

Country Profile - Slovakia

Job market

The Slovak Republic has been affected by the global financial crisis. But despite this, its strong export sector has continued to show solid economic growth, as has the services sector. Its unemployment figures have risen over the past four years, however, so competition is tough. With language skills, and knowledge and experience in shortage occupations, graduates will have a good chance of finding employment.

What are my chances of getting a job?

- **Typical problems encountered:** it is difficult for UK graduates to find work in Slovakia as the country produces plenty of high quality graduates each year and Slovak language ability is required in most jobs. The most promising job opportunities for UK graduates are in teaching English as a foreign language or on placement with an international firm. The economic downturn has also affected the labour market and there has been a decline in employment.
- **How to improve your chances:** your chances of finding a job could be improved by waiting a few years after graduation and acquiring professional skills and experience. Learning Slovak before you go to Slovakia is another option and you may find information on courses at your local educational establishments, although it is not widely taught. [EuroTalk](#) offers self-study courses in Slovak. There are some elementary online Slovak language courses organised by [The Centre of Slovak as a Foreign Language](#). Unless you are working as an English teacher or in an English-speaking international professional environment it is essential to have good Slovak language ability to have a realistic chance of getting a job. It is useful to have an understanding of German or Russian as these languages are spoken in business. Apart from teaching English, it may be possible to work for some non-governmental organisations (NGOs) using English as the main language.
- **Language requirements:** Slovak language ability is needed to study at Slovak universities.

Where can I work?

- **Major industries:** vehicle manufacturing, food and drink, metal and metal products and textiles.
- **Recent growth areas:** industrial manufacturing, transport.
- **Industries in decline:** construction, property services.
- **Shortage occupations:** public administration, social security, IT and telecommunications, defence and industrial manufacturing.
- **Major companies:** Volkswagen Slovakia, Slovnaft, Samsung Electronics, US Steel Kosice, SPP, Kia Motors, Peugeot-Citroen Slovakia, Slovak Electricity, Tesco Slovakia and Foxconn Slovakia.
- **Search for more companies:** Lists of companies can be found at: [Kompass](#), a worldwide business directory searchable by country and product/service. The [British Chamber of Commerce in the Slovak Republic](#) and the [Slovak Chamber of Commerce and Industry](#) websites have useful lists of employer members operating in the Slovak Republic. The [UK Trade & Investment \(UKTI\)](#) website lists potential

- business opportunities for UK companies in terms of investment, exports, franchising and consulting.
- **Major cities:** Bratislava (the capital), Kosice, Zilina, Presov, Nitra and Banska Bystrica.

What's it like working in Slovakia?

- **Average working hours:** may not exceed 40 hours per week. Depending on the type of work, normal working hours may range from 37.5 to 40 hours a week. Working overtime is not customary and employees are entitled to compensation for working overtime, on top of their normal wage.
 - **Holidays:** 15 public holidays, including Labour Day (1 May) and Slovak National Uprising Day (29 August). Basic leave entitlement is at least four weeks in a calendar year, although it is more for some professions, such as teaching.
 - **Tax rates:** there is a flat tax of 20% on all types of income, although foreigners working in the country only pay tax on their Slovak income. Find more information about pre-tax deductions and indirect taxes on [EURES Job Search](#).
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Applying for jobs

Most job applications are made by CV and covering letter, or by application form. The selection process is usually by interview. Applicants should be prepared to be called to interview at short notice, perhaps two days after being contacted. Multi-stage selection processes with numerical and verbal reasoning tests prior to interview are becoming more common among international companies.

A standard CV of the type commonly used in the UK will be appropriate. This should be sent to the employer with a covering letter outlining your interest in the job and relevant experience, qualifications and skills. An example of a covering letter can be found on the [EURES Job Search](#).

Most employers use a formal interview for staff selection. Some, particularly international companies, may use other selection methods in addition to interview.

Will my UK qualifications be recognised?

Visit the [ENIC-NARIC](#) website for information on comparability of your academic qualifications.

Do I still need to pay UK tax and National Insurance?

If you are planning to live and work in Slovakia, check your UK tax and National Insurance position with [HM Revenue & Customs \(HMRC\)](#) to ensure that you are not losing any UK pension rights.

