81	7.90	7.98	8.00	7.92	7.76	7.66	7.37	7.09	6.79	6.64	6.76	7.48
2022	6.96	6.86	6.67	6.54	6.35	6.28	6.23	6.14	6.06	5.90	5.83	5.90	6.31
2023	<b>5.82</b>	<b>5.76</b>	<b>5.61</b>	<b>5.34</b>	<b>5.10</b>	<b>5.12</b>	<b>5.22</b>	<b>5.23</b>	<b>5.21</b>	<b>5.11</b>	<b>5.02</b>	<b>5.08</b>	<b>5.30</b>

Source: Central office of labour, social affairs and family

Target oriented active measures showed positive effect on the labour market in the SR and the performance of the economy. These facts have positively reflected in the growth of employment and decline of unemployment.

Main negative factors influencing unemployment rate:

- long-term existence of non-corresponding diversification of the industrial basis,
- incoherence between the structure of job vacancies and the structure of job applicants (higher number of long-term unemployed job applicants, job applicants – fresh graduates, young people, job applicants over 50 years of age, job applicants with low qualification or without qualification, etc.),
- excess of the labour supply over the demand, in particular in less developed regions,
- non-corresponding supply of job applicants with inclination to spatial and structural mobility in relation to the current demand in the labour market,
- inflows of job applicants returning from abroad,
- inflows of job applicants due to mass dismissals,
- misuse of sick leave, in particular failing to come to the contact centre, selection procedure, activation works,
- low level of motivation of risk-exposed groups of job applicants to find jobs, low level of stimulation of employers to hire such groups of unemployed citizens, small difference between salary offers and social allowance.

Out of the tool supporting reduction of the unemployment, let us mention active measures in the labour market provided on the basis of Act No. 5/2004 Coll. on employment services and on amendment to other acts as amended (hereinafter only as the “Employment Services Act”). An amendment to the Employment Services Act unified, as of 1 January 2023, active measures in the labour market aimed at supporting employment of disadvantaged job applicants. It introduced uniform conditions for providing allowance to support creation of jobs for disadvantaged job applicants (€50) for all employers, including municipalities and legal entities set up by them. More emphasis is put on supporting employment of most vulnerable groups in the labour market, fresh school graduates, citizens over 50, long-term unemployed persons and low-qualified citizens by means of introducing a higher monthly contribution. The amendment was a part of the revision of active measures in the labour market aimed at supporting creation of jobs for disadvantaged job applicants by means of unifying conditions for providing assistance to all employers with the emphasis on supporting employment of most vulnerable groups in the labour market.

The MLSAF SR prepared a strategic and conceptual document titled “Strategic priorities for development of employment in the SR with the outlook until 2030”, which is fully in line with goals of the “Strategy for digital transformation of Slovakia 2030”.

In order to eliminate the incoherence between the demand and the supply in the labour market, deal with shortage of qualified labour force and develop skills of job applicants, job candidates and young job applicants under 30 in the NEET situation, national project titled “Skill for the labour market” was launched in April 2024 as part of Programme Slovakia 2021 – 2027. The intention of the project is, based on assessment of individual possibilities for employment, to support employability of job applicants and young people under 30 through requalification and support employability and adaptability of job candidates by means of education. When assessing applications, regard is taken of most numerous job vacancies in the labour market published and updated quarterly by the Alliance of Sectoral Councils and focus is put on artificial intelligence, digital and green transformation.

Regarding the equality of opportunities in the labour market, the amendment to the Employment Services Act enhanced the support provided to employment of persons with disabilities in the open labour market with effect as of 1 January 2024. In particular, the definition of protected workplace

was amended as follows: job positions established by legal entities or natural persons in protected workplaces will be intended for employment of citizens with disabilities with hindered access to the labour market. In connection to the definition of protected workplace, the expression citizen with disabilities with hindered access to the labour market was defined, reflecting the reduced ability, prior to commencing the employment or self-employment, to perform employment or self-employment for the period of at least six consecutive calendar months if the decline of ability to perform employment is up to 70% and changes in the percentage decline of the ability to perform employment during the employment or self-employment in order to enable employment of other groups of citizens with disabilities outside of the protected employment towards the open labour market.

## Access to adequate housing

Housing is one of fundamental human needs that should be satisfied at the level corresponding to the general social and economic development of the society. Goals and priorities of the SR in the field of housing are set in framework document titled “Housing policy of the Slovak Republic Until 2030”, which was adopted by the Government of the SR in its Resolution No. 728 of 8 December 2021. The long-term intention of the state in the field of housing policy is a gradual upgrading of the level of housing in order to make it accessible for the population so that every household could obtain adequate housing.

On one hand, Slovakia is one of the countries with lowest accessibility of housing as well as the lowest share of rental housing in the market. The basic vision of the state until 2030 is to gradually increase accessibility and quality of housing in the SR focusing on making housing more financially and physically affordable with the emphasis on development of all forms of rental housing. Of course, this vision also includes renovation of the existing housing stock.

In order to accomplish the aforementioned goals, there was a system of supporting economic tools for housing development set up in Slovakia, which differentiates them depending on the social standing of applicants for housing. The most active support of the state aid aimed at increasing accessibility of social rental housing that is important especially for socially vulnerable groups of the population and to the renovation of the housing stock.

In the long run, the MT SR has provided support to municipalities to acquire rental housing units intended for social housing by means of combination of subsidies provided under Act No. 443/2010 Coll. on subsidies for housing development and on social housing as amended and subsidized loans from the State Housing Development Fund. More than 45,000 housing units have been procured in the SR using this method.

The Census of inhabitant, houses and flats 2021 (hereinafter only as the “2021 Census”) has shown that there were 14,710 non-conventional housing units and, in 13,709 (93.2% of all non-conventional housing units), there were 94,844 inhabitants who claimed their residence in such type of housing. There are five types of non-conventional housing units: family house without acceptance procedure, recreational object, cabin, mobile object and undetected form. Cabins represent the highest share of non-conventional housing units with 34.8%.

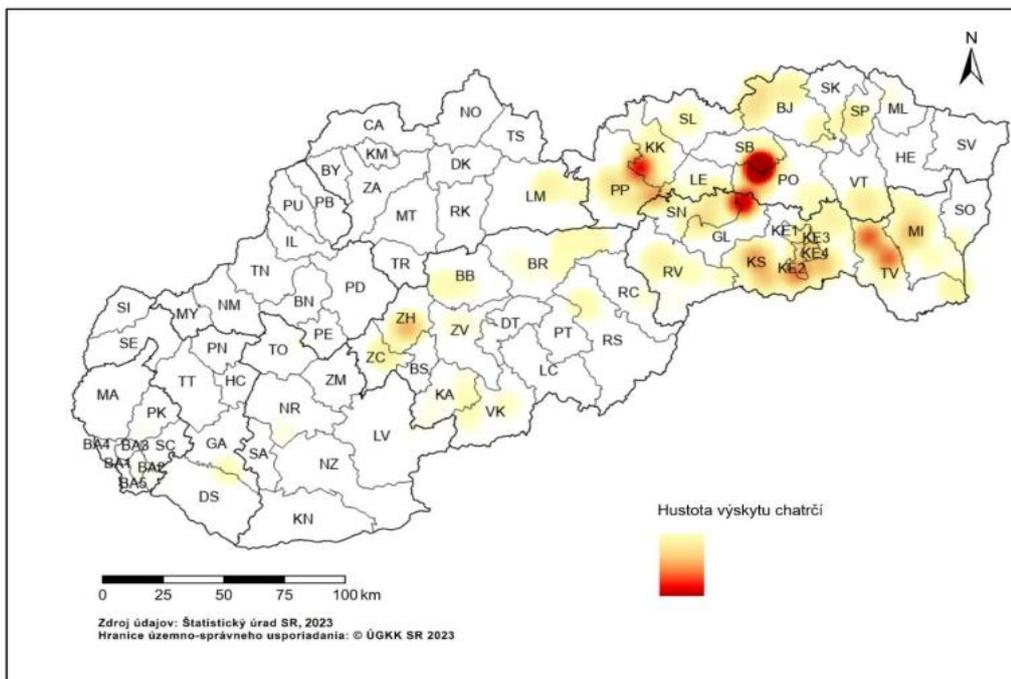
Tab. 2: Number of non-conventional housing units and the number of inhabitants with current residence in the SR, 2021 Census

Non-conventional housing unit	Number of non-conventional housing units	Number of inhabited non-conventional housing unit	Number of residents
Shack	5,115	4,996	37,276
Family house without acceptance procedure	4,449	4,122	24,934
Recreational object	408	389	1,146
Mobile object	91	84	647
Undetected form	4,647	4,118	30,841
Total	14,710	13,709	94,844

Source: Slovak Statistical Office, 2023

Non-conventional housing units of the cabin type are predominantly concentrated in Eastern Slovakia, the highest number of shacks was in the Prešov Region (2,325; 45.5%), followed by the Košice Region (2,259; 44.2%). The third one was the Banská Bystrica Region, with a significantly lower number non-conventional housing units of the cabin type (418; 8.2%). Looking at the district level, the concentration of cabins dominated in the Sabinov district (Prešov Region), with 15.1% of all cabins. It was followed by districts in the Košice Region - Košice-okolie (737; 14.4%) and Trebišov (546; 10.7%).

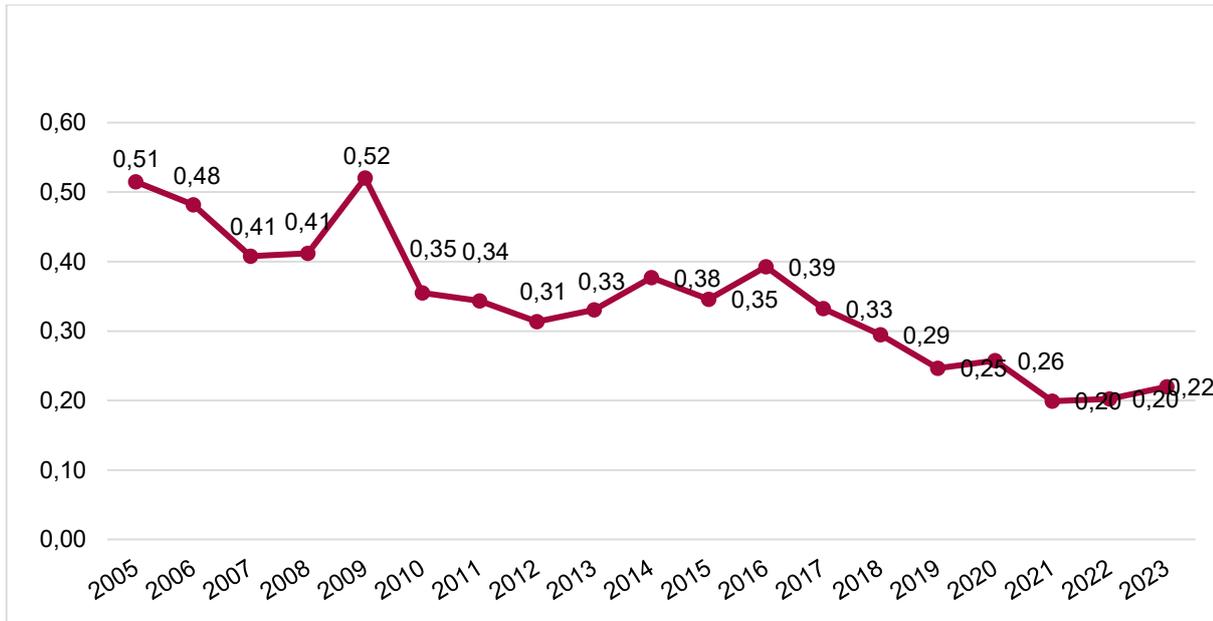
Pic. 1: Density of occurrence of non-conventional housing units of the cabin type in the SR, 2021 Census



Zdroj: Štatistický úrad SR, 2023

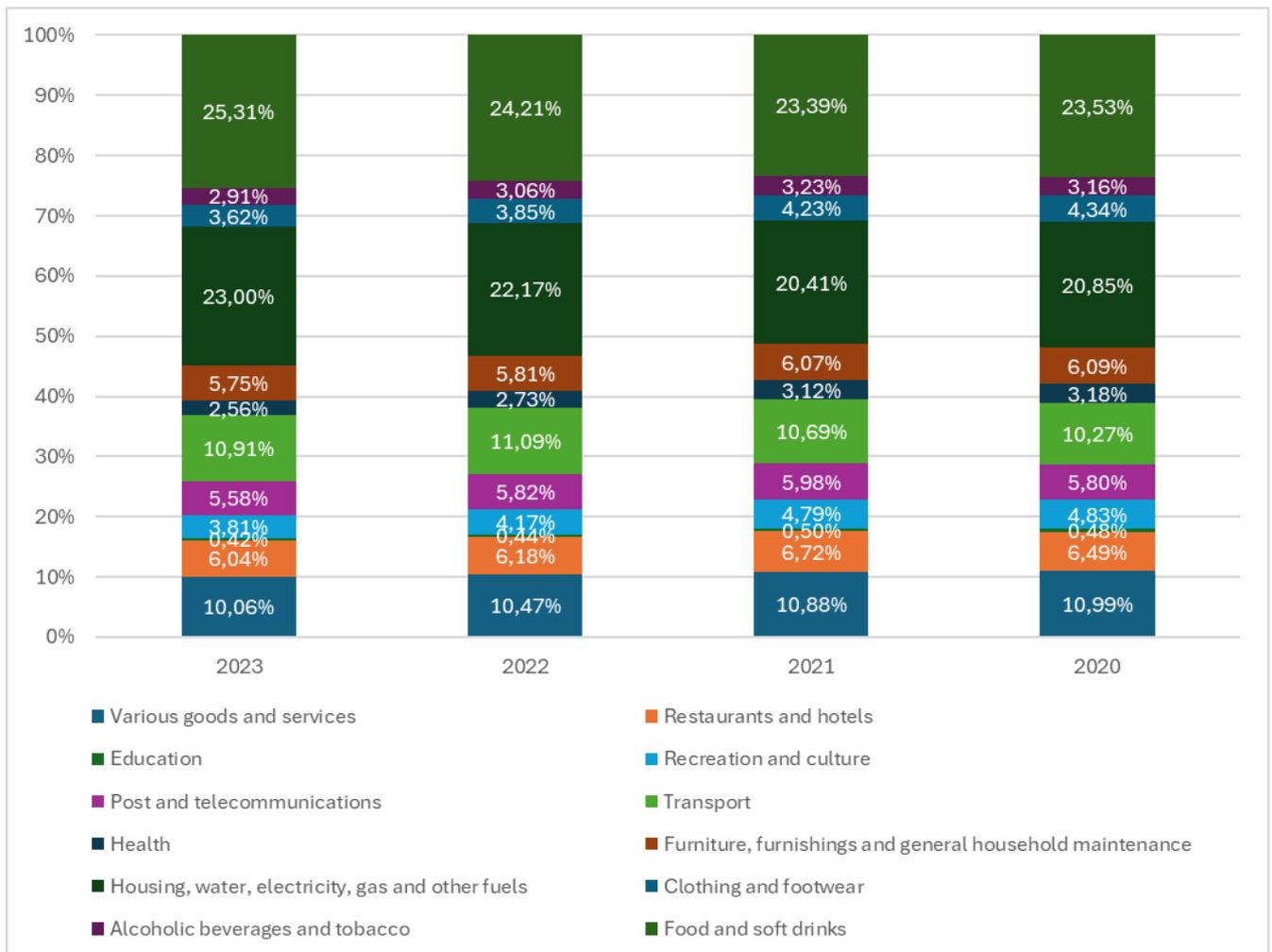
Source: Slovak Statistical Office, 2023

Graph 3: Share of public expenditure on supporting housing in the total GDP (in current prices)



Source: MT SR

Graph 4: Shares of categories of consumer spending in total consumer spending of households in 2020-2023



Source: Household spending [ps3002rr], SSO

The purpose of demand-oriented call of the MLSAF SR titled “Introduction of housing-led approaches with accompanying measures to provide affordable housing” is to acquire affordable housing with accompanying measures to endangered groups of inhabitants, such as homeless people, low income persons, lone parents, people with disabilities, young workers, young adults leaving institutional care facilities and vulnerable groups of inhabitants. The goal of introducing housing-led approaches (e.g., housing first, rapid re-housing) with accompanying measures is to mediate standard, affordable, sustainable and independent housing to a selected target group along with performance of social interventions and professional assistance (e.g., legal, psychological, etc.) as a preventive measure to protect health and lives of people who do not have or lost access to their own housing.

## Access to basic services

### Availability of water and waste water management

The current state of protection and use of water resources is defined in the strategic document Concept for the Water Policy of the Slovak Republic Until 2030. This document is in compliance with the water protection policy of the European Union, which focuses on ensuring all-round water protection, maintaining or improving water status and sustainable water management and use. The Concept for the Water Policy of the Slovak Republic Until 2030 with a 2050 outlook was approved by Resolution of the Government of the SR No. 372 of 1 June 2022. The Concept for the Water Policy of the Slovak Republic Until 2030 includes Objective 4.1 Ensuring access to safe drinking water for all inhabitants, including through measures to:

- diversify water sources for the supply of drinking water to the population; propose a solution for a stable drinking water supply throughout Slovakia also in the context of the expected impacts of climate change.

