



Guide for Asylum Applicants and Beneficiaries of International Protection
in the Slovak Republic

=> A NEW START IN THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

INTRODUCTION

This brochure has been developed by the Migration Office of the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic in cooperation with external experts and beneficiaries of international protection to help asylum applicants and beneficiaries of international protection navigate through the different services available to them in Slovakia. The brochure provides basic information on the asylum procedure and asylum applicants' stay in a reception centre for the duration of the procedure. The brochure also gives information on Slovakia as a country, the Slovak people and their way of life, their traditional food and describes the possible cultural differences asylum applicants and beneficiaries of international protection may run into when living among the people in Slovakia. The brochure sets out basic rights and freedoms of status holders, including those who enjoy asylum and those who benefit from subsidiary protection. The brochure further provides some practical information on housing, health care, employment, education, the financial system, leisure time and travelling in Slovakia. Last, but not least, the guide contains useful emergency and other important contacts to be used in case of need.



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ASYLUM PROCEDURE

In SR, after fulfilling the conditions stated in the Act on Asylum, the following forms of international protection are granted:

By submitting an asylum application, asylum procedure begins. Asylum procedure is a process, when reasons for granting international protection and hence the possibility of legal residence in the Slovak Republic, are examined.

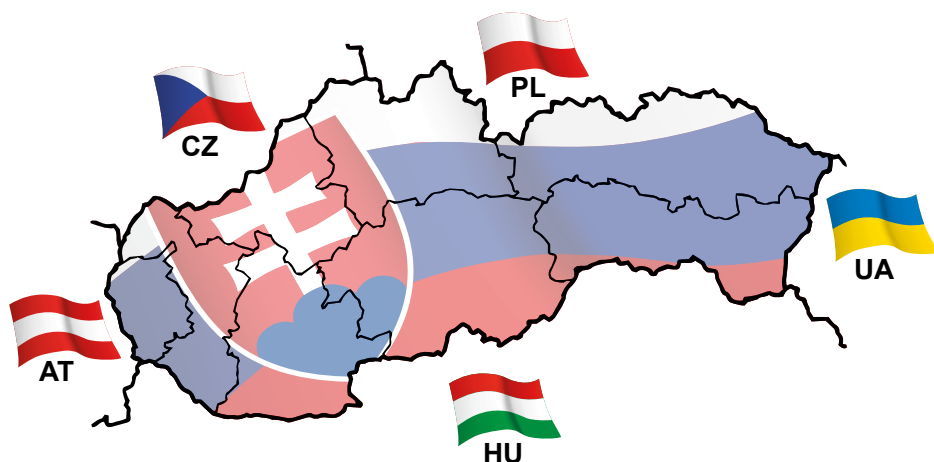
The country responsible for processing an asylum application is always the first country which the person enters. By the moment asylum procedure starts, it is not possible to apply for asylum in another country. It is specified in the Dublin Regulation more in detail. The person who submits an application for asylum in another country **WILL BE RETURNED BACK TO THE COUNTRY WHERE THE ASYLUM PROCEDURE HAS ALREADY STARTED**, or application was made for the first time.

ASYLUM is granted to a person who is unable to seek protection in his/her country of origin, in particular for fears of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership to a particular social group or political opinion. Therefore, asylum is granted in cases of threat aimed at individual for particular reasons while...

...SUBSIDIARY PROTECTION is granted on a temporary basis for a limited time until the threat or serious harm in the country of origin no longer exists (indiscriminate violence etc.).

In specific cases, **asylum on humanitarian grounds** may be granted.

Detailed information on the asylum procedure will be given to you at the Humenné reception centre in the form of Instructions for an asylum applicant on rights and obligations during the asylum procedure, in the language you understand.



