

Slovak Republic

Table 2.25. Slovak Republic

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| Country structure | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Unitary, three levels of government (national, eight self-governing regions [<i>vyssich uzemnych celkov</i>], 2 920 municipalities [<i>obec</i>]) |
| Problem recognition | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> West-east regional disparities, polarised economic growth Social inclusion |
| Objectives | <p>Sustainable, place-based and balanced regional and sectoral development policy with three core objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> efficiency, based on innovation and competitiveness index equity, higher living standards, based on cohesion index environmental quality and high value of the Slovak countryside |
| Legal/institutional framework ¹ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional Development Support Act (2008) National Strategy for Regional Development 2010-2020/30 (2010), currently in the legislative process |
| Spatial orientation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> KURS - Slovakia Spatial Development Perspectives, Policy for Territorial Development of Slovakia (2001), Amendment No.1 with SEA, currently under public debate Development poles and development axis Growth poles |
| Urban policy framework | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> KURS includes policies for urban development of the Slovak Republic |
| Rural policy framework ² | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> KURS includes policies for rural development of the Slovak Republic |
| Major policy tools | |
| Policy co-ordination at central level | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-ordination role of the Ministry of Construction and Regional Development Government Council for Regional Policy and Supervision on Structural Operations Regional development agencies |
| Multi-level governance between national and sub-national levels | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spatial planning process, plans at all three levels of government from national to municipal level (duty according to the law to respect the guiding part of KURS in regional plans and to respect regional plans in city plans) |
| Policy co-ordination at regional level (cross-sectoral) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional self-governance (eight higher territorial units) |
| Policy co-ordination at regional level (geographic) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Duty regional planning (according to the law to respect the guiding part of KURS in regional plans and to respect regional plans in city plans) |
| Evaluation and monitoring | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spatial planning authorities must evaluate spatial plans every four years |
| Future directions (currently under discussion) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decentralisation reform, strategic planning, more focus on sustainability, green growth, place-based regional development policy, equity, efficiency, and a more healthy environment of the countryside |

Notes: 1. In all EU member countries, the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) required by Cohesion Policy is also part of the legal/institutional framework.

2. In all EU member countries, the National Strategic Plan (NSP) (and the regional Rural Development Plans [RDPs] in federalised and strongly regionalised countries) is a basic rural policy document required by EU Rural Development Programmes. Each member country has the choice of either submitting a single NSP for its entire territory or of breaking down its territory into regions and submitting a set of regional RDPs.

Regional problems

The location of Bratislava, the capital of the Slovak Republic, in the extreme west of the country (just 50 kilometres from Vienna, the capital of Austria) contributes to polarised economic growth and the west-east divide of economic development in the country. There are some concerns regarding the urban-periphery of Bratislava. Southern and eastern parts of the country have a rural character, with below average economic productivity, low investment rates, high unemployment, spatial concentration of marginalised groups, and poor transport and infrastructure. Depopulation trends of the area are persistent. A growing challenge is to ensure the provision of basic public services throughout the territory, especially in rural areas. With increased mobility, settlement structures are becoming more scattered, leading to increased commuting and urban-rural sprawl.

Balancing economic efficiency and equity with better living standards is a primary concern. Since the enlargement of the EU, a new boom area is developing in the triangle of Bratislava-Vienna-Budapest, making cross-border co-operation an important element of spatial planning and regional policy. Problems related to climate change, energy and demography are not so severe and are considered in the context of long-term regional policy, together with enormous potential for green growth.

General objectives of regional policy

Regional development support is aimed at balanced, sustainable economic and social development, and the reduction of inter-regional disparities which were identified in the areas of infrastructure, human resources, industry and services, and agriculture and rural development. Modifications of regional policy after 2006 are linked to the introduction of the National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) and operational programmes and reflect the shift in the orientation of EU Cohesion Policy. Recently, more emphasis has been placed on the competitiveness and innovative capacity of regions, endogenous development, the enhancement of economic performance and living conditions, which are reflected in a new Regional Development Support Act and the National Strategy for Regional Development, currently being drafted. The overall objective set out in the NSRF is to “significantly increase the competitiveness and performance of regions, the Slovak economy and employment by 2013, while respecting the principles of sustainable development”.

Legal/institutional frameworks of regional policy

The **Regional Development Support Act** was established in 2008 and the **National Strategy for Regional Development** is currently being drafted. The act defines the objectives, instruments, tasks and main beneficiaries of regional development support as well as the key stakeholders and provisions for co-operation. The support aims to address unfavourable social, economic and spatial disparities to secure the sustainable development of regions, to increase the economic performance of regions and their competitiveness, and to increase employment and living conditions in regions. Investment in basic infrastructure remains a key pillar of support and is most commonly addressed at the national level. For instance, road infrastructure development is implemented according to the Programme for the Preparation and Construction of Motorways and

Highways for 2007-10, which identifies priority locations for investment. In addition to addressing regional infrastructure deficits, the development of business services is being encouraged.