Ensuring access to safe drinking water for all inhabitants is a long-term challenge for Slovakia. Currently, out of a total population of 5,426,000, 4,910,000 inhabitants are supplied with drinking water from the public water supply. This represents 90.49% of the population connected to the public water supply. In other words, out of a total of 2,890 municipalities in the Slovak Republic, 2,454 municipalities are connected to the public water supply system.

According to the “State of the Environment Report of the Slovak Republic in 2022”, the total amount of waste water discharged into surface waters was 564,634,713 m<sup>3</sup>; this represents a decrease of 11.1% compared to 2021, and this is a decrease of 36% compared to 2005. The share of discharged treated waste water to the total amount of waste water discharged into streams in 2022 was 93.05%. The number of inhabitants living in houses connected to the public sewerage system in 2022 reached 3,856,104, which represents 71% of the total population. 1,190 municipalities (41.18% of the total number of municipalities in the Slovak Republic) had built public sewage. In 2022, approximately 429 mil. m<sup>3</sup> of waste water was discharged into streams through public sewerage systems (managed by water companies, municipal authorities and other entities), a decrease of 20 mil. m<sup>3</sup> compared to the previous year, and the amount of treated waste water discharged into public sewerage systems reached 426 mil m<sup>3</sup>.

### Access to education

Schools included in the network of schools and school establishments which provide education and training in accordance with Act No. 245/2008 Coll. on Education and Training (Education Act) and

on Amendments and Additions to Certain Acts as amended, through educational programmes of fields of education providing successive levels of education, constitute the school system.

Kindergartens provide pre-primary education for children aged from 3 to 6 years. Educational activities are aimed at supporting children's personal development in the areas of social-emotional, intellectual, physical, moral, aesthetic, developing abilities and skills, and creating the prerequisites for further education. They prepare for life in society in accordance with the individual and age specificities of children. In the school year 2023/2024, 3,248 kindergartens (including special kindergartens) were included in the network of schools and educational establishments.

Primary schools provide primary and lower secondary education to pupils generally from the age of 6 to 15 years. Under the principles and goals of education and training pursuant to the Education Act, primary schools support the development of the pupil's personality based on the principles of humanism, equal treatment, tolerance, democracy, and patriotism, in terms of intellectual, moral, ethical, aesthetic, occupational and physical. They provide pupils with basic knowledge, skills, and abilities in the fields of languages, science, social sciences, arts, sports, health, transport, and other knowledge and skills necessary for their orientation in life and society and their further education and training. In the school year 2023/2024, 2,311 primary schools (including special primary schools) were included in the network of schools and educational establishments.

Secondary schools provide lower secondary education, secondary vocational education, general secondary education, complete secondary education and higher vocational education. They generally provide education to pupils aged 15 to 19 in studies up to school-leaving examinations, 19 to 21 in post-secondary studies. Secondary schools are grammar schools, vocational secondary schools, secondary sports schools, schools of artistic industry and conservatoires. They prepare pupils for professions, vocational activities and further studies at universities. In the school year 2023/2024, 790 secondary schools (including special secondary schools) were included in the network of schools and educational establishments. The network of secondary schools is determined by the size of each municipality, the demographic development in the region or the needs of the labour market or specific employers operating in the region and transport accessibility. The optimisation of the secondary school network also takes into account accessibility and connections to public transport to ensure that pupils from rural areas also have access to educational institutions. There are various initiatives to improve accessibility to education in rural areas, including support for pupil transport (fare discounts) and the establishment of localised centres that enable pupils to receive education in proximity with their homes.

## Availability of healthcare

The priority of the MH SR, amongst others, remains equal access in ensuring accessible and quality healthcare for all citizens, including compliance with all human rights aspects established by the applicable, objective legal order and international rights ratified by the SR.

In accordance with the provisions of Article 11(1) and (2) of Act No. 576/2004 Coll. on Healthcare, Healthcare-related Services and on Amendments and Additions to Certain Acts as amended, everybody has the right to healthcare. The right to the provision of healthcare and healthcare-related services, including cross-border healthcare, is guaranteed equally to everyone in accordance with the principle of equal treatment in healthcare and in the provision of goods and services laid down by a special law. In accordance with the principle of equal treatment, any discrimination based on any ground such as sex, religion or belief, race, nationality, membership of a national minority or ethnic group, sexual orientation, marital or family status, colour, language, political or other opinion, trade union activity, national or social origin, disability, age, property, birth or other status shall also be prohibited.



In order to fulfil the objectives of the Programme Slovakia, on 9 November 2023, the Commission at the Monitoring Committee for the Programme Slovakia 2021-2027 for Objective 4 of the EU Cohesion Policy approved the MH SR's developed plan of the national project "Support for training of health-workers in breastfeeding promotion and bonding and conducting clinical audits in the field of baby-friendly hospital initiative", which is a guarantee of the most effective way of ensuring the universal continuous training of health-workers in breastfeeding promotion and bonding and the verification of the quality system of healthcare provided to mothers and newborns in accordance with the Standard Procedure for the Practice of Prevention: Maternal and Newborn Care according to the principles of the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative ("BFHI") – Promoting Bonding and Lactation of the MH SR across the country. The BFHI promotes an anti-discriminatory approach to all mothers. Following the approved project plan, BFHI clinical audits will be launched in all maternity hospitals in the SR.

The development of healthcare focused on women's reproductive health and safe motherhood is also reflected in the internal regulations of the MH SR published on the website of the Standards of Gynaecology and Obstetrics of the Department of Standard Preventative, Diagnostic and Therapeutic Procedures. The main tasks, programmes and activities for the protection and promotion of sexual and reproductive health are further elaborated in subsequent documents, in particular in the "Concept of Healthcare in Gynaecology and Obstetrics" published in the Bulletin of the MH SR, professional guidelines and non-legislative documents, such as strategies and action plans approved by the Government of the SR, e.g. Gender Equality Plan 2020-2024, National Strategy for Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities in the SR 2020-2025 and Action Plan, Strategy for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma Until 2030, European Guarantee for Children, National Strategic Framework for Family Support and Demographic Development Until 2030, National Programme for the Development of Living Conditions of Persons with Disabilities.

The MH SR makes use of a number of standard practices to ensure quality antenatal, delivery and postnatal care for all women, e.g. Prenatal Care for Low-Risk (Physiological) Pregnancy, Recommended Practice for Prevention: Nutrition and Physical Activity in Pregnancy, and Care for the Low-Risk Parent during Childbirth. All standard practices in gynaecology and obstetrics are available at: <https://www.standardnepostupy.sk/standardy-gyneklologia-a-porodnictvo/>.

The MH SR presented a draft law amending Act No. 577/2004 Coll. on the Scope of Health Care Reimbursed by Public Health Insurance and the Reimbursement for Services Related to the Provision of Health Care as amended, which aims to improve the quality of healthcare provided within the scope of nursing practice to a child with a need for nursing care, in particular a child with a disability and a child from a socially disadvantaged background, after discharge from an institutional healthcare facility to a home environment or other natural environment. The aim of the draft law is to provide nursing services to a child in a home environment by a home nursing care agency on the basis of public health insurance. Public health insurance also fully reimburses healthcare within the scope of nursing practice provided by a nurse who provides specialised nursing care, either in the specialisation of paediatric nursing care or in the specialisation of intensive neonatal nursing care or in the specialisation of intensive paediatric nursing care or provided by a nurse with advanced practice in accordance with a special regulation in a neonatology unit of institutional healthcare or a paediatric ward of institutional healthcare or in the specialty of community nursing care, in the home environment or in another natural environment in connection with healthcare for a maximum of four visits to a child with a need for nursing care during the six weeks following discharge from institutional healthcare. Furthermore, the aim of the draft law is to relieve institutional healthcare facilities from additional consultations provided to the legal guardian after the child's discharge to the child's home environment or other natural environment, to relieve the outpatient clinics of contracted paediatricians who provide general outpatient healthcare for children and adolescents from such nursing services as may be provided by a home healthcare agency and, last but not least, to provide assistance to the legal guardian with the

provision of the child's healthcare, including education and breastfeeding support. The draft law was in the legislative process at the time this information was prepared.

The MH SR uses a number of standard procedures in meeting the specific needs of children with various types of disabilities, e.g. Standard Diagnostic and Therapeutic Procedures in the Rehabilitation of Cerebral Palsy, Comprehensive Psychological Management of the Child and Adolescent Patient with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (F90.0), Standard Diagnostic Procedure for Positive Results of Postnatal Sonographic Screening for Congenital Developmental Defects of the Uropoetic System – 1st Revision. All approved standard procedures are available on the link Approved Standard Procedures: SPDTP ([standardnepostupy.sk](http://standardnepostupy.sk)).

The MH SR cooperates in the implementation of the measures of the national strategies and action plans under the responsibility of the MLSAF SR:

- National Strategy for the Development of Coordinated Early Intervention and Early Care Services 2022-2030 approved by Resolution of the Government of the SR No. 435 of 28 June 2022;
- Action Plan 2023-2025 for the National Strategy for the Development of Coordinated Early Intervention and Early Care Services 2022-2030 approved by Resolution of the Government of the SR No. 244 of 24 May 2023;
- National Action Plan for the European Guarantee for Children in the Slovak Republic with a view to 2030, approved by Resolution of the Government of the SR No. 156 of 12 April 2023 in relation to Council Recommendation (EU) 2021/1004 of 14 June 2021 establishing a European Child Guarantee.

People who have come to Slovakia from Ukraine and have asylum status are fully reimbursed for healthcare like other participants in the public health insurance system in Slovakia. A foreigner who is not covered by public health insurance, is not insured in another Member State and is a foreigner who has been granted temporary refuge in Slovakia is entitled to reimbursement for emergency care.

At the same time, the MH SR may determine the scope of medical procedures reimbursed beyond emergency medical care, which is understood as necessary medical care, by publishing it on its website. The amount of reimbursement for medicines, medical devices and dietetic foods is governed by the currently valid list of categorised medicines, medical devices and dietetic foods.

On the basis of the above, the MH SR publishes, pursuant to Article 9h of Act No. 580/2004 Coll. on Health Insurance and on Amendments and Additions to Act No. 95/2002 Coll. on Insurance and on Amendments and Additions to Certain Acts as amended, on its website the scope of medical procedures reimbursed in excess of emergency medical care.

## Availability of internet connection

The development of electronic communications services and technologies in Slovakia is characterised by the construction of fixed fibre-optic networks and the expansion of coverage by the 5th generation mobile network (5G). 5G technology began to be commercially used on mobile networks at the end of 2020. By the end of 2023, 5G network coverage had reached 67% of the population and 28% of the territory. Broadband internet access services allow end-users to transmit a signal at a minimum speed of 256 kbit/s.

In fixed networks, there has been a steady increase in connections via fibre networks, as can be seen in the table below. The trend in fixed radio connections and cable TV connections is balanced. Broadband xDSL access, despite a steady decline, has so far maintained a strong market position, also due to the replacement of older ADSL technology by the more powerful VDSL.

Tab. 3: The number of fixed broadband internet connections by technology (with a minimum access speed of 256 kbit/s) is shown in the table below.

Indicator	31.12. 2020	31.12. 2021	31.12. 2022	31.12. 2023
xDSL	474,709	443,146	406,970	366,829
Cable TV distribution	176,171	174,913	173,953	173,085
Fibre optic access FTTH/FTTB	599,333	701,654	791,923	859,950
Fixed radio access	449,016	453,072	486,219	428,455
Satellite access	944	847	707	676
Connections via other technologies	1,388	1,038	1,050	1,487
<b>Number of broadband connections in the fixed network</b>	<b>1,701,561</b>	<b>1,774,670</b>	<b>1,860,822</b>	<b>1,830,482</b>
<b>Number of broadband fixed network connections per 100 inhabitants</b>	<b>31.21</b>	<b>32.65</b>	<b>34.28</b>	<b>33.74</b>

Source: MT SR

Broadband access to the internet on a mobile network is overwhelmingly accessed via mobile phones with mobile data activated.

Tab. 4: The number of mobile broadband internet connections (with a minimum access speed of 256 kbit/s) is shown in the table below.

Indicator	31.12. 2020	31.12. 2021	31.12. 2022	31.12. 2023
Mobile phones with SIM cards	4,459,415	4,470,485	4,500,049	4,758,360
Data devices (cards/modems)	364,028	363,473	395,210	462,520
<b>Number of mobile broadband connections</b>	<b>4,823,443</b>	<b>4,833,958</b>	<b>4,895,259</b>	<b>5,220,880</b>
<b>Number of mobile broadband connections per 100 inhabitants</b>	<b>88.34</b>	<b>88.95</b>	<b>90.17</b>	<b>96.24</b>

Source: MT SR

## Availability of public transport

In the field of mobility, the MT SR has systematically implemented and continues to implement a number of projects and activities within its remit to achieve the global Sustainable Development Goals, in particular with the aim of:

- ensuring sustainable regional and urban mobility with a higher share of public passenger transport and non-motorised transport (cycling and walking) that is accessible, reliable and safe;
- promoting the integration of public passenger transport at both tariff and transport levels in order to maximise synergies between modes and to make public passenger transport competitive and user-friendly;
- ensuring the environmental sustainability of transport with significantly reduced emissions, taking into account safe transport, public passenger transport, the use of alternative fuels, non-motorised transport and electrified public passenger transport.

The main instruments for achieving these objectives in the field of public passenger transport include forming a National Transport Authority and preparing a separate Public Transport Act to ensure comprehensive public passenger transport solutions. Act No. 332/2023 Coll. on Public Passenger Transport and on Amendments and Additions to Certain Acts entered into force on 1



January 2024, on the day that the National Transport Authority was established on the basis of this Act as the national coordinator of public passenger transport.

Since the ensuring of regional (bus) transport is within the competence of self-governing regions, a due range of transport services is ensured by the MT SR through compulsory plans of transport services and sustainable mobility, by which the self-governing regions (hereinafter as “SGRs”) undertake to their implementation, the development of which is a condition for financing from EU funds. The MT SR, in association with the National Transport Authority, will develop the National Transport Service Plan as a conceptual document that defines the public interest of all the principals. The National Transport Service Plan will include, in particular, the design of transport services, measures to achieve transport and tariff integration, the design of interchange points and identification of the carrier mode of transport depending on the size of the traffic flow. The national transport service plan will also include the method of addressing parallel transport and measures to ensure coordination and continuity of the individual modes of transport.

To support the development of public passenger transport (hereinafter as “PPT”), measures are being implemented, for example, to increase the attractiveness of public passenger transport, e.g. easier purchase and ticketing, better and clearer passenger orientation, reinforcement and extension of integrated transport systems, renewal of the vehicle fleet (hybrid buses, electric buses, cycle buses, provision of right of way), modern information boards in PPT vehicles and at bus stops, Wi-Fi connectivity, construction of park and ride facilities, incorporating elements of preference for public passenger transport, cooperation in the development of parking policy (differentiation of parking charges, revenue from charges assigned for financing PPT).

The National Transport Authority is preparing a project for a national integrated ticket, which will be the basis for the tariff integration of public passenger transport in the public interest throughout the territory of the SR.

Another area with the potential to significantly ensure the environmental sustainability of transport with significantly reduced emissions is the promotion of non-motorised transport, especially cycling. In this context, the MD SR supports the development of cycling transport with subsidies. In 2020, it supported municipalities in the framework of a call for proposals with an allocation of EUR 13 million aimed primarily at preparing project documentation, but also at constructing new cycle routes or completing cycling infrastructure. Accordingly, successful beneficiaries have built 50 kilometres of cycle paths, developed projects for the construction of a further 50 km of cycling infrastructure and provided 1,200 bicycle storage places.

In 2022, the MT SR supported 28 projects for almost EUR 750,000 for the construction of covered shelters for bicycles on school campuses. Primary schools, secondary schools, primary art schools or their founders, i.e. municipalities and self-governing regions, were eligible to apply for the subsidy. The Ministry of Transport also continues to support cycling from the Recovery and Resilience Plan of the SR, where approximately EUR 102 million has been allocated. To date, 21 projects have been supported in the amount of EUR 28.5 million, thanks to which 80 kilometres of new or reconstructed cycle paths will be added in Slovakia. The evaluation of the second call for support for the construction of cycling infrastructure is currently in its final stage. We anticipate support for 52 projects amounting to approximately EUR 59 million and the construction of 110 km of cycle paths. A third call for proposals is planned in the near future to fully utilise the allocation.

