



SLOVAKIA

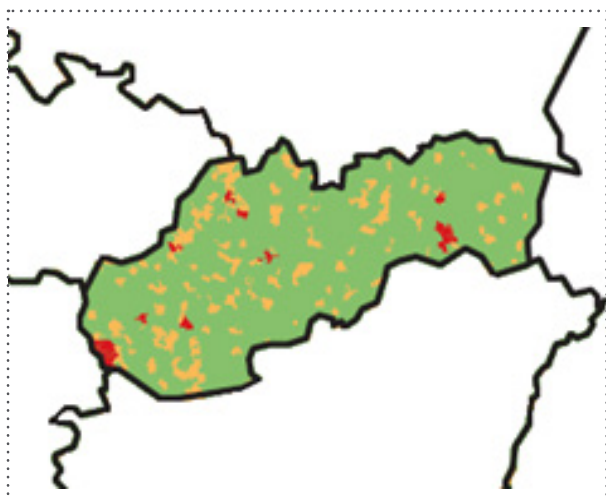
INSIGHT PAPER

Authors: Doina Dumitrescu
EIP - European Integrated Projects

Date: 01.05.2019

RURALITY (1)

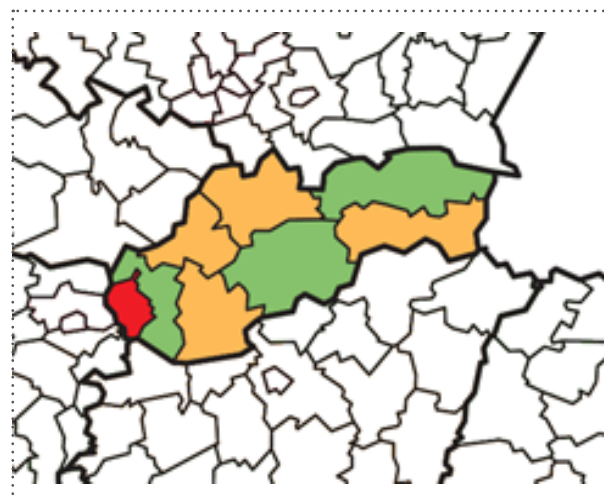
Degree of urbanisation for local administrative units level 2 (LAU2)



- Cities
- Towns and suburbs
- Rural Areas
- Data not available

Source: Eurostat, JRC and European Commission Directorate-General for Regional Policy, May 2016

Urban-rural typology for NUTS level 3 regions



- **Predominantly urban regions**
(rural population is less than 20% of the total population)
- **Intermediate regions**
(rural population is between 20% and 50% of the total population)
- **Predominantly rural regions**
(rural population is 50% or more of the total population)
- **Data not available**

Source: Eurostat, JRC, EFGS, REGIO-GIS, December 2016

DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION

22.6%

Share of people living
in cities

35.9%

Share of people living
in towns and suburbs

41.5%

Share of people
living in rural areas

Source: Eurostat, 2016

GEOGRAPHY

According to the Slovak Rural Development Programme for 2014–2020, Slovakia is a predominantly rural country, from a territorial perspective, with approximately 78.2% of its area classified as agricultural or forestry land¹. Furthermore, Slovakia had 5.4 million inhabitants, of which 88.7 % lived in the predominantly rural and intermediate regions which cover 95.8 % of the Slovak territory². As seen on the map with the degree of urbanization, the urban and suburban areas are condensed in the central – western part of the country, while the north – eastern, southern and eastern parts of the country are mostly rural.

In 1996, Slovakia was divided into 8 Self-Governing Regions (Higher Territorial Units) with 79 districts. The formation was based on social-economic situation. There are 2888 municipalities in Slovakia, of which 140 are cities. According to the urban-rural typology for NUTS level 3 regions classification from 2016, presented visually above, the regions are classified as follows: 3 regions are predominantly rural regions, 4 regions are intermediate regions and 1 region, Bratislava, is a predominantly urban region.