Arrival to Slovakia => stay in the reception centre Humenné

- ➔ Medical examinations are done within approximately 30 days – stay only within premises of the reception centre
- ➔ Interviews with “decision-makers” aimed at the assessment of asylum application

Negative decision

or

Positive decision = asylum or subsidiary protection =>

Participation in the integration project (accommodation, Slovak language lessons, work, social and legal counselling) at least 6 months

When first procedures are done, transfer to accommodation centre follows:

- ➔ Rohovce accommodation centre – only for men
- ➔ Opatovská Nová Ves accommodation centre – women, elderly people, families

At the time **WHEN YOU ARE A BENEFICIARY OF SOME FORM OF INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION IN SR, IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO GET INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION IN ANOTHER COUNTRY** by applying for international protection there.

It is also important to keep in mind the fact **that the length of your stay in another EU country within Schengen area, e.g. family members visit, should not exceed 90 days within 180 days period.**

Slovak Republic has 90 days for making decision on your asylum application (in justified cases, however, this period may be extended)

This length of stay may exceed 90 days if you have a work or another kind of permit in that country, or you have justified reasons to stay there longer. It is important you announce this matter to the Department of Alien Police. Nevertheless, you should check the Schengen Border Code since there are other conditions you should fulfill in order to stay in another country longer, otherwise you might be expelled.

STAY IN THE ASYLUM CENTRE

” IN CASE YOU ARE GRANTED
ASYLUM OR SUBSIDIARY
PROTECTION IN SR,

YOU CANNOT VISIT YOUR
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN.

IF YOU DO SO, YOU MAY
LOSE YOUR STATUS OF
INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION.“

Waiting for a decision on your application with an uncertain result is a challenging process. However difficult it is, we offer you some opportunities to spend your time efficiently. During your stay in the asylum centre, you have an opportunity to prepare for the change. Staying in the centre may seem endless, but try to spend the time with something beneficial for you in cooperation with the social workers who are present in the centre.

People in Slovakia really appreciate, if you demonstrate even little effort to communicate in Slovak language.

If you join Slovak language classes, you will be able to handle everyday situations much better and if you are taking them seriously, you may get an advanced level which gives you great advantage in the labour market.

Although it is difficult, Slovak language is manageable and very important for a satisfactory life in Slovakia. The sooner you start, the sooner you will feel more independent and more satisfied.

At the same time, you will find adequate work much faster. Not everyone communicates in English.

If you want to apply for Slovak citizenship after certain period of time, one of the conditions for acquiring citizenship is a good knowledge of the Slovak language.

This is verified by examination. If you do not fulfill this condition, you may not be granted citizenship of the Slovak Republic.

Asylum holders may apply for the citizenship of SR after 4 years. Subsidiary protection holders may apply after 10 years if they were granted long-term stay before they apply for the citizenship of SR.

Cultural orientation lessons will help you to prepare for life in SR, to prepare for the differences and Slovak way of life, because *what is obvious and natural for you MAY NOT BE so for the Slovaks, and vice versa.*



SLOVAK REPUBLIC



Official language: Slovak

Capital city: Bratislava

Population: 5 435 343 (2016 estimate)

Currency: euro

DISTANCE BETWEEN PLACES

Košice - Bratislava	cca 408 km
Humenné - Bratislava	cca 470 km
Žilina - Bratislava	cca 208 km
Rohovce - Bratislava	cca 32 km
Opatovská Nová Ves - Bratislava	cca 210 km

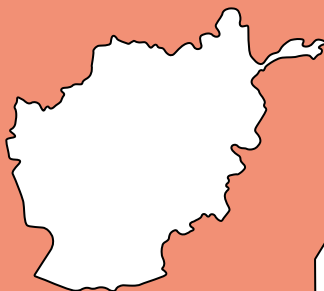
Politics and government: SR is a parliamentary democracy. Head of the state is the president - elected directly by the citizens for a five-year term. Parliament consisting of 150 members elected by citizens in parliamentary elections holds legislative power, executive power is exercised by the government and juridical power by independent and impartial courts.



SLOVAKIA



SYRIA



AFGANISTAN



SOMALIA

LANDSCAPE

There are many hills and mountains in Slovakia, especially in the northern parts of the country. South is formed by lowlands. In general, there are many beautiful protected areas.

Popular activity of many Slovaks is therefore mountain hiking - long walks through challenging terrain, especially during the warmer season. In winter, people ski on the hills.