# Sustainable and inclusive urban prosperity and opportunities for all

## Inclusive urban economy

A long-standing and continuous priority of the Government of the SR and the MEcon SR is to facilitate entrepreneurship by removing unjustified regulatory barriers and bureaucracy that impose additional financial and administrative costs or time burdens on entrepreneurs. To this end, since 2017, the MEcon SR has been preparing so-called “packages of measures to improve the business environment”. The first package of measures was adopted in 2017, followed by another package in 2018 and a third in 2019. In general, these were minor packages of measures aimed at improving particular areas of the economy.

In 2020, the “Lex corona” law was adopted in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. This package contained 114 measures and resulted in savings of approximately EUR 100 million. Following adoption of the “Lex corona”, the reform of the Anti-Bureaucratic Packages resulting from Component 14 was established within the Recovery and Resilience Plan of the SR. The reform aims to adopt 300+ measures to support the business environment, to be implemented and effective by the end of 2024. The first package of measures resulting from the Recovery and Resilience Plan of the SR was approved by the Government of the SR in February 2022 and subsequently by the National Council of the SR in June 2022. This package includes 200 measures applicable in various areas of the economy. A detailed quantification of the impact of individual measures on the business environment is currently underway in order to accurately assess their effectiveness and contribution to the improvement of the business environment. On the basis of analyses performed to date, it is estimated that around 150 measures will be reportable under the Recovery and Resilience Plan of the SR; however, this may be further specified depending on the results of the ongoing evaluations. The total savings of the measures implemented so far amount to EUR 151 million.

The second package of measures was approved by the Government of the SR in January 2024 and subsequently by the National Council of the SR in April 2024. In total, it contained 199 measures, of which 151 are currently recorded as completed. In the same way, for this package, quantification of the implemented measures is in progress, and the preliminary estimate of the cost savings for the business environment is EUR 280 million.

The adoption of better regulation by public authorities is also an important prerequisite for improving the business environment, which is one of the priorities of the MEcon SR. Within the framework of this agenda, the MEcon SR currently uses mainly the following tools:

- Regulatory Impact Assessment – RIA;
- Ex post evaluation of regulations affecting the business environment;
- Measurement of regulatory burden and administrative costs of the business environment;
- Preparation of proposals for reducing the administrative burden on the business environment.

The impact assessment of adopted legislative and non-legislative materials is carried out on the basis of the Uniform Methodology for Selected Impact Assessment. The main document determining the direction of the Better Regulation agenda in Slovakia is RIA 2020 – Better Regulation Strategy, which was approved by Resolution of the Government of the SR No. 32 of 24 January 2018. On the basis of this strategy, the national project “Improving the business environment in Slovakia and evaluating policies under the responsibility of the Ministry of Economy

of the Slovak Republic” was successfully implemented; this introduced several better regulation methodologies and implemented training sessions for the state administration and entrepreneurs. The project activities contributed to improving access to information by improving the quality of the impact assessment of legislative and non-legislative materials. At the same time, it strengthened the institutional capacity and efficiency of the public administration through the establishment and functioning of the Permanent Working Commission of the Legislative Council of the Government of the SR for the assessment of selected impacts, which institutionalises ex ante impact assessment in the SR.

The MEcon SR, as its implementing authority for Component 14 under Reform and Investment, implements measures to reduce the regulatory burden on business enshrined in the Unified Methodology for Selected Impact Assessment, which aim to simplify regulations, reduce bureaucratic burden and increase transparency. Updates to the Single Impact Assessment Methodology have introduced the one-in-two-out (1in2out) principles, ex post evaluation of regulations operating in the business environment and protection against unjustified gold-plating in the SR.

1in2out is intended to reduce the regulatory and administrative burden on the business environment. This objective is achieved on the basis of the correct identification of impacts on the business environment in the legislative materials submitted to the commenting process, the provision of quality information in the analysis of impacts on the business environment, a self-regulatory mechanism for submitters that leads to better quality public policy-making, ultimately making it possible to achieve the actual reduction of the burden on the business environment. The 1in2out principle consists in the obligation of the proposer of legislative materials to remove twice the existing costs per single euro of newly introduced costs on the business environment.

The protection against unjustified gold-plating prevents the unreasonable extension of the content of national legislation beyond the minimum requirements of EU legislation. The use of gold-plating in the transposition or implementation of EU legislation may be undesirable, hence the legislator should not go beyond the minimum (necessary) requirements of EU legislation. For example, if gold-plating creates negative impacts on the business environment, such a practice may lead to a reduction in the competitiveness of the affected domestic businesses compared to countries where this EU legislation has been transposed or implemented only to the extent necessary (without gold-plating).

Ex post evaluation of regulations is intended to assess the regulations, or the provision of legislation, after a certain period of time of their operation in the environment, whether they fulfil the purpose for which they were adopted, what are their actual impacts and whether unintended consequences, unforeseen at the time of their creation, have occurred during the operation of the regulations in the environment. In view of the need to fulfil the commitments of the Slovak Republic to the Recovery and Resilience Plan of the SR Component 14, the ex-post evaluation is currently focused on regulations applicable in the business environment.

The MERDY SR focuses on the development of technical and entrepreneurial skills and innovation through the following activities:

- for the second consecutive year, the MERDY SR is planning to launch a call “Extending Innovation into Education and Training in Schools”, which aims to disseminate proven educational innovations and to increase the share of new innovative approaches in education and training in kindergartens, primary schools and secondary schools. At the same time, in 2024, the objective of the call will be extended to specifically support the initiative and entrepreneurship of pupils, students and teachers. In 2023, EUR 950,000 was allocated for this call and in 2024, EUR 1,380,000;

- support for the position of school digital coordinator. This position plays a key role in the implementation of digital technologies in education, with the role of advising and providing professional support to teaching and professional staff;
- delivering the European digital competences frameworks for citizens (DigComp 2.2) and for educators (DigCompEdu), which will be translated into Slovak and published by the end of 2024;
- the provision of digital technologies was provided in the first wave of national edIT projects – devices were provided to primary and secondary school staff, schools were equipped with tablets, all-in-one computers;
- methodological support for skills is provided through the national project DiTEdu, of which the MERDY of the SR is a partner;
- updating of state educational programmes for secondary schools – key competences focused on digital competences (critical and responsible use of digital technologies for education, work and participation in society, as well as interaction with digital technologies, including information and data literacy, communication and collaboration, media literacy, digital content creation, security, issues related to intellectual property, problem-solving and critical thinking) have been added; at the same time, educational standards have been updated in the field of economic education, which also focuses on education for entrepreneurship.

## Productivity and prosperity in cities

### Just transition fund

The Just Transition Fund (JTF) was established by Regulation (EU) 2021/1056 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 with a total budget for Slovakia of EUR 459 million. The JTF is part of the Slovakia 2021-2027 Programme and, for the purpose of using this fund, the so-called Just Territorial Transformation Plan has been developed and approved.

The JTF is a key tool for addressing the economic, social and environmental consequences of the transformation in order to achieve the climate goals. It is specifically designed for those regions that are most vulnerable to this process. Within the Slovak Republic, eligible regions include selected districts within the Trenčín Region (Prievidza and Partizánske districts), the Košice Region (Košice I – IV, Košice – surroundings and Michalovce districts) and the Banská Bystrica Region (Brezno, Revúca, Rimavská Sobota, Zvolen, Žiar nad Hronom, Žarnovica and Banská Štiavnica districts).

The Action Plan for the Transformation of the Upper Nitra Coal Region was approved by Resolution of the Government of the SR No. 336 of 3 July 2019. Subsequent to the approval of the Action Plan for the Transformation of the Upper Nitra Coal Region, further updates have been made to reflect the transition from the planning phase to the implementation phase. The Action Plan for the Transformation of the Upper Nitra Coal Region is currently in the implementation phase, and the first calls from the JTF were announced in 2023.

Within the framework of the Just Territorial Transformation Plan, taking into account the development needs, challenges and priorities of the eligible regions, specific areas of support have been identified that need to be developed in order to meet the objectives of the transformation, in particular:

- economic diversification – focuses on the development of new economic sectors to increase the diversification of local economies that are heavily dependent on greenhouse-gas-

intensive industries. Support includes job creation, the development of start-up and existing businesses as well as the development of co-working spaces. Measures also aim to support research, development and innovation activities;

- clean energy transition and territorial revitalisation – focuses on promoting energy efficiency in public buildings, the introduction of renewable energy sources (solar, geothermal), including pilot support for exploratory drilling for future exploitation of geothermal energy potential. At the same time, support will target the development of sustainable and emission-free public passenger transport, including related infrastructure. With regard to the revitalisation of areas after mining or industrial activity, activities will also focus on the reuse of brownfield sites for new business and cultural uses;
- human capital and skills development for a just transformation – focusing on education and skills development in view of the needs of the changing labour market. Specifically, measures will be targeted at supporting secondary vocational education, lifelong learning (retraining and skills development) including career guidance for those affected by the impacts of the transition. Specific emphasis is placed on the support and activation of young people in transition regions.

At the same time, beyond the Fund itself, a new instrument under the Just Transition Mechanism, the Public Sector Credit Facility, is also available to address the impacts of transition. This is a combined product of a loan from the European Investment Bank and a grant from the European Commission. It is used to support public sector projects addressing the social, environmental and economic challenges arising from the transition to the EU's climate targets. The instrument creates preferential lending conditions for projects that do not generate sufficient revenue to be financially viable.

The JTF, within the scope of the eligible areas of support and subsequent implementation through calls for projects, including eligible activities under the Public Sector Credit Facility, complementarily contributes to achievement of the 2016 NUA objectives. Specifically, the commitment to “promote access to education, skills development and youth employment,” and the commitment to “transition urban economies to higher productivity through high value-added sectors and by promoting diversification, technology-upgrading, research and innovation”. The Just Transition Fund also reflects the commitment to “ensure universal access to affordable, reliable and modern energy services through the promotion of energy efficiency and sustainable renewable energy” as well as the commitment to “produce and use affordable renewable energy and create and use sustainable and cost-effective transport infrastructure and services”.

## Catching-up Regions Initiative

The Catching-up Regions Initiative (hereinafter as “CuRI”) is an initiative of the European Commission (hereinafter as “EC”), the essence of which is to provide technical assistance to catching-up regions in the EU. Among the Slovak regions, the Prešov Self-Governing Region was selected on a pilot basis in 2018, the Banská Bystrica Self-Governing Region in 2019 and the Košice Self-Governing Region joined the CuRI in 2020. The main objective of the initiative is to support the development of these regions by analysing the needs of the territory and then assisting in the preparation of targeted investments. The output of the initiative is well-prepared projects that have the potential to serve as examples of good practice or have the potential to be replicated in other territories.

The technical assistance is funded by the EC and provided by the World Bank Group. The projects themselves, prepared under CuRI, usually apply for co-financing from EU funds. The initiative also aims to increase the competitiveness of catching-up regions within the context of the use of available EU resources.



In Slovakia, five editions of the initiative have taken place and key support themes have been identified. Investments were prepared under thematic areas focusing on different aspects of the development of catching-up regions. These support areas were updated over time according to the progress of project implementation and the needs of the territory. Below is an overview of the framework themes that have been supported over the five years of CuRI:

- quality and development of secondary vocational education with regard to labour market needs,
- integration of marginalised Roma communities,
- social economy,
- local economic development (Gemera Trail, Poloniny Trail, environmental infrastructure in the Snina district),
- development of regional R&D and innovation ecosystems,
- geo-infrastructure for spatial data,
- human capital (health and social care),
- digitisation of integrated public passenger transport.

The CuRI supports the areas of regional development also identified in the 2016 UN New Urban Agenda. The commitments made by the SR in the UN document, such as support for economic diversification, technology modernisation, research and innovation, including the creation of value-added jobs, support for sustainable tourism as well as support for access to education, skills development and youth employment, have been reflected in the CuRI activities in Slovakia.

## Support for small and medium-sized enterprises

The MEcon SR is the central authority for the promotion of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The importance of small and medium-sized enterprises in the Slovak economy is described by several indicators. Small and medium-sized enterprises account for 99.9 % of the total number of business entities in the Slovak economy. In 2022, SMEs accounted for 74.7% of employment in the business economy. The share of SMEs in total employment in the Slovak economy was 59.3%.

Supporting the creation and growth of businesses, especially small and medium-sized enterprises, is one of the key activities that ultimately improves the performance not only of regions but also of the economy as a whole. From the perspective of small and medium-sized enterprises as important contributors to the creation of jobs, to the creation of added value and contributors to the economic growth and development of regions, it is essential to continue the process of improving the business environment on a continuous basis, in particular in response to the needs and requirements of SMEs. Entrepreneurship support is an important tool for the development and stabilisation of the business sector and the competitiveness of the country. In order to promote a stable business environment, it is necessary to continue systematic cooperation and a coordinated approach of all involved ministries, as well as to take into account the suggestions and recommendations of individual entities. Mutual and intensive cooperation should be aimed at improving business conditions for SMEs.

In 2023, the MH SR continued to provide support to small and medium-sized enterprises, especially in an indirect form through the provision of advisory and mentoring services through the Slovak Business Agency (hereinafter as “SBA”).

According to the Atlas of SMEs in Slovakia 2021, the percentage share of SMEs in GDP is around 80%.

In association with the SBA, the MEcon SR implements a support programme and a scheme aimed at supporting start-ups, which are intended for small and medium-sized entrepreneurs and those



interested in entrepreneurship. The objective of the programme and the scheme is to improve the conditions for start-ups and thus increase the chances for innovative and competitive ideas to succeed on the market. Thanks to the assistance provided under this programme, start-ups are able to set up their business plans in a more economically viable way, thereby reducing the risk of their possible failure.

Support is provided to innovative start-up entrepreneurs as well as to aspiring entrepreneurs working on innovative or technological projects. The assistance is implemented through three components – through the participation in start-up events, the provision of information, advice, support services and consultation in preparation for the commercialisation of products. Commercialisation of new ideas improves productivity and has a positive impact on the growth of living standards. The activities of the programme are provided to the beneficiaries free of charge.

In 2023, the MEcon SR has allocated EUR 300,000 for the implementation of this programme. The programme is implemented by the SBA. For this reason, the results of the implementation of the programme are presented in the section Characteristics of the subordinate organisations of the MEcon SR concerning the activities of the SBA.

Promoting successful entrepreneurial practice and entrepreneurship education aims to stimulate entrepreneurial thinking through the promotion of entrepreneurial role models, introduces entrepreneurship as a career choice, strengthens the entrepreneurial spirit and presents entrepreneurial initiatives as examples of good practice. Promoting Successful Entrepreneurship and Entrepreneurship Education seeks to strengthen public interest in entrepreneurship by developing entrepreneurial skills, promoting successful businessmen and businesswomen. Promoting successful entrepreneurial practice and education for entrepreneurship, among other things, uniquely connects theory within schools with successful entrepreneurial practice, thereby helping young people to better position themselves in the marketplace. In 2023, the events SlovakiaTech Forum-Expo, Young Innovative Entrepreneur 2023, Second Generation Continues Family Values – Sibling Entrepreneurship, DRONTEX and others were supported. The MEcon SR allocated EUR 230,000 for the implementation of the above activities.

The SME Monitoring and Research Programme includes the production of documents, studies, analyses and surveys that provide entrepreneurs, the public, in addition to public sector institutions and academia, with updated information on the conditions of entrepreneurship in Slovakia, the effectiveness of implemented support programmes and measures taken to improve the business environment. The outputs of the programme are used in the preparation and implementation of policies for the support and development of the business environment, in the design and evaluation of measures to support SMEs, in the preparation of documents for international assessments of the business environment and business conditions of SMEs, and in the higher education and research process.

An amount of EUR 380,000 was budgeted for this element of the programme structure in 2023. The following studies were carried out under this support: the grey economy and SMEs, the future of the labour market from the perspective of SMEs, analysis of regulatory obligations in the field of innovation, climate initiatives from the perspective of SMEs, proposals for measures in the field of entrepreneurship and others.

Activities implemented in support of the Internet economy were supported with EUR 20,000 in 2023. This is an effective tool for training and informing the general public in the use of online tools. Through the programme, information activities, activities to promote and popularise the Internet economy, the creation of tools for the introduction of electronic services and the creation of electronic platforms are implemented.

The aim of the Entrepreneurship Education Support Scheme is to build comprehensive and integrated support in the field of entrepreneurship education across all levels of education to

support the development of individual potential in individuals, in particular by fostering soft skills. Support for entrepreneurship education is thus primarily directed at children, school pupils and school students. Activities are also directed at teaching staff, who are an important element in spreading awareness of entrepreneurship promotion and in its practical application in the teaching process. The support provided under this programme is also important for developing the skills needed for a rapidly changing business environment influenced by competition and innovation in the market. The MEcon SR allocated funds of EUR 230,000 in 2023 for implementation of the scheme. The selection committee approved 21 projects in 2023 for an amount of EUR 230,000. The SBA is the agency implementing the scheme. The results of the implementation are presented in the section Characteristics of the subordinate organisations of the MEcon SR.