According to the Slovak Rural Development Programme for 2014–2020 (RDP), the main challenges identified for rural development, aside from the agricultural sector are related to social and economic challenges. The Programme presents the unemployment rate in rural areas as being 17%, much higher than the EU average, and even above 20% in several districts and many municipalities, the youth unemployment being very high (39%) and identifies that the marginalized Roma communities are mostly located in rural areas, where the offer of job opportunities is persistently low. The main needs identified by the RDP are investments in infrastructure, in diversification of the rural economy and in increasing human capital.

RURality (2)

21.8%

Share of people at risk of
poverty or social exclusion in
rural areas, **2016**

1.8%

Share of people aged 16 and
over who reported unmet
needs for health care in the
previous 12 months due to
expense, distance to travel or
length of waiting list in rural
areas, **2017**

10%

Unemployment rate, persons
aged 15–64, in rural areas,
2017

17.3%

Share of young people aged
18–24 neither in employment
nor in education or training
(NEETs) in rural areas, **2017**

Source: Eurostat

1 - 2014–2020 Rural Development Programme: Key facts & figures; value provided for 2010.

2 - Slovak Rural Development Programme for 2014–2020 (RDP), value provided for 2012.

NATIONAL POLICIES RELATING TO RURAL MOBILITY AND PUBLIC TRANSPORT

In Slovakia several documents establish the national development priorities for the transport sector, regional and rural development, but no dedicated policy for rural mobility or rural transport services could be identified. There is a gap between planning documents when it comes to rural mobility. The national transport planning documents focus especially on strategic developments by improving the national infrastructure and services, with some emphasis on passenger transport services in urbanized areas, while the rural development planning documents are limited in scope and support the development of local basic infrastructure.

At national level, the most relevant document for the transport sector is the ***Strategic Transport Development Plan of the Slovak Republic up to 2030***. The document builds on the Transport Development Strategy to 2020, which included a strategy for supporting and developing public passenger and non-motorized transport in Slovakia. The newest Transport strategy establishes the main development priorities of the national transport system, focusing on major national priorities for infrastructure, operations and organization. The plan does not provide dedicated interventions to support rural mobility, but it has a section dedicated to passenger transport, proposing the development of passenger services in urbanized areas, ensuring high-quality terminals and integrated stops. Furthermore, the strategy highlights interventions that would affect rural areas, such as an implementation of a new road concept, changes in road infrastructure administration and maintenance and the establishment of a national transport authority and public transport integration.

The ***Operational Programme Integrated Infrastructure (OPLI) for 2014-2020*** contributes to promoting the key national development priorities, with only an indirect effect on rural mobility by supporting public transport in major cities in Slovakia, and the modernization of road infrastructure outside TEN-T core networks.

The ***Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2014-2020*** is the main document that establishes the rural development priorities until 2020. The programme supports the development of rural areas through 6 priorities, most of which are dedicated to the development of the agricultural sector and environmental protection, but there is a priority dedicated to social inclusion and local development actions. Local Development

Strategies will be implemented through LEADER Local Action Groups and will cover over 20.84 % of the rural population. As a result of the operations programmed under this priority, it is expected that 1,100 additional jobs will be created and 3.67% of the rural population will benefit from improved services. The LEADER approach should also help in better use of local resources and to enhance the ownership of investments and cooperation of local actors in integrating economic activities for creating new jobs and improving the quality of life.

The ***Integrated Regional Operational Programme (IROP) 2014-2020*** is the document that establishes the regional development priorities and provides funding for them until 2020. The main objective of the programme is to contribute to the promotion of quality of life and to ensure sustainable provision of public services across the country. One of the 6 priorities focus on "Safe and environmentally friendly transport in the regions", more specifically by promoting sustainable local and/or regional transport systems, guaranteeing mobility and accessibility to the main services for all categories of citizens, based on public passenger transport and other sustainable modes of transport. In most regions, public transport is almost exclusively road-based, so the development and maintenance of regional (2nd and 3rd class) roads is included in the above-mentioned priority. The programme establishes that the development of roads must be dictated by the public passenger transport needs, and by assuring the connection of rural/remote areas to the road network of higher categories (motorways, expressways and first-class roads). The IROP is expected to support the reconstruction or upgrade of more than 150km of roads and conclude with 25% of individuals receiving social services on community-based level in line with principles of deinstitutionalisation.

INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

In the Slovak Republic, public administration is provided by state administration (central government) and territorial self-government (subnational government). The republic consists of 8 self-governing regions, their governing being in principle independent from the central government, but the two levels of government cooperate.

Responsibilities for rural mobility are not consolidated in one institution but rather sectorial, either focused on rural development, coordinated by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic (MARD SR) and transport planning, coordinated by the Ministry of Transport, Construction and Regional Development (MTCRD).

national companies are responsible for the delivery of national policies in the majority of cases. The decision-making process is rather vertical and lacks a structure that ensures mobility management policy development through effective multi-sectorial partnerships.

The 8 self-governing regions are responsible for the regional road networks (i.e. mostly repair and maintenance activities) and the supervision of the regional bus transportation (i.e. grant licences), while rarely operating own fleets of vehicles. The regions develop their own Regional Economic and Social development plans that contain transport development measures and priorities, but policy delivery is in most cases limited by delegated competences.



Photo from Shutterstock

The MARD SR is the Managing Authority for the rural and regional development programmes, with decision making prerogatives. For the Rural Development Programme, the Agricultural Paying Agency is the accredited Paying Agency and manages financial resources.

The Ministry of Transport, Construction and Regional Development (MTCRD) is responsible for strategic development and policy making in Slovakia and it coordinates the strategies, policies, programmes and tasks of national importance. The Ministry of Environment and Ministry of Health are cooperating in cross-sectorial agendas. The activity of the MTCRD is supported by responsible national bodies for each modal mean of transport (e.g. railway companies, and highway companies). State owned or private certified

The Slovak municipalities are responsible for operation of public transport.

In terms of infrastructure ownership, the state owns state roads and concession motorways, self-governing regions own regional and district roads, the municipalities own local roads and dedicated roads have various owners

REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

The main regulatory instrument is Law 56/2012 Coll. – Law on road transport. It establishes the legal framework for providing regular transport services, by setting rules of entrepreneur activity in road traffic and for accessing the profession of road traffic operator, rights and duties of the transport companies and passengers in bus services and taxi services, conditions of transporting dangerous materials, public administration in road traffic.

In the Republic of Slovakia, the transport service plan is the basis for awarding transport licences, drafting timetables of regular transport services and concluding contracts on services.

The Interreg Europe LAST MILE project analysed the Slovak legislation in order to assess the possibility to introduce flexible transport systems in the Kosice Region. A clear obstacle for flexible transport systems was considered the lack of national and regional legislation promoting sustainable transport, as only some types of systems have been defined by law. Other barriers for implementing flexible transport systems were the impossibility to secure financing through public funds due to difficulties in their integration into public transport systems and the absence of information services.

ORGANIZATIONAL FRAMEWORK

The main general mobility services in rural areas are public transport services, either bus services or rail services (i.e. regional and suburban trains).

Slovakia has a core road network of 483 km of motorways, 295 km fast roads, and 3311 km of class I roads (1.1.2018), Roads of class II (3610 km in total) cater for transport between larger cities and roads of class III (10357 km) serve to interconnect villages and connect them to higher roads (1.1.2018). Both class II and class III roads are currently operated by regional offices, as stated in the Institutional section above.

The passenger transport over short distances between neighbouring cities and villages is performed by the local bus lines, and they usually have a designated colour (i.e. blue) in Slovakia. The most available ticket option is a single ticket purchased with cash directly from the driver, however there are different reductions for specific categories of passenger. Some operators used also smart cards. The ticket fare is usually proportional to the journey distance in kilometres: i. the ticket for a journey up to 4km will cost 0.60 EUR, ii. for 10km it will be 0.80 EUR, iii. for 20km it will be 1,50 EUR, iv. for 30km it will be 1.60 EUR, v. for 40km the fare will be 2.00 EUR. The service is provided by different operators and the ticket fares may have small variations. Regional bus transport systems in the majority of regions are organised depending on passenger demand, and little-used lines are closed. The result is an unsystematic organisation of lines, which is not clear enough to attract new or occasional passengers.