Vacancy sources

Job websites

- [Profesia](#) - a searchable database of jobs in Slovakia, widely used for professional vacancies.
- [EURES Job Search](#) - maintained by the European Commission, provides information about job vacancies, living and working conditions, and labour markets in Slovakia, as well as a CV-posting service for jobseekers.

Recruitment agencies

- For experienced professionals, recruitment consultancies are likely to be an important source of vacancies. There are numerous agencies in Bratislava, including international and local ones. Most agencies of interest to graduates advertise on the Profesia website. Apart from personal contacts, this is the best way for an English speaker to find work and the higher the calibre of the candidate, the more likely it is that they will find a position through an agency.
- [APAS](#) - has links to recruitment agencies in Slovakia.
- [Slovak Yellow Pages](#) - could also be used to find recruitment agencies.

Newspapers

- English language and Slovak newspapers, e.g. the [Slovak Spectator](#), have classified jobs sections, with teaching posts the most commonly advertised.
- The economics weekly, [eTREND](#), has a recruitment section which focus on more senior positions.
- The daily [SME](#) is useful but less focused on professional vacancies.
- A list of national and local Slovak newspapers is available through the [Kidon Media-Link](#) website.

Other sources

Careers fairs are held by universities and by organisations such as:

- [IAESTE - The International Association for the Exchange of Students for Technical Experience - Slovakia](#)
- [AIESEC \(Association Internationale des Etudiants en Sciences Economiques et Commerciales\)](#)
- [EURES](#)

The government employment service is run by the [Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic](#) (Ministerstvo prace, socialnych veci a rodiny). Centres can be found nationally, with larger services based in the main district towns. They advertise

vacancies using display boards and have databases which can match job applicants with vacancies.

Hidden vacancies

Personal contacts can be very important in finding work and it is advisable to try to develop a network prior to travelling to Slovakia. It may be possible to find vacancies (particularly in teaching) through personal contacts whilst in the country and through networking with other expatriates and with Slovaks interested in learning English, for example, in bookshops and coffee shops as well as online.

The [BCSA - The British Czech and Slovak Association](#) is a focus in the UK for those with interests in the two nations, and its website has links with local groups and networks. These could help anyone looking for contacts in the Slovak community in the UK.

Work experience

Work placements and internships

Work placements and internships are most likely to be found in international companies in Slovakia, in professional areas such as accountancy, consulting, law and IT. A few may be found in Slovak companies in these fields.

Exchange programmes

Slovakia is a member of two major international exchange programme organisations, [AIESEC Slovakia](#) and [IAESTE - The International Association for the Exchange of Students for Technical Experience - Slovakia](#). Both provide technical and professional work experience placements for students and recent graduates. Applications should be made from your home country.

Teaching schemes

The most likely employment for graduates in Slovakia is teaching English in primary or secondary schools or possibly within a university. Most opportunities are in private schools in the large and medium-sized cities. State schools are more likely to require teaching qualifications and experience; they will arrange work visas and permits, but salaries are usually lower than in private schools.

Teaching provides the major area of temporary work programmes, whether for a TEFL (teaching English as a foreign language) organisation, or within the state education system.

In Bratislava, the British Council Slovakia's British Centre is a useful contact point to find out about available teaching vacancies and to advertise your services. The [British Council](#)

[Slovakia](#) has English British Centres based in local and university libraries in five other cities across Slovakia.

For details of language schools in Slovakia visit the [Green Pages - Language Schools in Slovakia](#) listings.

For teaching posts, producing fliers that advertise your services as a native-speaking tutor can attract private students. Student notice boards in English language bookshops, libraries and student common rooms can also be a useful advertising point.

[SOL - Sharing One Language](#) recruits graduates who are willing to spend at least one academic year teaching in state schools in several east central European countries, including Slovakia.

For graduates with specific skill sets (e.g. in environmental management, media, etc.) there may be occasional opportunities in non-governmental organisations (e.g. international foundations or the development arms of international governments) or in English language newspapers, such as the [Slovak Spectator](#).

Volunteering

[INEX Slovakia](#) organises international work camps for several types of activity including environmental and social welfare. Camps last two - three weeks and require around 150 volunteers each summer. Applications should be made direct to INEX in Slovakia.