Implementation of the scheme contributes to the improvement of conditions for family business in Slovakia through the provision of advice and support services aimed at supporting and developing business plans, skills, business sustainability and ensuring a smooth process of generational change or transfer of ownership. The scheme aims to strengthen the competitiveness and growth of family businesses operating regionally, nationally or internationally. Thanks to the support provided under the scheme, family businesses are able to develop their business plans in a more economically viable way, thereby reducing the risk of their failure during or as a result of generational change or transfer of ownership. In 2023, the MEcon SR allocated EUR 480,000 for implementation of this programme. The selection committee approved 31 projects. The programme is implemented by the SBA. Accordingly, the results of the programme implementation are presented in the section Characteristics of the subordinate organisations of the MEcon SR concerning the activities of the SBA.

## Environmentally sustainable and resilient urban development

### Resilient and adaptable urban development

Within the framework of environmental policy, cities in Slovakia strive to develop green and blue infrastructure, by planting, constructing and revitalising “green respite parks” and public green spaces under the management of cities and municipalities. The planting of isolated hygienic green areas along heavily trafficked corridors, industrial and agricultural sites and warehouses is encouraged. The accessibility of parks (within 300 m) is a key tool for improving the quality of the urban environment with an impact on the health of inhabitants. Greenery is also an important anti-erosion and anti-flooding measure, but it is important to avoid planting invasive non-native species that can cause a variety of allergic reactions or other impacts not only on the environment but also on the health of the inhabitants. The planting of trees in the urban environment should, primarily, use native species and, where possible, traditional and local species, thereby also supporting the preservation of our genetic diversity.

Transport is one of the most important factors affecting the quality of the urban environment. It is a source of emissions, noise and vibration. Accordingly, the priority objectives of urban strategies are to eliminate light smog, noise and dust from road and rail transport, to promote environmentally friendly solutions – reconstruction, modernisation and construction of infrastructure for non-motorised transport – cycling tracks, accessible public transport, as well as the construction of road bypasses outside built-up areas and the creation of conditions for

sustainable mobility. Introducing passenger shipping into public passenger transport is a positive solution to the negative environmental impacts of individual road transport.

The basic vision of the document “A Greener Slovakia – Strategy of the Environmental Policy of the Slovak Republic until 2030” (hereinafter as “Envirostrategy 2030”) is to achieve better environmental quality and sustainable circulation of the economy, which is based on rigorous protection of environmental compartments and using as little non-renewable natural resources and hazardous substances as possible, which will lead to an improvement in health of the population. The biggest environmental challenges in Slovakia and, therefore, the areas that will be prioritised in the 2030 environmental policy, are waste management, air quality and habitat and species conservation, especially in forest, meadow and wetland ecosystems, as well as the protection of biodiversity in general. Slovakia has the third lowest uniformity in the distribution of urban green areas in the EU. According to the WHO, urban green areas have a positive impact on health and help towns better adapt to the adverse effects of climate change. There are large green areas in the Slovak towns, but at the same time, locations with the low occurrence of greenery. In accordance with Envirostrategy 2030, the share of greenery in towns, weighted by the number of inhabitants, should increase to at least 40% in the nationwide average, and all inhabitants of regional towns should have access to greenery within 10 minutes. The maintenance of urban greenery and green/blue infrastructure should take into account not only the financial and aesthetic aspect, but also a positive health effect, maximising impacts on local microclimate regulation, rainwater harvesting efficiency, and sustainability of further maintenance, nature protection and biodiversity requirements (e.g. this includes the protection of insect pollinators as well as bats and birds, and the possible adaptation of relevant infrastructure to their needs, for example when insulating or renovating houses) and recreational needs of the population.

To support the environmental policy of cities, the Slovak Environment Agency (hereinafter as “SEA”) organises the Enviromesto competition. The Enviromesto competition has been held biennially since 2017 and is announced to support municipal government, raise public awareness and strengthen the involvement of local residents, entrepreneurs, associations and organisations in the creation and protection of the environment. The contribution of the competition is to create a platform of good examples and inspiring solutions to broad environmental problems and manifestations of climate change that are keenly felt in towns. An important health-related activity of SEA is the mapping of degraded ecosystems in towns. This is the mapping of brownfields, i.e. areas that have lost their original function, are abandoned and neglected.

In 2018, the MH SR, under the responsibility of the Public Health Authority of the Slovak Republic (hereinafter as “PHA SR”), developed an inter-ministerial document called the Action Plan for the Environment and Public Health of the Slovak Republic – NEHAP V., which reflects the new priority areas of environmental-health policy within the context of the Health 2020 policy and the 2030 Agenda. The main objective is to strengthen efforts to address the main environmental determinants that have the greatest impact on individual and population health, namely air pollution, water pollution, inadequate drinking water supply, hazardous chemicals, noise, waste, contaminated sites and climate change. NEHAP V was approved by Resolution of the Government of the SR No. 3 of 9 January 2019 and should also provide some guidance to towns and municipalities on implementing such a plan in some form at the local level. One of its activities is the development of methodological material concerning indicators for monitoring the urban environment, also in relation to the health of inhabitants, for the general use of representatives of local governments. The Slovak Environment Agency, also in association with the PHA SR, has developed a methodological manual for data collection and analysis of the environmental health of the population at the level of the towns of the SR under the title GREEN TOWNS – HEALTHY TOWNS. In 2022, the Report on implementation of the tasks arising from NEHAP V was adopted by the Government of the SR, which evaluated the status of implementation for the reporting period.



In order to increase public awareness and information on climate change and its negative impacts, which most notably include extreme weather events, in 2022, the PHA SR, in connection with the implementation of the project “Integrated System of Public Health Authorities”, developed information material for the general public entitled “Environmental Emergencies”, published in electronic form on the new information portal of the PHA SR. The material summarises in a clear form recommendations and practical advice on how to behave during events such as floods, extreme heat or cold, calamitous mosquito outbreaks, etc.

Selected employees of the PHA SR are members of the Working Group on Adaptation to Climate Change; the PHA SR also participates, in the role of managing authority and sub-coordinator, in the implementation of tasks arising from the Action Plan for the implementation of the updated Strategy of Adaptation of the Slovak Republic to the Climate Change (hereinafter as “NAP”). Within the framework of the implementation of one of the defined tasks of the NAP, the PHA SR participated in the inter-ministerial association in 2022 together with the Slovak Hydrometeorological Institute (hereinafter as “SHMI”). Following this association, the climatological and meteorological information provided by the SHMI on its website has been expanded to include brief information on health risks and recommendations on hydrological and meteorological warnings. These are preventative recommendations with an emphasis on protecting public health from extreme weather events, which are among the most significant impacts of climate change on human health. The health risks for each alert define the most at-risk groups, the potential health risks and recommendations on how to prevent or eliminate the impact of the alert. The aim of the PHA SR in implementation of this task was to raise awareness of the negative impacts on human health.

The increasing rate of urbanisation across the territory, the increasing intensity of the most environmentally unfavourable individual car traffic, the development of a variety of technical items in building, these are all changing the perception and attitudes of people towards noise, which increasingly affects the quality of life and the level of health of the population exposed to it. In order to raise public awareness and informedness on the issue of environmental noise, the PHA SR, in association with the Faculty of Medicine of Comenius University in Bratislava, has developed information material for the professional and general public entitled “The impact of noise on health in residential areas”. This information material presents the issue of noise as a factor influencing public health in the environment in a comprehensible form to the public, especially with regard to urbanised areas most affected by noise and burdened by intensive traffic or other activities of society, which are a source of undesirable disturbing noise. The publication provides information on the harmful effects of noise on human health, the issue of its measurement, related legislative regulations governing permissible values of environmental noise, as well as recommendations related to prevention of the occurrence and harmful effects of this factor on human health. The above publication was distributed in print-form to the public through the PHA SR and the regional public health authorities of the SR.

In accordance with Directive 2002/49/EC (Environmental Noise Directive – END), noise mapping is carried out in all European Union countries in regular five-year cycles, with the first round of noise mapping taking place in 2006. Directive 2002/49/EC applies to noise in the outdoor environment to which people are exposed, in particular in built-up residential areas, public parks, quiet areas in agglomerations or open countryside, in proximity to schools, hospitals and other areas with special noise protection. Following the Directive, the Slovak Republic adopted Act No. 2/2005 Coll. on the assessment and control of noise in the outdoor environment and on amending Act No. 272/1994 Coll. of the National Council of the Slovak Republic on the protection of human health as amended, which designates the obligatory entities responsible for drawing up noise maps and noise protection action plans. These entities are subsequently obliged to submit the noise maps and action plans to the PHA SR, which secures the reporting of noise maps and action plans for noise protection to the European Commission.

The following noise sources are the subject of strategic noise mapping: major roads – selected sections of roads carrying more than 3,000,000 vehicles per year; major railways – selected sections of railways carrying more than 30,000 trains per year; major airports – selected airports in the country with more than 50,000 departures and arrivals per year, agglomerations with more than 100,000 inhabitants and, within them, all roads, railways, airports and industrial sources.

For the future, a high level of cooperation will be needed in the implementation of the new EU Regulation on nature restoration (Regulation (EU) 2024/1991 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2024 on nature restoration and amending Regulation (EU) 2022/869), as this Regulation will also have a major impact on addressing the urban agenda – Article 8: “Restoration of urban ecosystems” will be the basic link for the further development and protection/management of urban greenery, and its restoration will be an obligation on most towns and municipalities in Slovakia as well. This regulation and its implementation is, as yet, only at the beginning of the process; in this context it is referred to as an aspect of further cooperation and implementation between the MEnv SR and the MT SR, or the Association of Towns and Municipalities of Slovakia or the Union of Towns on its further steps in the future. Urban ecosystem restoration will also have to become a mandatory part of the national adaptation policy as also, gradually, of all local adaptation strategies.

## Climate change mitigation

### Adaptation to the impacts of climate change

In 2018, the Action Plan for Implementation of the Strategy of Adaptation of the SR to the Climate Change (hereinafter as “NAS”) was approved by Resolution of the Government of the SR No. 478 of 17 October 2018. The main objective of the NAS is to increase the resilience and improve the readiness of the SR to face the adverse effects of climate change and to establish an institutional framework and coordination mechanism to ensure the effective implementation of adaptation measures at all levels and in all areas. In 2021, the Action Plan for implementation of the Strategy of Adaptation of the SR to the Climate Change (NAP) was approved. The implementation of the NAP is about halfway through the document’s period of validity (2021-2027) and, to date, it is proving to be a relatively effective tool for ensuring progress in the field of adaptation. However, inter-ministerial coordination and cooperation between all stakeholders, including municipalities, is crucial for the achievement of the NAP’s other medium-term objectives. One of the objectives of the NAP is to improve the legislative, institutional and financial environment for municipalities in adapting to climate change. To achieve this objective, it is necessary to:

- create the legislative conditions to support adaptation;
- provide methodological and consultative assistance to local and regional authorities;
- provide funding for adaptation measures.

In order to meet the NAP objectives in the field of the built environment, 6 specific measures and 18 follow-up tasks are implemented.

Based on implementation of point B.3. of Resolution of the Government of the SR No. 478 of 17 October 2018, a new NAS will be submitted to the Government of the SR for debate by the end of 2025. At the request of the MEnv SR in 2023, the European Commission approved a project funded by the Technical Support Instrument (TSI) for the preparation of a new NAS. As part of a separate project, the SHMI has developed climate change scenarios for the entire territory of the SR with time horizons of 2030 and 2050, an analysis of the adverse effects of climate change and a vulnerability analysis of selected sectors. The synergistic effect of the compatibility of the results

from both projects is expected to contribute significantly to the development of a new NAS 2025 of high quality. Its main objective will be to define adaptation policies in a way that builds on existing efforts and reflects the latest scientific knowledge, climate scenarios and climate policy developments at international and European level.

The national adaptation policy is progressively reflected at lower levels of governance. In this process, a coordinating role is played by the Association of Towns and Municipalities of Slovakia, the Union of Towns of Slovakia and the municipal regions, whose representatives are members of the adaptation working group of the MEnv SR and convey relevant information from the national level to regional and local levels.

One of the tools for more effective coordination of local government activities in the field of adaptation is the so-called EU Research and Innovation Missions, which are part of the Horizon Europe Framework Programme (2021-2027). The Climate Change Adaptation Mission aims to support at least 150 European regions and communities to become climate-resilient by 2030. Currently, more than 300 signatories have joined the Mission's Charter, including 4 municipalities from the SR: the Banská Bystrica, Košice, Trnava and Žilina self-governing regions and the town of Lučenec. Among the Friends of the Mission is the Environment Centre, Banská Štiavnica. The Mission will help these regions and local authorities to better understand, prepare for and manage climate risks, as well as develop innovative solutions to build resilience. Previous projects with Slovak participation include CLIMAAX, LAND4CLIMATE, NATURE-DEMO.

Climate change impacts are mostly local and threaten specific areas affecting people's lives in towns and municipalities. Local governments can apply different tools to adapt to these changes, including planning and financing. The key is to include adaptation measures in strategic documents, ensuring a systematic approach and prioritisation. Some municipalities have already developed strategies and action plans, which are available on the SEA website.

Within the framework of the project Methodologies for assessing investment risks associated with the adverse effects of climate change, funded by the Operational Programme on Environmental Quality, the SEA has developed ten methodological guidelines. One of these is the Methodological Guideline for the development of a strategy/action plan for adaptation to the adverse effects of climate change with a particular focus on local and regional levels. Another Methodological Guideline to support the deployment of green infrastructure solutions: analysis of barriers, support for the implementation of good practice and recommendations for public policies, which focuses in particular on the built environment, helps to continue efforts to improve landscape diversity, improve the NATURA 2000 system and support green infrastructure solutions.

In 2024, the SEA, in association with the MEnv SR, launched the website platform klima-adapt.sk. The creation of the platform was based on the need to ensure public awareness of the expected negative consequences of climate change and the possibilities of adaptation measures to mitigate these consequences. The aim of this platform is to make information on climate change adaptation available to the general and professional public, focusing on the national, regional and local levels, with the potential to expand its content in the future.

The protection of cultural heritage is an effective tool in managing climate action. Identifying risks, increasing resilience, adapting to change, implementing sustainable measures and engaging communities are key elements in protecting cultural heritage. In 2021, the Slovak Republic, represented by the Landmark Authority of the SR, became a member of the expert working group "Strengthening Cultural Heritage Resilience for Climate Change"; its aim is to prepare a synthesis report in the field of strengthening cultural heritage resilience to the impacts of climate change. Examples of good practice and recommendations should then be included in future European and national policies in this area.

## Air quality

The SR does not currently meet all the established criteria for good air quality, although air quality has already improved in some areas. In particular, exceedances of limit concentrations for PM10, PM2.5 but also other pollutants (exceedances of the target value for ozone as well as for benzo(a)pyrene) are a problem. In February 2023, the Court of Justice of the European Union ruled against the Slovak Republic for violation of the provisions of Directive 2008/50/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on ambient air quality and cleaner air for Europe for systematic and persistent exceedances of air quality limit values and failure to take sufficient measures to improve air quality as soon as possible.

In this context, the SR is preparing zonal air quality improvement programmes aimed at achieving the required air quality objectives and helping to meet not only its obligations to the EU but, in particular, to its citizens, whose entitlement to a healthy environment is a fundamental right. Air quality improvement programmes will be “tailor-made” for specific air quality management areas. Their implementation should be enforced, even though measures are often the responsibility of other ministries or local authorities.

The National Emissions Reduction Programme is currently being updated to address measures to reduce air emissions to meet the emissions reduction commitments (national ceilings) set by Directive (EU) 2016/2284 for 2030. National emission ceilings are set for SO<sub>2</sub> (sulphur dioxide), NO<sub>x</sub> (nitrogen oxides), VOC (volatile organic compounds), NH<sub>3</sub> (ammonia) and PM<sub>2.5</sub>.

Improving air quality is one of the priority areas of the 2030 Environment Strategy. Domestic heating and urban transport need to be shifted towards more environmentally friendly alternatives. Prioritise low-emission public passenger transport and urban cycling and walking in residential areas. Introduce differentiated emission zones in towns with access for vehicles meeting emission classes.

## Climate change mitigation

In the field of energy performance of buildings, the long-term strategic priorities include the renovation of buildings in order to achieve a gradual reduction of energy consumption of buildings, also following application of the provisions of Act No. 555/2005 Coll. on the Energy Performance of Buildings and on Amendments and Additions to Certain Acts as amended.

Since 1992, the Slovak Republic has provided targeted support for renovation of the housing stock. According to the Long-Term Strategy for the Renewal of the Building Stock, approved by Resolution of the Government of the SR No. 36 of 20 January 2021, more than 67% of flats in apartment buildings and more than 44% of flats in family houses had been renewed by the end of 2019. The rate of renovation of residential buildings varies and is highly dependent on the availability of financial resources of owners and their motivation to renovate, as the SR has a high share of owner-occupied properties (more than 92%). A significant potential for energy savings and emission reductions is to be found within the category of family houses. The potential for emission reductions in the category of renovated dwellings connected to central heat distribution (CHD) systems lies in the change to efficient CHD systems with a high share of renewable energy.