In winter, snow is common in most areas of the country. Temperatures typically range from 0 to -20 degrees.



Spring begins with nature turning green and blooming (March - May).



followed by summer when temperatures can rise up to 35 degrees.



Then comes autumn, during which the slowly falling leaves are getting colored tones, and temperature decreases gradually (September - November).



WINTER

- If you go outside during winter without appropriate clothing (in shorts, without socks, barefoot), you can get frostbites very easily.
- *People dress up into warm clothes and put on warm shoes in order not to get a cold.*
- Firm closed shoes, socks or stockings, long pants, long sleeves, warm jacket, hat, gloves and scarf are typically worn.



SUMMER

- Slovakia is a country, where everyone wears what he/she wants. One of the reasons, why people wear **short clothes, thin or even transparent dresses, is that there is hot weather during summer.** Another reason is constantly changing fashion, which many women and also men follow. **Sometimes shorter, sometimes longer dresses are worn.** **Clothing is a very individual issue.**
- When it is raining, people use umbrellas.
- *Public swimming pools serve for refreshing and are visited by everyone without distinction - children, men and women.* People are swimming in swimsuits as well as bikini - not in other types of clothing.
- People usually swim also in lakes and rivers.



NATIONALITIES AND FOREIGNERS IN SR



NATIONS:

Slovaks (85,8 %), Hungarians (9,5 %) – mainly in areas close to the border with Hungary, Roma (1,8 %), smaller minorities are formed by Czechs (0,8 %), Rusyns (0,4 %), Ukrainians (0,2 %), Germans (0,1 %) and Poles, as well as Croatians, Serbians, Russians, Moravians, Bulgarians, Italians, Austrians and Vietnamese.

There are also smaller numbers of persons from Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Egypt, India, Libya, Morocco, Nigeria, Vietnam and many other countries.

Although their total number is low, in cities like Bratislava and Košice, it is quite common to meet a foreigner.

SLOVAKS MIGHT SEEM CLOSED AND FOR THE FIRST SIGHT, QUITE COLD. IT COULD BE ARGUED THAT DUE TO THE SMALL NUMBERS IN SR, SLOVAKS ARE NOT USED TO FOREIGNERS, ESPECIALLY TO THOSE FROM DISTANT COUNTRIES. ITS HISTORIC CHARACTER MAY SERVE AS AN EXPLANATION:

*During the existence of the block of socialist republics in 1948-1989, Slovaks had limited freedom of movement. Given such isolation, interaction with the surrounding world was very limited. It also means that Slovaks could travel to certain countries only, in particular to the countries of the so called Eastern Block – some countries of Eastern Europe. **The experience of Slovaks with different, especially remote cultures is therefore significantly weak.***

*As a result, Slovaks have more restrained attitude towards foreigners, especially towards cultures distant from the Central European area. It is important to remember that not all of the Slovaks are the same. To a great extent, after **Slovaks get some experience with foreigners, they are more open.** Those who have not much experience with foreigners, of course, keep their distance. But they need an experience - and in these cases **you have the opportunity to give these people a positive experience** through contact with you.*

On the other hand, Slovaks are very **curious**, they want to know more and therefore, they are used to asking questions that you might not have expected. It is not a demonstration of impoliteness, but only a way to find out whether there is a common interest.



RELIGION

Majority of Slovaks identify themselves as Christians. Most prevalent church is Roman – Catholic (62 %), followed by Evangelical church (5,9 %), Greek – Catholics (3,8 %) and Calvins (1,8 %). There is also a small number of Jews in SR.

NON – RELIGIOUS PEOPLE FORM APPROXIMATELY 14 % OF THE WHOLE POPULATION.

Despite the fact that most of the Slovak people consider themselves **Christians**, **not all of them strictly follow traditions**, such as fasting, visiting church on regular basis/ attending church services.

Main Christian holidays represent Easter and Christmas. During these holidays people are not working, they usually visit each other, eat together and give gifts to each other (especially on 24th of December, when people celebrate Christmas).