[Volunteer Abroad](#) has a list of environmental and community based volunteer projects.

Organisations involved in wildlife and environmental conservation include the [Slovak Wildlife Society](#) and [The Conservation Volunteers \(TCV\)](#). They are involved with conserving wildlife including bears and wolves in the Carpathian mountains, in eastern Slovakia.

Casual work

High levels of unemployment and low wages make this unrealistic for non-Slovaks.

Gap year opportunities

See the Teaching Schemes and Volunteering sections above for opportunities suitable for a gap year. Ski resorts may provide opportunities for tour operator reps for three to five month seasons. Experienced reps, particularly with relevant language skills, are preferred. There are few ski tours to Slovakia from Western Europe but this may change as Slovakia's tourist industry grows. [World-Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms \(WWOOF\)](#) have opportunities on Slovak organic farms that involve working for bed and board. Also check out [iGapyear](#) for inspiration.

Postgraduate study

How does the higher education system work?

The Slovak higher education system operates in three stages which are similar to the Bachelor, Masters and Doctorate stages in the UK system. The first stage usually lasts three or four years and graduates are awarded the degree of Bakalar. The second stage lasts a further one or two years and leads to the award of a Magister degree. The third stage is three years (full-time) or five years (part-time) research, and graduates are awarded the degrees of Philosophiae Doctor (PhD) or Artis Doctor (ArtD). A fourth stage award of Doctor Vied (Doctor of Sciences - DrSc) is awarded to outstanding doctoral researchers.

Slovakia has general universities and those specialising in agriculture, the arts, economics, education, medicine and technology. The military and police academies are higher education institutions.

What courses are available?

Postgraduate courses usually take between one and three years to complete and most of the major subjects can be studied. Knowledge of Slovak is essential for postgraduate study, although the majority of higher education institutions offer some programmes in English. Courses taught in English are mainly in business, medicine and specialist technical fields such as agriculture.

For more information on studying in Slovakia visit the [Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic](#) (Ministerstvo školstva, vedy, výskumu a športu) as it has some information in English, and also [Study in Slovakia](#).

Where can I study?

There are some 30 institutions of higher education in Slovakia comprising traditional universities, higher education institutions of art and music, and universities of technology, economics, veterinary medicine and agriculture. There are also some private higher education institutions, mainly business schools.

The Study in Slovakia website has details of the higher education institutions in Slovakia.

Applying for postgraduate study

Applicants for postgraduate study must have completed a first degree (for Masters courses) or a Masters degree (for doctoral studies) equivalent to stages one and two in the Slovak system respectively. A valid passport and visa are required from certain countries. See the Study in Slovakia website for more information.

Closing dates for advanced and doctoral studies are variable and you should check with individual institutions.

Applications should be made to individual higher education institutions. Some universities offer online applications and a personal statement is usually required.

Fees and scholarships

Tuition fees for international students vary. The exact amount is determined by the institution, according to regulations of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic.

Useful information and links can be found on the Study in Slovakia website. Grants may also be available through individual institutions in accordance with cultural agreements.

Are there any exchange programmes?

UK students on undergraduate degree programmes or postgraduate Masters and some PhD programmes may be interested in spending time studying in Slovakia through [Erasmus](#). This programme is open to all subject areas, but check with your institution's Erasmus coordinator first (usually based in the international office) to see which countries they have links with and in what subject areas.

Slovakia participates in other multilateral or bilateral higher education programmes like the [Leonardo da Vinci Programme](#).

Will my qualification be recognised in the UK?

Slovakia is a member of [ENIC-NARIC](#), a network of national centres that aims to improve academic recognition of diplomas and periods of study in European Union (EU) member states, EEA countries and associated countries in Central and Eastern Europe. The website includes information on current issues on international academic and professional mobility, and on procedures for the recognition of UK (and other European) qualifications.

Visa and travel information

Visa requirements and applications

At present, as a member of the Schengen Area, EU or EEA citizens can enter the Slovak Republic without need for a visa. They have the right to remain as permanent residents in Slovakia. During their permanent residency they can work, conduct business or study.