The Slovak Republic has a long-standing and successful financial instrument, the State Housing Development Fund, the subsidy instruments contribution for the insulation of a family house and green households to increase the share of renewable energy sources in residential buildings. New renovation support instruments are financed by the Recovery and Resilience Plan of the SR (Renovate Your House and Renovate Your House Light) and the Programme Slovakia.

In 2022, a report on implementation of the overall national energy efficiency and renewable energy targets was submitted to the EC under Regulation 2018/1999 on Governance of the Energy Union. The report assessed the energy efficiency targets for 2020. In 2020, the SR met the National Indicative Energy Efficiency Target for 2020 in primary energy consumption of the SR at 107.9%, the National Indicative Energy Efficiency Target for 2020 in final energy consumption of the SR at 100.18%, the binding energy savings target under Article 5 for public buildings at 145.99%, and the energy savings target under Article 7 of the EE Directive at 111.63%.

In 2024, the Slovak Innovation and Energy Agency (SIEA) launched a call under the Programme Slovakia aimed at reducing energy intensity and the use of renewable energy resources in public buildings. In the same year, SIEA also launched a call for rapidly implementable energy measures for public buildings under the REPowerEU programme. The reduction of the energy performance of family houses has been supported by the State since 2022 through “the Renovate Your House” programme funded by the Recovery and Resilience Plan of the SR. Since 2024, the name of the original programme has been changed to “Renovate Your House Mini”, which aims to support the renovation of family houses as a priority for those households in energy poverty. The programme of the State Housing Development Fund, which has been successfully established in Slovakia since 1994, has contributed significantly to reducing the energy consumption of residential buildings.

The new Green Households project builds on the first three successful national Green Households projects, which were funded by the Operational Programme Environmental Quality between 2015 and 2023. Thanks to European and state support, almost 60,000 renewable energy devices have been installed in Slovak households to date. Households have used vouchers worth EUR 124.5 million to purchase the equipment. The total installed capacity of the supported installations exceeded 460 MW.

The new national Green Households project will support the installation of renewable energy equipment in households between 2023 and 2029. The aim of the project is to increase the share of the use of renewable energy sources (RES) in households and the related reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. Households could choose from more than 5,000 specific types of installations that met the required technical requirements. The new national project, administered by SIEA, is funded by the European Regional Development Fund through the Programme Slovakia (measure 2.2.3 aimed at promoting the use of renewable energy sources in households). The amount of EUR 151.6 million from European and national sources is allocated for vouchers for households.

Owners of family and apartment houses in all regions of Slovakia, including the Bratislava Self-Governing Region, will be able to reapply for support in the form of vouchers for the installation of heat pumps, photovoltaic panels, solar collectors, biomass boilers and wind turbines.

The “Renovate Your House” project is a long-term programme for the renovation of family houses, financed through the Recovery and Resilience Plan, with the aim of contributing to regeneration of the Slovak countryside and protecting it from the adverse effects of climate change. The aim of this programme is to renovate at least 30,000 family houses by June 2026. The investment is targeted at owners of older family houses and provides for the financing of traditional energy-saving measures (e.g. thermal insulation, replacement of windows, replacement of inefficient heat sources or installation of new RES equipment) and measures to support adaptation to climate change (e.g. vegetated roofs).

Four calls for family house reconstruction and one special call were launched within the framework of the project for the reconstruction of family houses after the hailstorms in the districts of Michalovce and Sobrance and the earthquake in the Prešov Region. As of 11 July 2024, 22,313 applications had been received while, by the same date, 19,318 applicants had been provisionally approved for funding.



In accordance with Resolution of the Government of the SR No. 231 of 17 April 2024, the MEnv in association with SEA prepared the Renovate Your House Mini scheme under the REPowerEU of the Recovery and Resilience Plan of the SR component, focusing on the Banská Bystrica and Košice Self-governing Regions due to high air pollution and long-term exceedances of limit values for PM10 particles on their territory. One of the measures that will contribute to a partial improvement of air quality as well as to reducing the energy intensity of family houses in problematic areas is this scheme aimed at supporting the partial renovation of family houses for households at risk of energy poverty. The pilot call will support the partial renovation of at least 3,060 family houses in eligible municipalities in the Banská Bystrica and Košice regions with REPowerEU funds. The non-repayable financial aid provided for partial renovation can be partially paid prior to the renovation, supporting measures such as insulation of parts of building structures, replacement of windows and doors, replacement of heat sources or installation of renewable energy sources, etc.

The subsidy programme of the MC SR “Let’s Renovate Our House”, which within six sub-programmes aims at supporting projects of systematic approach to the protection of national cultural monuments, projects of preparation and implementation of the restoration of a cultural monument, preparation and implementation of the restoration of a cultural monument, including a cultural monument in a World Heritage site, and projects of identification, documentation, presentation or use of the heritage fund in accordance with their monument values, also contributes to fulfilment of the objectives. The restoration of national cultural monuments, thanks to the programme’s subsidies, not only creates added values in individual settlements in the fields of tourism and economic development, but also contributes to the development of civil society.

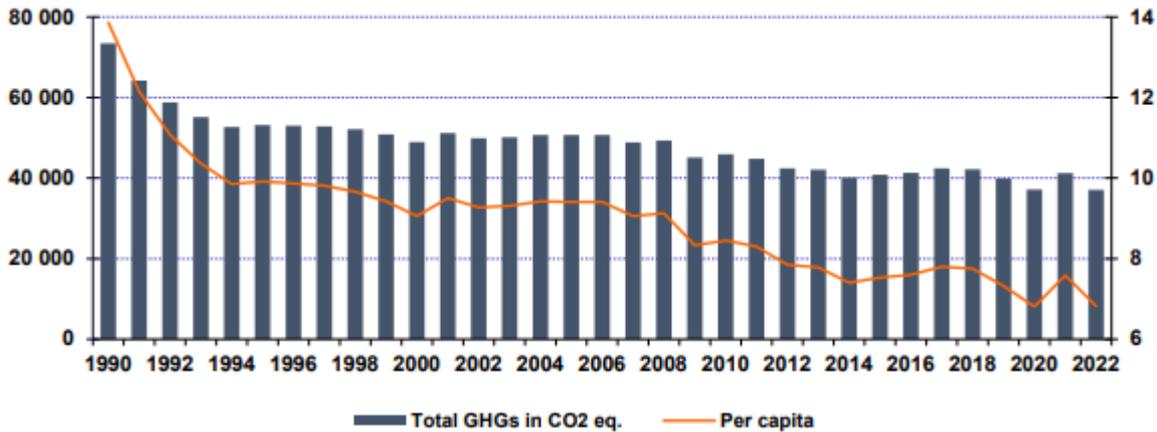
Activities in the field of conservation of the monument fund are also carried out by the Landmark Authority of the Slovak Republic (hereinafter as “LA SR”). In addition to exercising state administration with nationwide competence for protection of the monument fund, the LA SR actively seeks out properties with monument values, which it declares to be national cultural monuments. To protect and guide the development of the environment or surroundings of cultural monuments, conservation areas or conservation zones, the LA SR declares protection zones. The preservation of historic buildings is in accordance with the principles of sustainable development.

The “Pro Monumenta – Prevention by Maintenance” programme has introduced into the system of monument care in the SR the continuous survey of the structural and technical condition of the immovable heritage stock, thus helping in the revitalisation and preservation of cultural monuments. The “Pro Monumenta” programme was created thanks to the so-called “Norwegian Funds”. With the help of this project, various seminars have been organised for managers and owners of cultural monuments, electronic manuals have been prepared and distributed, and meetings with various experts have been organised. A greater ability to maintain cultural heritage sites in good condition contributes to sustainability, while enhancing the sense of belonging to the cultural and historical environment. In general, the project has been of major benefit to the SR and has great potential to become a permanent part of the cultural heritage maintenance system in Slovakia. In July 2024, Pro Monumenta was integrated into the organisational structure of the LA SR as an organisational unit – the Department of Preventative Maintenance of Monuments. The newly established department of the LA SR performs in-depth and detailed inspections of immovable cultural monuments; on the basis of these inspections it creates documents for the detailed recording of the condition of the cultural monument and prepares the Technical Report on the cultural monument and the Certificate on the condition of the cultural monument; on-site it eliminates the detected defects of the structural and technical condition of the monument of minor extent, instructs the owner or administrator of the national cultural monument on the possibilities of eliminating further detected deficiencies and defects as well as on the correct principles of continuous care of a monument; it submits proposals for measures and proposals for methodological guidelines aimed at improving the structural-technical condition of immovable national cultural monuments; it cooperates in the organisation of workshops and training sessions

aimed at the maintenance of immovable national cultural monuments and the preservation of traditional craftsmanship; it also promptly informs the relevant regional landmark authority of all results of fieldwork and its outputs.

In comparison with other indicators, e.g. macroeconomic indicators for the per capita emissions indicator, impressive results can be achieved even without any measures, with only a higher population growth rate being sufficient. However, this is not the case for the SR, as the graph below shows, where the indicator attained its lowest level in 2020. This is due to a combination of the above measures and the specific situation with COVID-19, the war in Ukraine and fuel-pricing policies in recent years.

Pic. 2: Indicator Total GHG emissions in Gg CO2eq. per capita 1990-2022 (in Gg CO2eq)



Aggregate GHG emissions excluding LULUCF and indirect emissions; emissions are determined as of 15 March 2024

Source: SHMI

## Biodiversity and ecosystem protection

The SEA regularly issues a publication “State of the Environment Report of the Slovak Republic”. Such a report was also prepared for 2022 and it includes information on nature and landscape protection. At present, there are a total of 1,166 so-called small-size protected areas and 23 so-called large-size protected areas of the national system in the territory of the Slovak Republic, while the total protected area classified by protection levels (2nd - 5th) amounts to 1,138,922 ha (without mutual overlaps), which constitutes 23.2% of the area of the Slovak Republic. In 2022, a supplement to the national list of sites of Community importance was approved, which includes 97 sites with a total area of 10,195 ha. Subsequently, an updated database of Natura 2000 sites was published. Hereby, the area of the Muránska Planina National Park dropped from the current 20,338 hectares to 18,516 hectares, whereas with the 5th protection level, the non-intervention forest management zone increased to 7,621.9 ha. In 2022, the Government of the SR also approved care programmes for five protected bird areas, bringing the number of protected bird areas with an approved care programme to 23 out of a total of 41 protected bird areas. During 2022, the Vydrlica Protection Site and the Muránska planina National Park were declared and the process of declaring the Devínska Kobyla Nature Reserve started.

In 2022, the Government of the SR approved the extension of the National List of Sites of Community Importance by 97 new sites with an area of 10,195 hectares. The addition of the list is a step towards meeting Slovakia’s obligations as an EU Member State under the Habitats Directive,

addressing the shortcomings raised by the EC and avoiding an action to the Court of Justice of the European Union. The majority of the added list of Sites of Community Importance (50.5%) currently overlaps with the existing protected areas. The other half of the area will see an increase in the level of protection compared to the current situation (from level 1 to level 2). The highest proportion of the added areas is permanent grassland (6,800 ha), with the occurrence of hay meadows, which are a valuable habitat of Community Importance. Forest land will comprise 1,524 ha, with priority given to maintaining current land use. A non-intervention forest management zone (5th protection level) is proposed for an area of 42 ha, whereas 8 ha will be subject to more delicate forest management practices (4th protection level). The water areas will be on an area of 1,226 hectares and mainly on river sections with good conditions for fish and lamprey species of Community importance. Currently, the Natura 2000 list consists of 642 sites with a total area of 615,261 hectares. The inclusion of the new sites in the National List of Sites of Community Importance is in line with the new Common Agricultural Policy and will support the development of the regions by building up agritourism and cycle tourism, as well as allowing the use of EU funds for the care of protected areas. The adequacy of the updated National List of Sites of Community Importance is still to be assessed by the European Commission.

In the assessment of the conservation status of species and habitats of Community importance in Slovakia, knowledge has improved, but their conservation status is more or less the same as in previous assessment periods. According to the Third Assessment Report to the EC (2013-2018), 75% of species and 60.4% of habitats of Community importance were in unfavourable (inadequate or bad) conservation status.

The threat status of lower plants in the SR is currently 11.7% and the threat status of higher plants is 14.6%, with 22.1% of higher plants in the SR being protected. Within animals, 24.2% of vertebrates and 6.5% of invertebrates are threatened, while over 3% of species in general are protected. In 2022, conservation programmes were implemented for seven animal species and care programmes for three animal species. With effect from 1 March 2022, an amendment to the regulation and convention on the protection of species of wild fauna and flora by regulating trade therein (CITES) came into force, which prohibits the acquisition of new live specimens of large wild cats (selected species), apes and bears for breeding that is not aimed at the conservation of the species in question.

The Government of the SR approved the report on the implementation of the Action Plan for Wetlands 2019-2021 and the draft of the new plan 2022-2024 resulting from the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, also taking into account other related strategic documents (approved by Resolution of the Government of the SR No. 380 of 8 June 2022). The Government of the SR has also approved an action plan to address the issue of penetration routes of unintentional introduction and unintentional spread of invasive non-native species to the territory of the SR and to the EU through the territory of the Slovak Republic, the aim of which is to establish a system to provide an up-to-date overview of the status of occurrence and abundance of invasive species in Slovakia, as well as to improve their control, monitoring and eradication of invasive species.

According to the State of the Environment Report of the SR 2022, the total area of the SR was 4,903,394 ha, of which the share of agricultural land was 48.4%, forest land 41.4% and non-agricultural and non-forest land 10.2%. Between 2005 and 2022, the area of agricultural land decreased by 2.5% (-60,638 ha) to the current 2,372,341 ha. There was an increase of 2.1% (+1,968 ha) in the area of water and 1.2% (+23,801 ha) in the area of forest land, with the largest percentage increase of 6.5% (+14,687 ha) in the built-up areas and courtyards compared to 2005. The area of agricultural land is steadily decreasing, mainly in favour of built-up areas and courtyards. The development of contamination of soils with hazardous substances after 1990 has been very gradual, without significant changes. Almost 99% of the agricultural land resources are hygienic. The remaining part of the contaminated soil is mainly linked to areas of industrial activity and to areas

of influence of the so-called geochemical anomalies - mountain and foothill areas. The concentrations of the monitored risk elements as well as organic contaminants at the monitored sites are higher than the established limits, which indicates that the contamination of soils from the past persists and therefore it will be necessary to continue to pay increased attention to their hygienic status. In 2022, 233,822.7 ha of agricultural land in the SR was threatened by current water erosion of varying intensity (erosion categories from moderate to extreme).

In the field of water use, there is a need to optimise abstractions, manage water efficiently, reuse rainwater and treated wastewater, and promote the use of water-saving technologies and practices, especially in the light of climate change and its impacts. The use of groundwater primarily for drinking purposes should continue to be promoted as a priority. The priority objective for sustainable water use is to reconcile the requirements for achieving good status of water bodies and the requirements for the economic use of water resources. Measures for the sustainable and efficient use of surface and groundwater resources without compromising their quantity and quality are defined in Objective 3.1 of the Water Policy Concept until 2030 with a view towards 2050.

As an EU Member State, the SR bases its waste management on EU legislation governing waste management. This is primarily transposed in the SR in Act No. 79/2015 Coll. on Waste and on amendment to other acts as amended.

The basic principles enshrined in waste management legislation that are applied in waste management are the “polluter pays” principle and the equally strict adherence to the waste management hierarchy, based on a binding order of priorities in waste management: 1. waste prevention, 2. preparation for re-use, 3. recycling, 4. other recovery, such as energy recovery and 5. disposal.

Reducing waste production, promoting recycling and sustainable management of natural resources are key aspects for protecting the environment, reducing negative impacts on ecosystems and promoting sustainable development. These areas are becoming increasingly important in European and global environmental policy, and it is therefore essential that the Slovak Republic actively contributes to addressing these issues at both national and international level.

Slovakia faces several challenges in waste management, including insufficient recycling rates, high municipal waste production and low levels of reuse of raw materials. The target for reuse and recycling of municipal waste was set at 50% in 2020. Slovakia has made significant progress in waste management in recent years, but has not met this target. According to data from the Statistical Office of the SR, the recycling rate of municipal waste in the SR will reach 49.5% in 2022. In addition, in 2023, the European Commission identified us in an Early Warning Report as being at risk of not meeting the target for reuse and recycling of municipal waste, which should be 55% by 2025.

Specific areas for improvement in the Slovak Republic include promoting the circular economy, reducing landfilling and increasing the reuse of materials.

By 2030, the SR commits to recycle or compost at least 50% of all organic waste, which should significantly reduce the amount of waste ending up in landfills.

The strategic documents Waste Management Programme 2021-2025 and Waste Prevention Programme 2019-2025 and the new Waste Management Strategy currently under preparation, which should include all the programme documents resulting from the Waste Directive, represent the main initiatives containing measures that need to be implemented more intensively at national level.