The passenger transport over long distances between cities is performed by long-distance bus lines in Slovakia. Sporadically, they stop to board passengers in rural areas, but only in the largest villages. The long-distance bus lines in Slovakia operate on a frequent basis and run during the night. Tickets can be purchased from the driver, in advance at the bus station, and some companies offer the possibility to buy an e-ticket online. The ticket fare depends on the travel distance and transport operator. The Integrated Regional Operational Programme (IROP) 2014–2020 provides data about the evolution of ridership on the public passenger transport services. The share of public passenger transport (PPT) decreased from 50 % in 1995 to 30 % in 2008, while the share of individual motorized transport (IMT) for the same period increased to 70 %. Of the total number of 766 mil. PPT passengers in 2011, only 6 % used the train, 39 % used the road public transport, and 55 % used the vehicles of urban public transport (UPT).

In recent years, measures focused on improving the attractiveness of regional public transport services have been implemented, such as the renewal of vehicle fleets and the development of infrastructure. The IROP states that bus-transport still suffers from inadequate organization of traffic and low-quality conditions of stops and stations, very few amenities and inappropriate infrastructure. In long-term, regional public passenger transport bus services are dominant, but the number of passengers by buses is steadily declining, while the number of rail passengers remains approximately equal, despite the cancellation of several little-used train lines, mainly in regional transport.

ORGANIZATIONAL FRAMEWORK

Missing transfer terminals, inadequately-designed transfer nodes and a deteriorated condition of transfer stops decrease the attractiveness of public passenger transport and increase pressure on direct links without transfers. The potential for improvement lies in creating conditions for integration of various modes of transport and for improving the first contact of passengers with public passenger transport.

One of the key problems in the organizational area is the unsatisfactory coordination between the existing PPT sub-systems and the associated non-existence of integrated transport systems. The underlying reasons are the following: split of competencies in the area of transport ordering and financing, and working systems used by certain customers; outdated infrastructure or even total absence of transfer stops, hubs and terminals and integrated control and management systems.



Photo from Shutterstock

FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK

There seems to be no dedicated funding for rural mobility. Funding for rural mobility is dispersed across multiple funding sources, either for the transport sector or regional and rural development. The financing schemes of local policies come from municipal budget, state contributions, European structural funds and occasional external project-based funding.

Lack of funding has been the most significant barrier of implementing mobility measures in Slovakia in recent years. This barrier appears to be more challenging for urban areas, as municipal income and state subsidies cover only minimal maintenance of existing infrastructure and public transport services. The self-governing regions are also affected by lack of funding, especially since the majority of the budget received from the national level is being used for regional road repairs and maintenance.

European funding for mobility in rural areas (infrastructure and services)

EU-funded operational programmes for 2014-2020 are considered the cornerstone of Slovakia's medium and long-term development strategy. These programmes provide ample financing for designated priorities and have the potential to mobilize additional public national and private funding for sustainable mobility.

2014-2020 Operational Programmes and Management Authorities

Programme	Management Authority
Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2014-2020	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic
Integrated Regional Operational Programme (IROP) 2014-2020	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic
Operational Programme Integrated Infrastructure (OPI) for 2014-2020	Ministry of Transport, Construction and Regional Development of the Slovak Republic

FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK

OPLI Slovakia – finances the main transport infrastructure investments for all sectors, with a particular section dedicated to support and facilitate public passenger transport services in main cities. Promoting sustainable transport and removing bottlenecks in key network infrastructures is a thematic priority of OPLI with an allocation of approx. EUR 3.5 billion.

IROP Slovakia – aims to contribute to the promotion of quality of life and to ensure sustainable provision of public services across the country. Benefits include a balanced and sustainable regional development, as well as economic, territorial and social cohesion of Slovak regions, cities and municipalities. The programme allocates more than EUR 500 million to promote safe and environmentally-friendly transport in regions, on a dedicated Priority Axis.