They have the right to remain in the Slovak Republic for up to 90 days as tourists, as students taking short-term courses or as persons in short-term employment. If they wish to remain for longer, they must register as residents. See [Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic](#) (Ministerstvo zahraničných vecí a európskych záležitostí) for more details.

If you are from a non-EU country, contact the Slovakian embassy in the country where you are currently residing. If you are living in the UK, go to the [Embassy of the Slovak Republic in the UK](#).

You might also find it helpful to contact your ministry of foreign affairs (or your own embassy if you are not living in your home country) to ask whether there are any issues to be taken into account when considering working in Slovakia.

Permanent residency

If you plan to stay in Slovakia long-term, you have to register your permanent residency with the local police station within three days of arrival, and ask the police station to issue a permanent residency document. To register it is necessary to provide a passport, two photographs, proof of accommodation and a small fee. You can also apply for a 'green card'. Permanent residency is initially for a period of five years. See the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic website for details and application forms.

If you are from a non-EU country, please check with your embassy about regulations for working in this country.

Help in an emergency

The [British Embassy Slovakia](#) can help with lost passports, crime, judicial and health matters. 112 is the general emergency number used throughout the European Union and is particularly useful for foreigners.

Travel advice

Find the latest travel advice from the [Foreign and Commonwealth Office \(FCO\)](#).

Country overview

Geography

- **Full country name:** the Slovak Republic.
- **Population:** 5.5 million (UN, 2011).
- **Border countries:** Poland, Ukraine, Hungary, Austria and the Czech Republic.
- **Climate:** continental, with hot summers and cold winters. In July the mean temperature is 21°C (70°F). In January the mean temperature is -1°C (30°F).
- **Terrain:** very mountainous, with most of the north and central areas consisting of mountain regions divided by valleys, in which the main towns, cities, road and rail links are located. The south and south west is low-lying, with the flat Danube plain being a major agricultural region.

Living in Slovakia

- **Cost of living:** Slovakia is a cheap country to live in when compared with the UK. For more information on the cost of living see [EURES Job Search](#).

- **Internet domain:** .sk
- **Health:** healthcare provision is generally good. The EURES Job Search website has more information on healthcare in Slovakia. EU citizens just need to have the [European Health Insurance Card \(EHIC\)](#) in order to receive free medical care. However, do still take out medical insurance as not all treatments will be covered.
- **Laws and customs:** there are severe penalties for the smuggling, possession and use of drugs. Homosexuality is legal in Slovakia and there is a standard age of consent of 15. Attempts to legalise same-sex relationships have failed in parliament. Social attitudes in Slovakia tend to be very conservative, particularly outside Bratislava and the other larger cities.

Economy and finance

- **Currency:** Euro.
- **Type of economy:** capitalist, western.
- **Health of economy:** Like all countries, Slovakia has not escaped the effects of the global recession. Public sector cuts and cuts to state-owned companies have contributed to a rise in unemployment. However, Slovakia remains one of central Europe's strongest economies. It has been out-performing its neighbour, the Czech Republic, with 2012 seeing steady GDP growth. EU membership and low costs have attracted major foreign investment.
- **Unemployment rate:** unemployment has increased from 7.3% in 2008 to 13.5% in 2011 (estimated, The World Factbook). There are strong regional variations between the more prosperous west and the depressed east.
- **Main exports:** transport, machinery and electrical equipment, base metals, chemicals and minerals, plastics.

Culture

- **People:** the main ethnic groups are Slovaks, Hungarians and Roma. Slovak is the official language, but Hungarian is also widely spoken.
- **Major religion:** Roman Catholicism.
- **History:** see [BBC Timeline: Slovakia](#)

Politics

- **Type of government:** parliamentary democracy.
- **Major political parties:** Smer, The People's Party - Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (ĽS - HZDS), Slovak National Party (SNS), Slovak Christian Democratic Movement (SDKU), Christian Democratic Movement (KDH), Most-Híd and Freedom and Solidarity (SaS).

More information

- [Embassy of the Slovak Republic in the UK](#)
- [BBC Country Profile - Slovakia](#)
- [The World Factbook](#)
- [XE Universal Currency Converter](#)

Written by AGCAS editors, October 2012

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