# Effective implementation

## Building a governance structure for cities: establishing a supporting framework

In the SR, since 1990, there has been a dual system of local public administration, consisting of local state administration bodies (including its regional level) and local government bodies at the level of municipalities, as well as at the level of regions - self-governing regions (higher territorial units).

Municipalities are independent self-governing and administrative units, legal entities with their own property and financial resources, obligations can only be imposed on them by law, they have their own elected bodies (mayor/city mayor, local council, or chairman and council of the self-governing region). There is no relationship of superiority and subordination between the two levels of local government (municipality, higher territorial unit - self-governing region).

The municipality independently decides and carries out all acts related to the administration of the municipality and its property, all matters which are regulated by a special law as its self-governing competence. The (original) self-governing competences of the municipality include, for example: deciding on and administering local taxes and local charges, directing economic activity in the municipality, ensuring the construction, maintenance and management of local roads, public spaces, municipal facilities, providing public utility services (in particular municipal waste and small construction waste management, maintaining cleanliness in the municipality, management and maintenance of public greenery and public lighting, water supply, sewage disposal, waste water treatment from cesspits and local public transport), procurement and approval of spatial planning documents and development concepts for individual areas of municipal life, creation and protection of healthy conditions and a healthy way of life and work for the municipality's inhabitants, protecting the environment, ensuring public order in the municipality, performance of tasks in the field of social assistance, health care and culture, and certification of deeds and signatures on deeds. In order to ensure the needs of the inhabitants of the municipality and the development of the municipality, the municipality may carry out its own business and investment activities. It may establish, set up, dissolve and control, in accordance with special regulations, its budgetary and contributory organisations, other legal persons and establishments.

In addition to their independent competence, municipalities also exercise delegated state administration. The exercise of state administration delegated to the municipality by law is managed and controlled by the government. State administration is performed by municipalities, for example, in the sections of building regulations, water management, air protection, flood protection, nature protection and landscaping, waste management, primary school education, road transport, land communications, and registry activities.

The transfer of certain tasks of state administration to the municipality is carried out by law if their performance in this way is more rational and efficient. So far, the transfer of tasks to municipalities took place in two stages: 1990-1991 and 2002-2004. These transfers led to the decentralisation and deconcentration of state administration. With the transfer of tasks to the municipality, the state is obliged to provide the municipality with the necessary financial and other material resources.

The project "Delivering Good Governance in Slovakia", which was proposed by the MI SR on the basis of the recommendations of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, as well as a number of analytical documents and reports focused on the evaluation of local government in Slovakia, was approved by the European Commission for implementation by the Centre of Expertise for Good Governance of the Council of Europe. The project was divided into two phases and implemented from 2019 to 2023.



In the first part, the project included recommendations on the development of a strategy for better setting and functioning of local government in the Slovak Republic, including an analysis of the territorial and administrative division, the division of competences, as well as an audit of the relevant legislation and the preparation of an expert evaluation report (peer review). The second phase of the project consisted of the preparation of recommendations for a better distribution of competences between local governments with rural character on the one hand and cities on the other hand, recommendations concerning the status of the capital city of Bratislava and the city of Košice, an analysis of the competences, powers, finances and coordinating role of the regional level of local government and a proposal for strengthening the financial independence of local and regional governments and strengthening their financial management capacity. The outputs of both phases of the project were several strategic documents:

- Strategy for strengthening local government in Slovakia;
- Peer review of territorial consolidation in Slovakia;
- Advisory opinion on improving the structure and competences of local government in Slovakia;
- Policy advice on the status of the capital of Bratislava and the city of Košice;
- Policy advice on the competences, scope, financing and coordination role of the regional level of self-government in Slovakia;
- Policy analysis and recommendations on strengthening the financial independence of local and regional governments.

The most significant output in the field of cities in Slovakia was policy advice on the empowerment of towns and municipalities in Slovakia. The material in question is the result of a peer review that took place in Bratislava from 15 to 17 June 2022. Foreign experts from the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Slovenia, Sweden, Ukraine, the United Kingdom and Poland participated in several meetings with Slovak experts and representatives of state administration, institutions and associations of local governments. The aim of the peer review was to develop recommendations in relation to strengthening the position of towns and municipalities in Slovakia and diversifying the functions of different types of local government units.

In the document, the experts discussed the structure of the administrative system of local government in Slovakia and shortcomings in the implementation and monitoring of public services. Subsequently, in the second part, they discussed possible reform intentions that would lead to an increase in the efficiency of the use of public resources and an improvement in the quality of services provided by local governments.

The MI continues to implement activities from the Recovery and Resilience Plan of the SR towards local governments. This includes the establishment of shared service centres, not only for the delegated performance of state administration, but also for the joint performance of the agenda of local governments, thus promoting inter-municipal cooperation. At the end of September 2024, the government directly decided to support 22 beneficiaries located in the least developed districts of the Slovak Republic. For the establishment of the aforementioned shared service centres, the selected municipalities should be provided with funds totalling more than EUR 11 million. The aim of the shared service centres is to strengthen the administrative capacity and efficiency of public administration.

Activities towards local governments are also carried out by the Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Civil Society Development, which was established in 2011 and organisationally falls under the MI SR. Specifically, it concerns activities related to the effective involvement of citizens in the development of public policies (participation). In the framework of Resolution of the Government of the SR No. 134 of 2 March 2011, the mandate of the Plenipotentiary is to “contribute to the stakeholders from the public sector, business, political and media spheres, as

well as the general public, to better understand the need for and importance of civil society, to feel part of it and to communicate with it more intensively. At the same time, the institution of the Commissioner is intended to encourage these actors to facilitate the development of mechanisms of civic participation through partnerships". One of the ways of fulfilling these tasks was the implementation of the national projects Support for Partnership and Dialogue in Participatory Public Policy Making I (2017-2020) and Support for Partnership and Dialogue in Participatory Public Policy Making II (2020-2023), which were supported by the European Social Fund through the Operational Programme Effective Public Administration, and the subsequent creation of the so-called Participatory Unit of the Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Civil Society Development.

The national project Support for Partnership and Dialogue in Participatory Public Policy Making I purposefully built preconditions, proposed actions, and implemented solutions aimed at promoting participatory public policymaking at the national, regional, and local levels. The practical part of the project consisted of a pilot scheme for participatory public policy making, in which different participatory scenarios and tools for public involvement were tested in pilot projects. On the basis of the call, the following municipalities and public policies were selected for pilot testing: Svidník - a town for all/Integration strategy; From Levoča to the Spis Castle/Policies of inter-municipal cooperation; Strategy of municipal waste management in the town of Partizánske; Proposal for ensuring accessibility for all in the city of Nitra; Transparency of municipal administration in the town of Hlohovec; Use of public spaces at local level and in the city of Bratislava; Sustainable mobility in the city of Banská Bystrica.

In the analytical part, the project presented and summarised the current state of participation in the cities and municipalities studied, examined the real benefits and barriers, as well as presented recommendations for facilitating public participation. All findings from the implementation of the participatory processes research are publicly available in publications. A separate block of activities was the development and testing of a training programme on "Participatory Policy Making in Public Administration", aimed at strengthening the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for introducing participation into public administration practice, as well as capacity building activities for promoting participation, which was subsequently implemented in the continuation of the national project.

The national project Support for Partnership and Dialogue in Participatory Public Policy Making II introduced a new concept of managed participation (top-down), which was the result of the analytical activities of the previous national project, where, in contrast to the concept of civic participation (bottom-up), the public administration becomes the active initiator of public involvement in the design and implementation of public policies, thus further accentuating the main benefits of participation, which are better quality public policies for the public and building trust between citizens and the public administration. The main activities of the project in relation to local government are the following:

- Educational workshops to promote managed participation in cities and municipalities called Learning Cities and Municipalities

A two-year cycle of educational online webinars for local government called Citizens Matter, which brought up-to-date information on participation, as well as examples of good practice from cities and municipalities in Slovakia (e.g. Senec, Nitra, Dubnica nad Váhom, Košeca, Galanta, Prešov, Banská Bystrica, Košice, and many others).

A total of 33 webinars were held on 17 topics (e.g. participation and waste management, participation and sustainable mobility, participation of public spaces, participation and energy measures in local government, participation and open government, participation and modern officialdom, participation and youth, participation and participatory budgeting). All webinars have

been developed and together with the Participation II book edition of the Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Civil Society Development, they form a publicly accessible knowledge base on participation for local government.

Within the national project, expert workshops on participation tailored to cities and municipalities have been carried out, which use concrete examples of public policies to show the benefits of participation for better and more efficient performance of local government. We visited the cities of Banská Bystrica, Nitra, Veľký Šariš, Trenčín, Bratislava and more than 20 other cities and municipalities in Slovakia via online.

- Participation coordinators at SGRs

The position of participation coordinators was created within the national project Support for Partnership and Dialogue in Participatory Public Policy Making II, implemented by the Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Civil Society Development, in the offices of five self-governing regions: the Banská Bystrica Self-Governing Region, the Košice Self-Governing Region, the Nitra Self-Governing Region, the Prešov Self-Governing Region and the Žilina Self-Governing Region.

The role of the coordinators is to introduce participation into the routine operation of their offices and to provide expert and methodological support in planning and implementing participatory processes. Participation coordinators continue to work in the offices of SGR after the end of the national project.

Currently, as part of the sustainability of the national project, a so-called participatory unit operates at the Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Civil Society Development, whose task is to develop and promote the concept of managed participation at both national and local government level.

The participatory unit helps to set up and implement participatory processes in collaboration with various central state administration bodies as appropriate. Its collaborations in 2024 included, for example, cooperation with the Crime Prevention Department of the MI SR; cooperation with the MEnv SR (Biodiversity and Landscape Protection Department); cooperation with the Data Office of the MIRD SK; and cooperation with the MC SR.

In addition to the national level, in 2024, the participatory unit provided up-to-date information on participation and experiential workshops or consultations for the cities of Poprad, Stará Turá, Bratislava-Staré Mesto, Bratislava-Ružinov, Nitra, Partizánske, Senica. Workshops are currently being prepared in other cities. The aim of the workshops is to provide a summary of knowledge and skills on participation tailored to the specific municipality and to help kick-start participatory processes in individual city and municipal authorities.

A separate activity of both national projects and the participatory unit is participatory budgets, which are one of the most popular and most frequently used tools for public involvement in public policy-making. Within the framework of the first national project, the Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Civil Society Development has already implemented a pilot participatory budget in Hlohovec, prepared a methodology for Participatory mechanisms - What? Where? When? How?, a publication on practical examples of x+1 questions and answers on participatory budgeting, a series of newsletters on participatory budgets in different cities.

In an effort to promote this tool of participation, a unique city board game titled “Nie je mesto ako mesto”, was created with the aim of preparing future active citizens - pupils and students of primary, secondary and university schools. The use of a gamification element in opening up the topic of civic participation proved to be a suitable way and thanks to the board game, participatory budgeting was launched in secondary schools in Trnava Self-Governing Region, Trenčín Self-Governing Region and Banská Bystrica Self-Governing Region. The initiative has also crossed the borders of Slovakia and the board game has attracted the attention of Hungarian colleagues so

much that they have published it in Hungarian and are using it as an introductory activity in participatory budgeting.

## Planning and management of urban spatial development

Spatial planning is a key tool for creating long-term, sustainable frameworks for social, territorial and economic development. In 2022, a new law on spatial planning, Act No. 200/2022 Coll. on Spatial Planning as amended (the “Spatial Planning Act”), was approved by the National Council of the Slovak Republic and came into force on 1 April 2024. The stand-alone Spatial Planning Act is the result of a long-standing reform effort in the field of spatial planning. Spatial planning is one of the original competences of local and regional government. Along with the new act on spatial planning, five implementing decrees have been drafted:

- Decree of the ASPaC SR No. 392/2023 Coll. on the content and method of processing of spatial planning documentation and on spatial planning documents and general requirements for spatial arrangement of the territory and functional use of the territory;
- Decree of the ASPaC SR No. 49/2024 Coll., which establishes the content and form of the application for registration in the register of professionally qualified persons and the method of verification of professional competence;
- Decree of the ASPaC SR No. 54/2024 Coll., which establishes models of forms used by the information system for spatial planning and construction - e.g. model form for suggestion, comment and opinion on the process of procurement of spatial planning documentation;
- Decree of the ASPaC SR No. 69/2024 Coll. on the spatial technical requirements for construction;
- Decree of the ASPaC SR No. 153/2024 Coll. on standards and methodology for processing spatial planning documentation and spatial planning documents.

The Authority is currently procuring the Concept of Territorial Development of Slovakia (hereinafter referred to as “CTDS”), which is a spatial planning documentation of the entire territory of the SR, which determines the main directions of comprehensive development of the SR. An evaluation of the inter-ministerial comment procedure on the CTDS assignment stage is currently under way. After approval by the Government of the SR, the CTDS assignment will be published on the Authority’s website and on the website for spatial planning.

The Authority is currently preparing the assignment for the landscape planning study, which will be the spatial planning basis in terms of protection, restoration and creation of the landscape at the national level prior to the procurement of CTDS. The specific obligation to procure a landscape planning study resulted from the approved amended Act No. 24/2006 Coll. on Environmental Impact Assessment and on amendment to other acts as amended. The amendment relates to the implementation of the obligations arising from the recovery plan in connection with the landscape planning reform.

The Authority prepares the architectural policy of Slovakia as a non-legislative strategic document with national scope. The architectural policy will set out a vision and basic objectives in the medium to long term that will lead to an increase in the quality of the built-up area. The architectural policy is also foreseen in the Cultural and Creative Industries Strategy of the Slovak Republic 2030 approved by the government in 2023. Among other things, the Cultural Strategy foresees that the Authority for Spatial Planning and Construction of the SR will prepare the architectural policy of



Slovakia by 2025 in cooperation with the Slovak Chamber of Architects and will submit it for approval.

The Economic and Social Development Programme is a strategic document that serves to support and develop territorial units such as cities, municipalities, regions or counties in order to promote long-term and sustainable development in the fields of economy, social life, infrastructure and environment. The Economic and Social Development Programme is developed in cooperation with stakeholders (public institutions, businesses, citizens) and serves as a basis for the use of public funding, such as EU funds. Act No. 539/2008 Coll. on Regional Development Support as amended, allows for the joint processing of the Economic and Social Development Programme for several municipalities.

Currently, the policy of regional development support in the SR is implemented mainly through Act No. 539/2008 Coll. on Regional Development Support as amended, and Act No. 336/2015 Coll. on Support for the Least Developed Districts and on amendment to other acts as amended, which will be replaced by the act on support for priority districts. The draft law envisages a change in the assessment of the state of the region at the district level, based on the expansion of the areas relevant for the assessment of regional disparities. Combining and analysing indicators in several areas will make it possible to capture the strengths and weaknesses of individual regions, and then to assess the overall position of the region in relation to other regions on the basis of one composite indicator - the regional development indicator. The effectiveness of the law on support for priority districts is expected to take effect on 1 May 2025.

The NUA principles will be integrated in the document Vision and National Development Strategy of Slovakia until 2030, which will also serve as the National Regional Development Strategy under Act No. 539/2008 Coll. on Regional Development Support as amended. These principles have been taken into account in the methodology for the creation and implementation of programmes for the economic and social development of regions, municipal development programmes and groups of municipalities with the application of the principles of sustainable smart development, version 1.0.4 of which was published on the MIRDI SR website in February 2022.

Activities that support the implementation of the NUA are financially supported through calls for proposals in the field of regional development support and through calls for proposals for regional subsidies, which are announced for individual activities, measures and tasks defined in the individual development plans of the least developed districts. The subsidies have long been aimed at creating and expanding territorial cooperation partnerships. At least EUR 1.1 million is allocated annually for calls for proposals for subsidies in the area of regional development support and an average of EUR 18 million is allocated annually for calls for proposals for regional grants.

Within the context, it should be emphasised that the integrated territorial mechanism was designed on a bottom-up basis. Almost 1/5 of the resources from Programme Slovakia are allocated to support strategic projects implemented through the Integrated Territorial Investments (hereinafter referred to as "ITI"), while the selection of projects is in the direct decision-making power of individual regions. The integrated approach must be part of the Integrated Territorial Strategy (hereinafter referred to as "ITS"), which must, in addition, include a link to the geographical area, the needs of the territory and the potential for territorial development in the areas of economic, social and environmental development and, last but not least, a description of the participatory process of territorial actors in the preparation and implementation of the strategy. Integrated territorial strategies may also include a list of operations to be supported. Integrated territorial strategies shall be prepared in accordance with the Economic and Social Development Programme of the territory concerned.