RDP Slovakia – is putting emphasis on actions related to restoring, preserving and enhancing ecosystems, promoting social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development in rural areas. The Slovak RDP is allocating a total of EUR 2.1 billion which will be devoted to development of the agricultural sector and rural areas, of which EUR 1.55 billion is from the EU budget and EUR 534 million represents national funding. RDP has a dedicated priority which provides financial support for social inclusion and local development (i.e. Priority 6), with 2 measures that can finance basic infrastructure and other rural development priorities: Measure 07 Basic services and village renewal and Measure 19 LEADER / CLLD. The allocated sums for these measures are of approx. EUR 200 million and it is expected that 20.84% of the rural population will benefit from improved infrastructure.

OTHER INFORMATION

As presented in the Institutional section above, the self-governing regions have certain responsibilities for managing passenger transport at regional level, but there are limitations to actual policy delivery. It is expected that their current responsibilities might be enhanced by passing the regional railway operation responsibilities to regions. In the Slovak Republic, some regions have already started public cooperation and partnerships in order to introduce integrated regional networks development, however there are still many obstacles and real implementation delay. One particularly advanced case is the Kosice region, where a formal consortium was established in order to develop integrated suburban passenger transport. The consortium is composed of the city of Kosice, the railway management company and the self-governing region.

Furthermore, the Kosice region is involved in the Interreg Europe project LAST MILE, through the Agency for the Support of Regional Development Kosice. The LAST MILE project aims to find innovative and flexible solutions for sustainable regional mobility systems, providing alternatives to cars for last mile trips. In the case of the Slovak Republic, the project addresses implementation improvements of regional development policy and programme focused on the transition to a low carbon economy. Two sustainable mobility projects have been identified as good practices in the Kosice Region, but both of them have a strong

touristic component: i. Nostalgic train – sightseeing in Košice region and surrounding areas, ii. CykloTour Spiš – Tourist bike rental system.

The CykloTour Spiš touristic bike rental system was implemented in the Slovak Paradise National Park and helps to overcome the last mile for tourists that are not prepared for long hiking trails. The number of tourists is increasing and it proved difficult for some of them to explore the park on lengthier trails. The system has over 300 bicycles, distribute in 3 docking stations, connected to public transport services. The bicycle rental is also available at hotels and guesthouses in Slovak Paradise. The service operates from May until the end of October and the price to rent one bicycle is €5. The off season is used for the maintenance of bikes.

The Nostalgic train is an alternative to individual car to visit touristic attractions by public transport in the areas where regular railway transport has been discontinued. On the route currently operated by the Nostalgic train, the previous regular public train service was stopped and the only method to travel to certain touristic interest point was by individual cars. Along selected regional routes, nostalgic “event trains” are only a seasonal tourism offer (from May until September). The practice was initiated in 2009 and is currently considered successful as interest for such “eventrides” has grown each year.

