

An overview of the migration policies and trends - Slovakia

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Abstract:

Slovakia is a country with relatively low share of foreigners within population, though the overall number of foreigners is increasing (both in relative and absolute numbers). In 2011, the number of foreign citizens officially residing in Slovakia reached 70 727 which means 1.3 % of the total population.¹

Recent migration trends

The overall inflows of immigrants to Slovakia had been constantly rising from 2004, when the country entered into the EU, and reached its top in 2008 when the number of incoming immigrants registered for permanent residence reached 8 765 persons. In 2009, the number of new immigrants fell by some 2.5 thousand on yearly basis mainly due to the effects of economic crisis.² According to most recent data, in 2011 authorities registered 4 829 new immigrants for permanent residence.³ The emigration flows from Slovakia have been relatively steady in recent years. In 2011 over 85 % of all migrant Slovak citizens emigrated to other EU countries.

In recent years, the share of migrants coming from third (non-EU) countries has decreased in favour of migrants from the EEC. Out of the total number of immigrants residing in Slovakia, in 2011 only about 23 % came from third countries, mainly from Ukraine, Serbia, Russia, Vietnam and China. This trend is related to easier travel and employment opportunities for EU citizens after the country's accession to the EU in 2004.

Most immigrants are coming from neighbouring countries, in particular from the Czech Republic and Hungary. Also the number of immigrants from Romania and Bulgaria has considerably increased after the accession of these two countries to the EU in 2007. In the period of 2004-2008 the number of immigrants from Romania has increased fivefold and has doubled in respect of Bulgaria.⁴

¹ [Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic](#), data of 31 December 2011.

² OECD (2011), *International Migration Outlook: SOPEMI 2011*, OECD Publishing.

³ Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic, [Foreign Movements and migrants in the Slovak Republic in 2011](#), December 2011.

⁴ Institute for Public Affairs, [Migrants on the Slovak labour market: problems and perspectives](#). Bratislava 2011, p. 19.

The highest concentration of migrants is in the western Slovakia mainly due to more employment possibilities in this region. Around two thirds of immigrants are male. In average, immigrants from third countries are in younger age category (20-34 years), than those from the EU countries (35-64 years).

Labour migration policy in Slovakia is currently not regulated by quotas or similar restrictive measures. According to recent migration surveys, Slovakia is slowly changing into a country of the first choice of migrant workers.⁵ This is also due to the development of migrant social networks, providing information on working possibilities and other types of support.

According to official statistics, the number of employed migrants surged dynamically after the accession to the EU (from 2 761 in 2004 to 18 247 in 2010). However, the share of employed migrants on overall population of the Slovak Republic has been low – less than 1 %.⁶ According to independent researchers, the official data are significantly undervalued, and they estimate that a real number of migrants active on the labour market could have reached around 34 – 37 thousand persons in 2008.⁷

The number of asylum applications in Slovakia has been gradually decreasing to the approx. 500 per year in 2010 – 2012, which constitutes a sharp decline from 11 395 in 2004. In 2012 (until the end of October) 27 persons were granted asylum and 94 provided with subsidiary protection.

Recent migration and integration policy

In 2011 the government adopted new strategic document the [*Migration policy of the Slovak Republic - Perspective until the year 2020*](#) (Slovak only), prepared by the Ministry of Interior. The document prioritizes immigration of high-skilled workers with an emphasis on culturally related countries. A new theme of this political paper is the connection between migration and development. The issue was first introduced into the public discourse in 2007 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in cooperation of IOM.⁸ The migration strategy envisage greater coherence between migration and development policies, in particular by focusing official development aid at countries relevant from the perspectives of migration flows, as well as using potential of circular migration when supporting development of third countries. Consequently, the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family adopted the [*Action Plan of Migration Policy in 2012-2013*](#) (Slovak only), which includes concrete measures of migration policy.

In terms of integration of migrants, the [*Strategy on Integration of Foreigners in the Slovak Republic*](#) (Slovak only) was adopted in 2009. In 2011, the government adopted its first

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ Divinský, B.: [*Migration trends in the Slovak Republic after the entry into the EU \(2004-2008\)*](#). Bratislava, IOM 2009, p. 45.

⁸ [*International Conference on Migration and Development in Bratislava*](#), 3 April 2007.

[summary report](#) (Slovak only) about the implementation of integration strategy in 2010 and last year, the government approved its second [summary report](#) (Slovak only) about the implementation of the integration strategy in 2011. The NGOs working with migrants *inter alia* pointed out that the implementation reports are rather vague, and failed to tackle the problem with the lack of proper statistical data and indicators in evaluation of integration.⁹

In January 2012, the new [Act 404/2011 on Residence of Aliens](#) came into force. The new act unified previous legal regulation of border control with the law regulating entry and residence of foreign citizens in Slovakia, a move largely criticized by non-governmental sector as creating atmosphere of state and border endangerment by migrants.¹⁰ This approach is also reflected in the significantly more restrictive regulation of entry and stricter conditions for granting temporary residence for third country nationals.¹¹ The new law introduces new types of permanent residence, whereas the period of previous residence before for requesting permanent residence has been shortened from 5 to 4 years.

The directive no. 2009/50/EC on the Blue Card was transposed into the Slovak legislation by the Act no. 223/2011 amending the Act No. 82/2005 Coll. on Illegal Work and Illegal Employment. By the end of August 2012, there were only 9 applications for the Blue Card and 6 positive decisions. The reason for very low demand is probably the lack of awareness and complex procedure before receiving the Blue Card. The same amendment also transposed the Directive 2009/52/EC regarding sanctions against employers of irregular third-country nationals.

In 2012, Slovakia prolonged its resettlement program. Since 2009, more than 250 resettled migrants from Afghanistan, Eritrea, Iraq, Ethiopia, Somalia, and Palestine were placed for a certain period in the Reception Centre Humenné at different stages of the resettlement program.¹²

Generally, the overall migration domain is rather a marginal theme for Slovak politicians and public. This is reflected in rather short and vague parts on migration policy in electoral programs of main political parties.

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⁹ Chudžíková, A., [Where did Slovakia move in migrants' integration in 2011?](#) Minority Policy in Slovakia, 1/2012.

¹⁰ CVEK - Centre for Research of Ethnicity and Culture, [Comments on proposal of the Act on border control and entry and residence of aliens](#).

¹¹ Bargerová, Z.: [The new act on Residence of Aliens](#), www.migraceonline.cz, 2012.

¹² Hajdu P., [Slovakia increases capacity of refugee transit centre in Humenné](#), UNHCR, 27 June 2012.

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