Where the territorial strategy referred to in Article 29 of the Regulation involves investments which receive support from one or more funds, one or more programmes or more than one priority of the

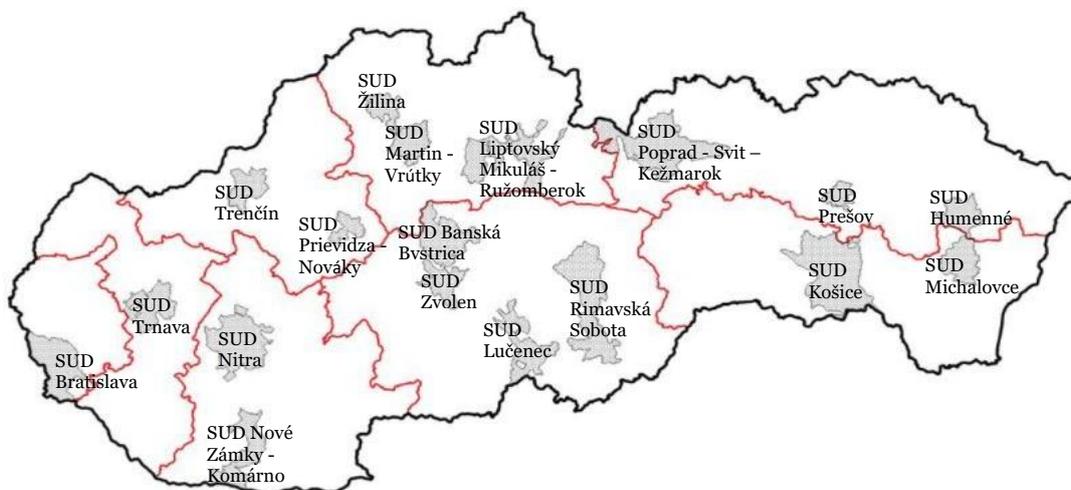
same programme, the actions may be implemented as an integrated territorial investment. In the Slovak Republic, under Article 7 of the act on grants from European Union funds, partnership and cooperation councils of sustainable urban development are established for the purposes of integrated territorial development, whose competences include, inter alia, the approval of project plans for integrated territorial investments. This ensures a broad participatory process of all actors in the territory and secures the approval of territorial priorities.

The ITI Project Intent (hereinafter referred to as “ITI PI”) is a summary of all information on ITI project activities. The ITI PI form represents the minimum information required. The elaboration of the ITI PI form is an essential step for the approval of the ITI PI. The ITI PI shall be approved by the relevant partnership council/cooperation council of SUD (hereinafter referred to as “PC/CC of SUD”), whereas the ITI PI shall be consistent with the ITS and shall contribute to the achievement of the objective or objectives of the ITS. The ITI PI approved by the relevant PC/CC of SUD shall be processed into a grant application on the basis of a call for proposals announced by the relevant provider.

For the implementation of the ITS, 37 measures/specific objectives are earmarked under Programme Slovakia in five cohesion policy objectives, while the ITIs are supported by the European Regional Development Fund and the Cohesion Fund. The integration of ITI projects is assessed at the level of the ITS. Projects must show an internal intervention logic, build on each other or complement each other, be consistent with the ITS and contribute to the achievement of the ITS objectives.

The area of sustainable urban development (hereinafter referred to as “SUD”) is understood as an area of intensive interactions between the core city and the municipalities of its hinterland, in which the possibility and effectiveness of using the development potential, solving problems and challenges is conditioned by inter-communal cooperation and implementation of a common strategy. The aim of sustainable urban development is to address the common challenges and problems of core cities and their hinterland, including the use of the development potential of the territory. The core cities in the SUD territory are identified on the basis of the CTDS defining the centres of population of the 1st and 2nd category. The SUD territories, as urban functional regions, had to meet the criterion of a minimum population of 40,000 inhabitants in a contiguous area. The list of municipalities that are part of the SUD is attached as Annex 3 to the Methodological Guideline of the Managing Authority for Programme Slovakia No. 8<sup>1</sup>.

Pic. 3: SUD territories



Source: MIRDÍ SR, JMR version 2.0

<sup>1</sup> [Methodological documents for Programme Slovakia \(P SK\) | EU funds](#)

The implementation mechanism of the ITI is based on the principle of partnership, with multilevel governance applied in particular in the preparation, approval, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the ITI, which is carried out in partnership between representatives of local governments and local partners. In view of the specific allocation of EU funds to support the sustainable development of functional urban areas, cooperation councils of SUD have been established for each SUD area. The cooperation councils of SUD are the territorial body within the meaning of Article 29 of the CPR for the sustainable urban development areas and are the key institutional mechanism for the development of the SUD area through the SUD ITS and their implementation under Programme Slovakia. The cooperation council of SUD approves the project plan from the ITS project pipeline.

Decisions in the cooperation council of SUD are taken on the basis of a territorial agreement of the representatives of the municipalities concerned or other socio-economic partners represented by elected members, while each municipality in the SUD territory must be represented in the CC of SUD by its own member.

Voting in the CC of SUD shall be based on the principle of weighted votes, whereby the weight of each vote corresponds to the proportion of the population represented by that vote to the total population represented by all the members of the CC of SUD. Where the CC of SUD has members from among socio-economic partners other than representatives of the municipalities concerned in the SUD territory, voting in the CC of SUD shall be carried out on the basis of equal voting rights by a majority vote of a simple majority of the members.

Tab. 5: SUD ITI allocations

Territory	Allocation amount	
	European Regional Development Fund	Cohesion Fund
SUD Banská Bystrica	60,324,592.00 €	
SUD Bratislava	27,573,662.00 €	228,891,000.00 €
SUD Humenné	18,345,844.00 €	
SUD Košice	133,801,458.00 €	
SUD Liptovský Mikuláš-Ružomberok	31,288,596.00 €	
SUD Lučenec	17,999,927.00 €	
SUD Martin-Vrútky	33,010,243.00 €	
SUD Michalovce	21,254,789.00 €	
SUD Nitra	50,189,949.00 €	
SUD Nové Zámky-Komárno	33,958,542.00 €	
SUD Poprad-Svit-Kežmarok	41,233,383.00 €	
SUD Prešov	52,992,172.00 €	
SUD Prievidza-Nováky	25,969,350.00 €	
SUD Rimavská Sobota	15,326,856.00 €	
SUD Trenčín	71,372,366.00 €	
SUD Trnava	40,860,602.00 €	
SUD Zvolen	24,650,703.00 €	
SUD Žilina	59,705,167.00 €	
Total	759,858,201.00 €	228,891,000.00 €

Source: Programme Slovakia, SUD ITI allocations version 4.2

# Mobilisation of financial resources

One of the most significant changes that the local government in Slovakia underwent, especially between 2002 and 2005, is the decentralisation of a number of public services (competences) associated with a significant strengthening of own revenues and the resulting change in the method of financing of local governments from financing by subsidies from the state budget to financing from their own, mainly tax, revenues (fiscal decentralisation). The basic pillars of fiscal decentralisation are transparency, equity, stability, autonomy and accountability.

Local government is represented by municipalities and higher territorial units (self-governing regions), which are legal entities and which, under the conditions laid down by law, independently manage their own property and their own financial resources. At present, they carry out their activities within the framework of two types of competences, namely original (i.e. their own) and delegated state administration. The financing of the competences delegated to the state administration is ensured by subsidies from the state budget.

Financing of original competences is carried out by the local government from its own, mainly tax, revenues. The law determines which taxes and fees are the revenue of the municipality and which taxes and fees are the revenue of the self-governing unit. The largest source of own revenue is the share in the personal income tax (PIT) yield according to Act No. 564/2004 Coll. on Budget Determination of Income Tax Yields to Local Government and on amendment to other acts as amended. Currently, for 2024, the share of municipalities is 70% and that of SGRs is 30% of the income tax yield.

The criteria and formula for the distribution of the share of the proceeds of this tax to individual municipalities and SGRs are contained in Decree of the Government No. 668/2004 Coll. on Distribution of Income Tax Yields to Local Government as amended.

The basic regulatory framework for the management of municipalities and self-governing regions is regulated by Act No. 583/2004 Coll. on Budget Rules of Local Government and on amendment to other acts as amended.

The Act regulates the internal division of the budget of a municipality and the budget of a self-governing region into the current budget, the capital budget and financial operations. It provides for the obligation for local government entities to draw up the current budget as a balanced or surplus budget, while allowing the possibility of drawing up the capital budget as a deficit budget under the conditions that the deficit of this budget is covered by the balance of funds from previous years or by repayable financing sources received.

It further defines the conditions for receiving repayable assistance, which may only be used to cover capital expenditure. Municipalities and SGRs may receive repayable assistance only if the total amount of the municipality's debt does not exceed 60% of the actual current revenue of the preceding financial year and, at the same time, the amount of their annual repayments, including proceeds, does not exceed 25% of the actual current revenue of the preceding financial year less transfers from other entities.

If the established limits for the ratio of the amount of total overdue liabilities to the actual current revenue of the preceding financial year are exceeded, the municipality or SGR shall be obliged to introduce a monitoring regime or, where appropriate, a rehabilitation regime in order to restore its economic situation. If this does not occur, the MF SR shall be authorised to introduce receivership and appoint a receiver.

Pursuant to Article 6(1) of Constitutional Act No. 493/2011 Coll. on Fiscal Responsibility (hereinafter referred to as the "CA on FR"), the state does not financially ensure the solvency and is not responsible for the solvency of the entities of the local government.

Pursuant to the provision of Article 6(3) of the CA on FR, if the total amount of the debt of a municipality or SGR reaches 60% of the actual current revenues of the previous financial year and more, the municipality or SGR is obliged to pay a fine imposed by the MF SR in the amount of 5% of the difference between the total amount of the debt and 60% of the actual current revenues of the previous financial year. The above shall not apply during the 24 months following the first meeting of the municipal council or of the council of the SGR if a new mayor, a new city mayor or a new president of the SGR has been elected in the elections.

The relations of the state budget to the municipalities and SGRs represent grants and transfers provided to municipalities and SGRs from the state budget through individual budget chapters as state subsidies. Pursuant to Act No. 523/2004 Coll. on Budget Rules of the Public Service and on amendment to other acts as amended, the chapter administrator may provide subsidies only on the basis of a special act to the extent, in the manner and under the conditions laid down therein. The provider of the subsidy may specify the conditions laid down in more detail or may lay down additional conditions to ensure maximum economy and efficiency in the use of the subsidy. When granting the subsidy, the provider of the subsidy must clearly define in writing the purpose for which the subsidy is granted. At the same time, the expenditure of individual budget chapters for the reimbursement of the costs of the delegated exercise of state administration to municipalities and the expenditure of the chapter for the reimbursement of the costs of the delegated exercise of state administration to SGRs shall be budgeted in the state budget act for the respective budget year as binding indicators of the state budget.

In their 2023 actual accounts, municipalities reported total ESA 2010 revenues of EUR 7,329.3 million and total ESA 2010 expenditures of EUR 7,317.6 million. In terms of revenue, in 2023 they had own revenue of EUR 4,237.3 million and grants and transfers received of EUR 3,092 million (of which the funds received for the delegated exercise of state administration amounted to EUR 1,327.5 million), with grants and transfers accounting for 42.19% of total municipal revenue and 42.25% of total municipal expenditure. Municipalities spent own resources amounting to EUR 4,225.6 million on expenditure in 2023.

In their 2023 actual economic outturn, the SGRs reported total ESA 2010 revenue of EUR 2,369.3 million and total ESA 2010 expenditure of EUR 2,524.2 million. In terms of revenue, in 2023 they had own revenue of EUR 1,287.4 million and grants and transfers received of EUR 1,081.9 million (of which the funds received for the delegated exercise of state administration amounted to EUR 544.0 million), accounting for 45.66% of total revenue and 42.86% of total expenditure. In 2023, SGRs spent expenditure from own resources amounting to EUR 1,442.3 million.

Local taxes and fee for municipal waste and small construction waste (hereinafter referred to as "fee") are regulated in Act No. 582/2004 Coll. on Local Taxes and Local Fees for Municipal Waste and Minor Construction Waste as amended. Local taxes are imposed by municipalities by means of a generally binding regulation, which regulates tax rates, tax reductions and tax exemptions. In the same way, the municipalities also impose a levy by means of a generally binding regulation, which also regulates the rates of the levy and the grounds for its reduction or remission. The generally binding regulations are usually published on the websites of the municipalities concerned.

Local taxes are:

- Property tax;
- Dog tax;
- Tax on the use of public spaces;
- Accommodation tax;
- Tax on vending machines;
- Tax on non-gaming machines;
- Tax on the entry and stay of a motor vehicle in the historic part of the town;

- Tax on nuclear installations.

Municipalities also impose a local charge for municipal waste and small construction waste.

Act No. 335/2022 Coll., which amended Act No. 582/2004 Coll. on Local Taxes and Local Fees for Municipal Waste and Minor Construction Waste as amended, introduced legislative rules for the levying of advance payments and subsequent settlement of costs for weighted quantitative collection of municipal waste, which municipalities may optionally introduce from the 2023 tax period. Weighted separate collection of municipal waste (and separately weighted separate collection of small construction waste) is the most efficient way of collecting and charging for municipal waste. This mechanism increases fairness in charging through a merit-based mechanism (“PAY-AS-YOU-THROW”) and directly incentivises the producer of municipal waste to reduce the generation of municipal waste, which also has a directly proportional impact on the final fee. This is similar to the system of advance payments and subsequent billing for water, gas or electricity services. Moreover, only this way is the fee set at the actual cost of the municipal waste collection and disposal services incurred to the municipality according to the actual quantity generated by taxpayers, eliminating the political influence of the municipal council in setting the rates of the fee. Municipalities are gradually setting up the conditions for the introduction of weighted quantitative collection, thus putting it into practice.

## Capacity development and better knowledge sharing

According to the “Analysis of inter-municipal cooperation of a selected range of cities and their immediate surroundings (urban functional area) and the resulting positive externalities for the entities and inhabitants in the area”, which was prepared in 2019 for the needs of the implementation of the Urban Development Concept 2030, the basic legislative prerequisites for inter-municipal cooperation in the Slovak Republic include:

- Constitution of the Slovak Republic, Title 4, Article 66 - “A municipality has the right to associate with other municipalities to ensure matters of common interest; a self-governing region has the same right to associate with other self-governing regions”;
- Act No. 369/1990 Coll. on Municipal Establishment - Article 20 defines the basic forms and principles of municipal cooperation. Municipal cooperation is governed by the principles of legality, mutual benefit and compliance with the needs of the inhabitants of the municipalities. Municipalities have equal status in their cooperation; Article 21 refers to the international level of inter-municipal cooperation - “A municipality may, within the scope of its competence, cooperate with local and administrative units or with authorities of other states performing local functions. It shall have the right to become a member of an international association of territorial units or local authorities”;
- Act No. 539/2008 Coll. on Regional Development Support as amended - according to Article 13, the municipality is also one of the entities of territorial cooperation. One of the activities carried out by the entities of territorial cooperation is “the creation of partnerships and cooperation with socio-economic partners in the field of regional development”;
- The European Charter of Local Self-Government – Article 10 enshrines the right of local authorities to associate, which means that municipalities have the right to cooperate with other local communities in the exercise of their powers. Specifically, the article states that “local authorities are entitled, in the exercise of their powers, to cooperate and, within the



limits of the law, to associate with other local authorities for the purpose of carrying out tasks of common interest. The right of local authorities in each state to become members of an association which protects and develops their common interests and the right to become members of an international association of local authorities shall be recognised. Local authorities shall have the right, under such conditions as may be defined by law, to cooperate with local authorities in other countries”;

- the international commitments of the SR, to which the country is committed, such as agreements on cross-border cooperation with neighbouring countries;
- The European Framework Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities. This promotes the conclusion of agreements on transfrontier and inter-territorial cooperation within the competence of local and regional authorities, on the basis of development, stability and mutual trust between countries;
- Act No. 90/2008 Coll. on the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation and on the amendment of Act No. 540/2001 Coll. on State Statistics as amended - regulates the establishment, formation, status, management, dissolution and termination of the European grouping of territorial cooperation established in the Slovak Republic and the supervision of its activities. According to Article 3, a municipality is the Slovak entity that can be a member of the grouping as well.

Neither municipality can “compete” with the other, but together they can successfully cooperate. The European Charter of Local Self-Government must be respected, alongside the standard legislative framework for inter-municipal cooperation. If to the provision of public utility activities in the local government environment we add the possibilities of economic cooperation in, for example, the management and maintenance of local roads, property management, reconstruction and construction activities, the production of electricity from, for example, environmentally friendly alternative energy sources, or the production of goods and services that other municipalities would buy directly from municipal enterprises, local economic policy would take on a micro-regional dimension and directly support an increase in self-financing, job creation and positive social impacts on community life. Micro-regional cooperation represents an opportunity for small municipalities, which should lead to increased efficiency of public services, as well as the possibility of promoting local employment and preparing the territory for new trends such as shared self-government or smart communities.

Cooperation allows synergies to be achieved, which can be reflected, for example, in economies of scale or in solving a common problem. Currently, the most common cooperation between cities and municipalities is the creation of joint municipal offices, especially for the execution of building procedures, or in the field of special building office for local and special purpose roads, state water administration, education and social affairs. In essence, the creation of joint municipal offices involves mutual cooperation in the form of partnerships for the purpose of ensuring competences in the field of the delegated exercise of state administration.