KEY STAKEHOLDERS AND MINISTRIES ADDRESSING RURAL AREAS

TITLE	ROLE
Ministry of Transport, Construction and Regional Development (MTCRD)	The ministry was recently formed by merging and uniting the agendas of Transport, Construction and Regional Development and currently has responsibilities to coordinate strategies, policies, programmes and tasks of national importance. The MTCRD is the managing authority for Operational Programme Integrated Infrastructure (OPII) for 2014-2020.
Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic (MARD SR)	The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development is responsible for fulfilling the regional and rural development priorities, being the Managing Authority for the two development programmes. The ministry is also responsible with drafting legislation or methodological guidelines for the agricultural sector.
Agricultural Paying Agency (PPA)	The Agricultural Paying Agency is a state administration body for providing support and subsidies. The Paying Agency is a budgetary organization involved in financial relations with the MARD SR budget. The PPA is located in Bratislava, but in order to ensure the performance of selected activities, the PPA creates regional workplaces with a defined scope of their activities and a territorial area of their competence.
National Transport Authority	The National Transport Authority has responsibilities for road transport, particularly related to approval of vehicles, systems components and separate technical units, compulsory qualification and periodic training for drivers, and the Uniform Information System in Road Transport. Furthermore, the agency is a contact point for national registration authorities in other Member States of the European Union.
National Rural Development Network (NSRF)	The National Rural Development Network of the Slovak Republic is being hosted by the Rural Development Agency during 2014-2020. The NSRF brings together the organizations and administrative bodies involved in rural development for the correct and smooth implementation of the Rural Development Program 2014-2020. The main objectives of the networks are to: i. increase the participation of stakeholders in rural development, ii. improve the quality of implementation of rural development programs, iii. inform the wider public and potential beneficiaries about rural development policy and on funding opportunities, iv. promote innovation in agriculture, food production, forestry and rural areas.
Transport Research Institute Žilina (Výskumný ústav dopravný, a.s.)	Transport Research Institute was established more than 60 years ago. The company has been dealing with important assignments of national significance with economic impact, resulting from major research projects in the field of creation and implementation of transport policy. The related extensive know-how integrates the institute into the scientific and research basis of the Slovak Republic. In 2002, the Institute has transformed to a private joint stock company, with no substantial changes in the structure and competence of the company. The Transport Research Institute represents an organization of science, research and development with a long tradition and research potential in the field of transport.
University of Žilina	University of Žilina with its sixty-five years of history belongs to one of the leading educational and scientific institutions in Slovakia. With its rich tradition it occupies a significant place among Slovak universities. This fact is not only connected with the number of students or offer of interesting and quality study programmes but the university also has the significant research and foreign activities. The university is focused especially on transport and communications.
Agency for the Support of Regional Development Kosice (ASRD)	The ASRD was established by the Košice Self-governing Region as a non-profit organization dealing with general interest needs. According to the LAST MILE project, the main purpose of the organization is to assist public services and support sustainable regional development and employment by creating conditions and providing relevant mechanisms.

LINKS TO WEBSITES

- Ministry of Transport and Construction of the Slovak Republic – www.mindop.sk/en
- National Transport Authority – www.mindop.sk/ministry-5191/transport/national-transport-authority
- Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic – www.mpsr.sk/en
- Rural Development Agency – www.nsrv.sk
- Agricultural Paying Agency – www.apa.sk
- Transport Research Institute Žilina (Výskumný ústav dopravný, a.s.) – www.vud.sk/en
- University of Žilina – www.uniza.sk/index.php/en

REFERENCES

- Evidence of the Proven Economic Benefits of Sustainable Transport Initiatives to Facilitate Effective Integration in Urban Mobility Plans (EVIDENCE) - <https://ec.europa.eu/energy/intelligent/projects/en/projects/evidence>
- Evidence project - Identifying barriers, hooks and opportunities: WP4 Country Profile Report Slovakia - [link](#)
- Integrated Regional Operational Programme (IROP) 2014-2020 - [link](#)
- Rural Development Programme (RDP) 2014-2020, factsheet - https://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/sites/agriculture/files/rural-development-2014-2020/country-files/sk/factsheet_en.pdf
- Slovak Rural Development Programme for 2014-2020 (RDP), Slovak language – www.apa.sk/index.php?start&navID=496
- 2014-2020 Rural Development Programme: Key facts & figures, Slovakia - https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/sites/enrd/files/sk_rdp_qnt_summary_v1_2.pdf
- Operational Programme Integrated Infrastructure (OPII) for 2014-2020 - <https://www.opii.gov.sk/opii-en/titulka-en>
- Strategic Transport Development Plan of the Slovak Republic up to 2030 - [www.opii.gov.sk/download/d/sk_transport_masterplan_\(en_version\).pdf](http://www.opii.gov.sk/download/d/sk_transport_masterplan_(en_version).pdf)
- LAST MILE Interreg Europe: State-of-the-Art of regional public transport systems and particularly flexible systems - www.interregeurope.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/tx_tevprojects/library/file_1505207658.pdf
- LAST MILE Interreg Europe Sustainable mobility for the last mile in tourism regions: Policy exchange about flexible mobility alternatives for tourists and locals - www.interregeurope.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/tx_tevprojects/library/file_1538054976.pdf
- Slovak legislation on passenger transport - Act No. 56/2012 on Road Transport Slovak - www.slov-lex.sk/pravne-predpisy/SK/ZZ/2012/56/20160101