The **Slovakia Spatial Development Perspective 2001 (KURS)** was approved by the government in 2001. The KURS is prepared as a tool for national policy on territorial development, arranging the settlement structure, settlement centres and economic agglomerations, as well as the development of main urbanisation axes while co-ordinating principles of spatial development for equal living conditions across the Slovak Republic. The main goals of KURS are spatial integration within the EU; a balanced polycentric settlement structure; transport infrastructure for balanced development and effective international transit; urban-rural relations; the preservation of cultural heritage; and the protection of nature, landscape and environment. The KURS has a binding part that must be implemented in lower planning documents and in planning decisions as well as a voluntary part that is a recommendation for lower planning documents. The binding part was announced as a Government Decision (legislation) in 2002. The KURS will be amended by the Ministry of Construction and Regional Development in 2010.

Regional spatial plans identify the development patterns of each NUTS 3¹ region. They are prepared and approved by regional governments. The regional spatial plans include the binding and voluntary parts of the KURS. The binding part is announced as a regional law.

Main implementation tools

Regional aid continues to be available for economic development in regions with extremely low living standards or high unemployment rates. However, more generally, financial assistance is increasingly concentrated on **growth poles** with a view to enhancing the effectiveness of Cohesion Policy resources and promoting the convergence of target regions and their hinterlands. Most commonly, regional aid takes the form of income tax relief, grants and subsidies in the form of irrecoverable financial contributions and penalty relief.

Impacts of EU regional policy

The Slovak Republic became eligible for Structural Funds when it entered the EU in mid-2004. For the 2007-13 programming period, the Slovak Republic has been allocated EUR 11.7 billion. The main priorities are environment and climate change (EUR 5.5 billion), transport (EUR 3.5 billion) and R&D and innovation (EUR 2.6 billion). A specific regional programme is being implemented in the Bratislava region. Aid area population coverage for 2007-13 decreased from 100% to 88.9%.

Governance structures

Vertical governance is assured through the spatial planning system. The **Ministry of Construction and Regional Development** is the key authority responsible for the implementation and co-ordination of regional development, and the preparation of the KURS as well as Cohesion Policy. The KURS represents the state policy on territorial development in terms of settlement structure and includes guiding principles for spatial

development. Its main task is to co-ordinate the activities of state administration bodies and self-government at regional and local levels.

The **Government Council for Regional Policy and Supervision on Structural Operations** is a consultative body of the government with a co-ordinating function at the central government level. It supervises the performance of ministries and other public bodies in the field of regional development, regional policy, EU Cohesion Policy and other relevant EU and national policies. It aims to ensure co-ordination between Cohesion Policy and national policies.

In 2002, self-governing regions were established. Regional governments are responsible for preparing and approving regional plans as well as for announcing the approved plan as a regional directive. In 2006, the **Association of Chairmen of Self-Governing Regions** (higher territorial units) was formed to co-ordinate development activities in the regions and act jointly in negotiations with national and international institutions. An integrated network of **regional development agencies (RDAs)** is in place to stimulate endogenous development and co-operation between public and private actors. The RDAs provide a wide range of services such as project management, information points, strategic planning and training. Local governments are responsible for preparing and approving two levels of local plans, *i.e.* a master plan and a zoning plan (part of the city regulation). Local municipalities announce the approved plan as a local directive (law). Municipalities with more than 2 000 inhabitants were required to have a master plan up until 2005.

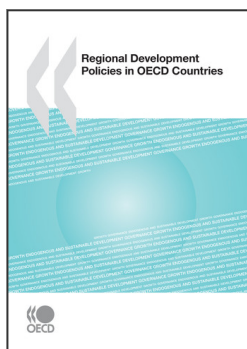
Regional governments and municipalities are respectively responsible for the elaboration and implementation of economic and social development plans and spatial plans. In the context of the decentralisation trend of public administration, the role and importance of regional and local self-governments is increasing. Some implementation responsibilities have moved from central to regional levels. Sub-national input into the implementation process is being strengthened, potentially involving a stronger role in resource allocation, project generation and selection. Under the Regional Development Support Act, the self-governing NUTS 3 regions also contribute to the development of a National Development Plan and infrastructure operational programmes. However, concerns about administrative capacity and expertise at the sub-national level mean that central implementation structures continue to dominate.

Note

1. The Nomenclature Units for Territorial Statistics (NUTS) is a geocode standard for referencing the subdivisions of countries for statistical purposes. For each EU member country, a hierarchy of three NUTS levels is established by Eurostat and is instrumental in the EU's Structural Fund delivery mechanism. Though the NUTS regions are based on existing national administrative subdivisions, the subdivisions in some levels do not necessarily correspond to administrative divisions within the country. Depending on their size, some countries do not have all three levels. The following thresholds are used as guidelines for establishing the regions, but they are not applied rigidly: NUTS 1 region (3 million to 7 million inhabitants), NUTS 2 region (800 000 to 3 million inhabitants) and NUTS 3 region (150 000 to 800 000 inhabitants).

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From:
Regional Development Policies in OECD Countries

Access the complete publication at:
<https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264087255-en>

Please cite this chapter as:

OECD (2010), "Slovak Republic", in *Regional Development Policies in OECD Countries*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264087255-27-en>

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