Municipal cooperation is governed by the principles of legality, mutual benefit and consistency with the needs of municipal residents. The municipalities shall have equal status in their cooperation. Entry into cooperation must not only be legally anchored, but also equally beneficial for the contracting parties, while being in line with the needs of the municipalities’ inhabitants. Cooperation without a setting a certain number of municipalities is not an obstacle. Rather, it is an advantage, since cooperation between more than two municipalities (on a voluntary contractual basis) is a sign of satisfaction for all the municipalities concerned, which have decided to cooperate, as it is more advantageous for them than the current autonomy. Thus, the legal framework regulating the cooperation of municipalities enables competition between producers of public services, the ability of public institutions to respond flexibly to public needs, and the management

style of public organisations respecting new trends in decision-making and management of public institutions (not excluding local government). Thus, public services represent a standardised but also highly specialised output of different public policies, individualised from the municipality's point of view, in practice. In this case, inter-municipal cooperation itself presupposes the trust of the municipalities involved, the sharing of purchased technology, the impact on investment and financial planning, but also the social aspects of municipal business as well as common accepted policies.

## Technology and innovation

### Smart Cities

The Action Plan of Smart Cities and Regions 2023-2026, (hereinafter referred to as “Smart Agenda AP”), which is managed by the MIRD SR and which in principle represents the first material in this area, which has the features of a strategic document, was approved on 12 June 2023 at the meeting of the Government of the SR by Resolution No. 310 of 12 June 2023. The MIRD SR, as the national coordinator of the Smart Cities and Regions Agenda in the Slovak Republic (Smart Agenda), has proposed specific measures within the framework of the Smart Agenda AP to ensure the consistency and compatibility of the policy at the national level with the development needs, interests and requirements of local governments. That is to say, the Smart Cities and Regions Agenda generally encompasses investment, regional development as well as elements of informatisation. This combination, also in view of the existing substantive remit of the MIRD SR contained in Act No. 575/2001 Coll. on the Organisation of Government Activities and the Organisation of Central State Administration as amended, creates the prerequisite for effective coordination of activities and measures under this agenda at national level. The adoption of the Smart Agenda AP should also ensure that the support allocated in Programme Slovakia for this purpose will be used for targeted measures with the aim of contributing systematically to the advancement of local governments.

The Smart Agenda AP contains a number of measures that are fully budgeted under the relevant budget chapters.

In the field of support for the concept of data-driven state, a call entitled “Support for the development of creation, processing, use and linking of data within public administration for intelligent decision-making, planning and management” (PSK-MIRRI-619-2024-ITI-EFRR) was announced on 27 May 2024. The total funds earmarked for the implementation of the activities are EUR 20,051,715.00. Eligible applicants under this call for proposals are municipalities and SGRs, including organisations set up and established by them, as well as interest associations of legal entities which will implement activities in the municipal environment. The call focuses on IoT, data and platforms, specifically to support the development of the creation, processing, use and interconnection of data within public administrations, in particular the development of data platforms, information systems (in relation to smart governance and support for city and region building) and related value-added tools for intelligent decision-making, planning and management).

In the field of education, following the implementation of the measures resulting from the Smart Agenda AP, the MIRD SR in cooperation with other partners is preparing tools aimed at creating a training programme for current and future employees of state and local governments, which is aimed at complementing professional skills and knowledge in the field of building smart cities and regions.

In the area of strengthening professional staff capacities in the territory, the MIRD SR is working on the preparation of a coordinated and coherent approach to support the deployment of digital services, including the concept of digital twins. The result is a national project whose primary objective is to bring support directly to the territory and in the short term (36 months) to fill the above-mentioned missing capacities that will be responsible for the preparation of smart projects and preparing the territory for the implementation of the digital twin. The project also supports a central team at national level of 10 specialists who are directly involved in the implementation and support of the digitalisation of local governments in Slovakia.

Finally, in the area of event implementation, the MIRD SR was given the opportunity to organise a prestigious international event in Slovakia called “Regional Consultation Meeting” as one of five global events within the UN-Habitat series of regional expert events aimed at preparing the International Guidelines on Smart Cities. UN-Habitat is spearheading the development of the International Guidelines on People-Centred Smart Cities 2025, following a request from UN member states. As part of this activity, the above-mentioned series of five regional consultative meetings of international experts from several countries will be held over the coming months. The opportunity to organise one of these in Bratislava is the result of negotiations between the MIRD SR and UN-Habitat. The date of the event is scheduled for the end of January 2025. The opportunity to organise an event of this kind in Slovakia represents a unique opportunity not only to participate in the development of the International Guidelines on People-Centred Smart Cities, but also to translate the strategic priorities of the Slovak Republic within the smart agenda into the forthcoming document and the follow-up programmes and forms of support of UN-Habitat. This will result in the visibility of the Slovak Republic as a leading actor within this agenda and the establishment of partnerships with countries and international organisations that actively support the implementation of the smart agenda in regional development.

## e-Government

Legislative progress since 2019 has been contributing to the objectives of the New Urban Agenda, in particular the digitalisation of public administration and effective communication with citizens. These measures support sustainable and modern public administration, which is key for smart urban development.

- Amendment to the e-Government Act No. 325/2022 Coll. amending Act No. 305/2013 Coll. on the Electronic Form of Exercising the Powers of Public Authorities (e-Government Act) as amended, simplified e-government processes, introduced new institutes, such as central official delivering (hereinafter referred to as “COD”), and made it possible for a wider range of entities (e.g. banks) to carry out guaranteed conversions.
- Effectiveness of certain changes - new system of central registration of records on guaranteed conversion was put off by Act No. 237/2024 Coll. amending Act No. 325/2022 Coll., amending Act No. 305/2013 Coll. on the Electronic Form of Exercising the Powers of Public Authorities (e-Government Act), and on amendment to other acts as amended by Act No. 301/2023 Coll. and amending Act No. 305/2013 Coll. on the Electronic Form of Exercising the Powers of Public Authorities (e-Government Act), and on amendment to other acts as amended on 1 October 2025.
- Act No. 95/2019 Coll. on Information Technologies in Public Administration and on amendment to other acts as amended, created a legal framework for the efficient use and sharing of data between public administration systems, thereby reducing the administrative burden and promoting cooperation between individual public institutions.
- The National Concept of Public Administration Informatisation 2021-2026 (hereinafter referred to as “NCPAI”), approved by Resolution of the Government of the SR No. 763 of 14

December 2021, supported the introduction of digital-ready principles in legislation, which means that new legislation must be designed to allow for the full digitalisation of processes. This approach is reflected in the legislative intent of the e-Government Act, which emphasises simplification of rules and full e-communication.

Key legislative measures in support of NUA objectives:

- Central electronic communication
  - The Slovensko.sk portal has streamlined communication between citizens and the public administration and increased the availability of services through a single point of access. Extending functionalities to new digital services has reduced the bureaucratic burden.
  - The mobile application “Slovakia on mobile” has expanded the possibilities of access to electronic services and increased the accessibility of digital communication for the general public.
- Guaranteed document conversion
  - The reform of guaranteed conversion improved legal certainty in the transition between paper and electronic documents. The introduction of a new central record-keeping system is currently under preparation.
- Life situations
  - Progress in the integration of electronic services according to citizens’ life situations (e.g. property registration, social benefits) has contributed to simplifying processes and reducing the administrative burden.
- Cybersecurity
  - Act No. 69/2018 Coll. on Cyber Security and on amendment to other acts as amended, ensures the resilience of the public administration against digital threats, thus supporting the credibility of e-Government.

Future challenges will focus on achieving a full digital transformation that supports the efficient functioning of cities and regions in line with NUA objectives.

- Full digital transformation
  - Introducing legislation that establishes e-proceedings as the default method of communication with public administrations.
- Reinforcement of digital-ready principles
  - Introducing digital-ready principles in the amendment of laws.
- Extension of COD and guaranteed conversion
  - Including a wider range of public authorities in the mandatory use of COD
  - Extending the guaranteed conversion and introduction of a system for the central registration of records of guaranteed conversion.

The MIRDI SR is preparing an update of the national concept of informatisation of public administration, which aims to update and develop the basic principles and strategic priorities on which Slovak e-government is built. Several projects have been successful in the past and need to be further developed.

A central IT asset management tool has been implemented, enabling the collection of accurate and up-to-date information on IT assets of individual public administration authorities (hereinafter referred to as “PAA”), thus creating the prerequisites for the subsequent optimisation of management and streamlining the spending of funds on IT assets within the state and public administration. The MIRDI SR is preparing ITAM 2.0, which represents the intention to continue the

project of IT asset management across the public administration, with the aim of involving 150,000 devices, which will be registered in the ITAM system as state-owned devices and will be able to be continuously monitored at the level of the respective organisations. The aim of the project will be a comprehensive management of IT assets in the public administration, which will be the basis for future optimisation activities of the PAA, the design of IT architecture and licensing models as well as the design of an IT security map. By implementing a comprehensive IT asset management system, the state will achieve an important level of knowledge of its own assets, on the basis of which it will be able to implement optimisation steps and activities.

From the Recovery and Resilience Plan of the SR - Component 17: Investment No.1 and Reform No.1, the MIRDI SR implements priority life situations and under Investment No.2 and Reform No.2 it implements the digital transformation of public administration sections. The MIRDI SR, as the focal point for eGovernment solutions and the implementer, is responsible for meeting the milestones and targets in Component 17 and is responsible for meeting the target “Number of developed and deployed eGovernment solutions (16 priority life situations)” under Investment 1: “Better services for citizens and businesses”, the fulfilment of which is the subject of the ninth payment request to the EC.

The aim is:

- to increase the satisfaction and trust of people and public administration entities with e-services;
- to reduce people’s interactions and complexity in using public administration services;
- to increase the proportion of electronic communication with public administrations;
- to simplify access to e-services in the form of complex life situations of public administrations;
- to ensure improvement of Slovakia’s position in the DESI index and in the eGOV benchmark assessment and contribute to the fulfilment of the NCPAI objectives.

The MIRDI SR is implementing the “eSKa” cloud project under investment 2 of the Recovery and Resilience Plan of the SR, which aims to provide financial and technical resources for the operation of information systems in the cloud. This project is in line with the intention and activities leading to optimisation of IT resources in the state, as it is the cloud that should play an important role in the e-gov environment. Similarly, in an identical investment, the IT Resource Platform project will be implemented in the near future, which aims to prepare a digital marketplace for IT products and services on the theme of “digital marketplace” in the UK or Canada.

An open data portal based on modern technologies such as SparqlEndPoint and ETL LinkedPipes has also been built, fully compliant with European standards and supporting central European solutions. It was an international project built in cooperation with the Czech side, which is one of the leaders in the LinkedPipes area. The principle of using open source software was applied, which was only adapted to the needs of our portal, which also reduced the cost of the project. The portal was primarily built as a central catalogue of open data, which is a repository of metadata about datasets, the datasets themselves are hosted by their providers.

The Central Integration Platform (CIP) project is a functional update of the Central Reference Data Management Information System. It implements five new functional modules bringing a further level of digitalisation of public administration and modernisation of the electronic services of the state. Central Reference Data Management allows the PAA to work with the data available to the state for the purpose of exercising public authority, without burdening the citizen, the entrepreneur or any other type of customer with unnecessary bureaucracy.

The KAV 2.0 project should improve the state's functioning and handling of the state's analytical data, which it has at its disposal and is not using as much as it should. It should build on the continuation of the KAV 1.0 project.

## Conclusion

The NUA describes the state of affairs that is desirable to achieve in order to preserve and develop the values that make up urban agglomerations. It highlights postulates such as the preservation and development of social and environmental functions, participatory decision-making, gender equality in access to amenities and values, sustainability of economic development, the functioning of cities beyond their administrative boundaries, disaster prevention and the preservation of ecosystems.

All of the above postulates are fully embodied in the Urban Development Policy until 2030 (hereinafter referred to as "UDP"). However, ministries are also contributing to the implementation of the individual tasks, as outlined in the material. The UDP is a framework national document, the aim of which is to comprehensively assess the existing state of urban development, to create preconditions for a partnership approach of all levels of public administration, and at the same time, through the proposal of priority measures, to create preconditions for systemic changes in the current state of affairs. A working group composed of representatives of central government bodies, local government, as well as representatives of relevant non-governmental, academic and private sector entities participated in the drafting of the UDP.

The material states that the vision of the country's development is that "cities in Slovakia should be managed in such a way as to provide a healthy settlement environment for quality of life through a sufficiently varied supply of employment opportunities, adequate housing and services with an emphasis on the quality of the environment, including quality urban and architectural solutions". The second part of the vision calls for increasing productivity, not productivity in the productive sense, but with a view to capitalising on the resources that cities use, namely to "use and improve them efficiently and thus create added value".

Given the overall development of the country, the high mobility of the population, the dwindling public financial resources while increasing demands on the quality of public services, one of the challenges is the ability to link the capacities of local governments within wider areas. The success of the territories in making them attractive to residents will require planning and development based on "intensive cooperation across administrative boundaries, using multi-level governance, mutual coordination of activities and measures, and mutual exchange of information". Another principle by which municipalities should develop more effectively is the application of an "integrated approach". In general, a "sectoral approach" to problem solving still prevails. The UDP summarises the principles of sustainable development of Slovak cities in the following statement: "with the right setup of competency and funding frameworks, provided that cities plan their development on the basis of correct data, applying an integrated approach that includes good governance, building the conditions for a functioning economy and based on local knowledge of demographic, environmental, social and societal challenges, applying the requirements for a quality physical structure of the built environment, including appropriately set conditions for mobility, it is possible to achieve productive functioning cities that provide a healthy environment for a good quality of life".

In Slovakia, the principles of sustainable urban development, as outlined in the NUA, are widely applied, with specific measures adapted to the needs of urban development in Slovakia.

# List of abbreviations and acronyms

Equality Action Plan	Action Plan for Equality of Women and Men and Equality of Opportunities for 2021-2027
Smart Agenda AP	Action Plan for Smart Cities and Regions for 2023-2026
BFHI	Baby-friendly Hospital Initiative
CCF	Centres for children and families
CuRI	Catching-up Regions Initiative
Commission	European Commission
Envirostrategy 2030	Greener Slovakia – Strategy of the Environmental Policy of the Slovak Republic Until 2030
JTF	Just Transition Fund
ITI	Integrated Territorial Investment
ITS	Integrated Territorial Strategy
UDP	Urban Development Policy of the Slovak Republic Until 2030
CTDS	Concept of Territorial Development of Slovakia
MT SR	Ministry of Transport of the Slovak Republic
MF SR	Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic
MEcon SR	Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic
Migration Policy	Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic with the Outlook Until 2025
Migration Office	Migration Office of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic
MIRDI SR	Ministry of Investments, Regional Development and Informatization of the Slovak Republic
MC SR	Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic
MLSAF SR	Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic
SMEs	Small and medium enterprises
MERDY SR	Ministry of Education, Research, Development and Youth of the Slovak Republic
MI SR	Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic
MH SR	Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic
MFEA SR	Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic
MEnv SR	Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic
NAP	Action plan for implementation of the updated Strategy of Adaptation of the SR to the Climate Change
National Programme	National Programme for Active Ageing for 2021 – 2030
NAS	Strategy of Adaptation of the SR to the Climate Change
NCPAI	National Concept of Public Administration Informatization for 2021-2026
NFS	National framework strategy on social inclusion and poverty reduction
NUA	New Urban Agenda
UNO	United Nations Organisation
RES	Renewable energy sources
LA SR	Landmark Authority of the Slovak Republic
ITI PI	ITI Project Intent
SEA	Slovak Environment Agency

SBA	Slovak Business Agency
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SHMI	Slovak Hydrometeorological Institute
SIEA	Slovak Innovation and Energy Agency
SLPC a SC	Social Legal Protection of Children and Social Curatorship
SR	Slovak Republic
Equality Strategy	National Strategy for Equality of Women and Men and Equality of Opportunities for 2021-2027
SO SR	Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic
SUD	Sustainable urban development
COLSAF	Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family
ASPaC SR	Authority for Spatial Planning and Construction of the Slovak Republic
PHA SR	Public Health Authority of the Slovak Republic
CA on FR	Constitutional Act No. 493/2011 Coll. on Fiscal Responsibility
Asylum Act	Act No. 480/2002 Coll. on Asylum and on amendment to other acts as amended
Employment Services Act	Act No. 5/2004 Z. z. on Employment Services and on amendment to other acts as amended
Social Services Act	Act No. 488/2008 Coll. on Social Services and on amendment to Act No. 455/1991 Coll. on Trade Licensing (Trade Licensing Act) as amended
Trade Licensing Act	Act No. 455/1991 Coll. on Trade Licensing as amended



INFORMATION ON THE PROGRESS IN  
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NEW URBAN  
AGENDA GOALS  
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