Judaism



Currently there are approximately 3 000 – 5 000 Jews living in Slovakia. **There are many synagogues** in SR, and most of them are used only as a cultural heritage or gallery, which means they do not serve religious purposes anymore.

To those which are active belong Orthodox synagogue on Heydukova street in Bratislava, (www.synagogue.sk/en/home) or Orthodox synagogue in Prešov (www.synagoga-presov.sk/en/), once or twice a week there is a service in the synagogue on Dlabačova street in Žilina (www.kehilazilina.sk/index.html).

Islam



Currently, there are around 5,000 Muslims in Slovakia according to estimations. Islam is not an officially registered religion because of the small number of its followers. In Slovakia there is not any mosque, but in some of the cities there are places where Muslims can pray together.

The Slovak constitution guarantees freedom of religion, including Islam.

Places where the Muslim community can meet:

As the Islamic community is small, Slovakia does not have any mosque (closest mosque is in Vienna, Austria), the Muslims are meeting in different places.

In **Bratislava**, there are such places in Ružinov, on the Peterská street, in Petržalka, and the oldest one is to be found in passage behind the Obchodná street in the city center. In **Košice** there is a room for prayers called Alhuda on Rožavská street.



SLOVAKS AND DIFFERENCES (CULTURE, NATIONALITY, HAIRSTYLE...)

The perception of otherness in the society is various. People who like travelling are more open towards differences and do not look so surprised when they see a foreigner. **HOWEVER, THERE ARE ALSO PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT ASHAMED TO STARE AT OTHER PEOPLE IF THEY SEE SOMETHING UNUSUAL.** Although it may be uncomfortable for you, many Slovaks simply enjoy staring at others. It can be due to unusual clothing, a bold hairstyle, a darker skin color or anything else. They simply demonstrate surprise or just plain curiosity.

As a result of events around the world and intensified media coverage of terrorist attacks in Europe, some people may feel fear or express negative attitude not only towards Muslims, but towards foreigners in general. **Therefore, for some people, a woman wearing a scarf or a darker man can recall the picture similar from the one in media which subsequently makes certain people feel they are in danger.**

Media is constantly causing panic, and so people have feeling there is a threat. This situation is similar in other European countries. Fear and ignorance can lead people to uncontrolled behavior. *For this reason, try to be patient even with unpleasant people, let them know you and your culture better, or simply ignore them. It is also important to note that not everyone has the same attitude.*

**IT IS IMPORTANT TO
NOTE THAT THE LAW IN
SR PROTECTS EVERYONE
EQUALLY FROM INJUSTICE.
THERE SHOULD BE NO FEAR
TO REPORT ANY CRIME,
ATTACK, OR ANY FORM OF
VIOLENCE ETC.**

EMPLOYMENT

Working days - from Monday to Friday are considered to be days when most people work. Weekends - Saturday and Sunday are days off for most of the population. People usually spend this time in their households, with gardening or sports, etc. **However, this rule may not apply to all.** Since many businesses and services are also available on weekends, some employees work on the basis of shifts that may require working also during the weekend. **They mostly adapt to how their days of work and leave are determined by their employer.**

If you do not come to work without having a reason for that and your employer was not acknowledged about it in advance, you may be sanctioned, even by being fired out. **If there is a serious reason which makes you unable to work (sickness, for example), you must notify your employer about it as soon as possible and pass a confirmation from your doctor to your employer or take an official day off.** People in Slovakia are considered as hard-working and so they expect certain responsibility also from the others.

That is why **many Slovaks in order** to be able to cover their life expenses **work even up to 16 hours a day**, regardless of whether it is Monday or Sunday.

YOUR STATUS IN THE LABOUR MARKET

In case of being granted asylum or subsidiary protection, you do not need a work permit to work in SR. Even more, you will fall into the category of disadvantaged job seekers in the labour market. If you register in a job seeker's list at the appropriate Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (Labour Office), at least communicative knowledge of Slovak language is required. However, some obligations are

associated with registration. You must follow certain rules such as regular reporting to the assigned official to confirm that you are looking for a job. In case you are registered at the Labour Office, you can use services such as job counseling and courses to acquire different skills requiring at least basic knowledge of Slovak language.

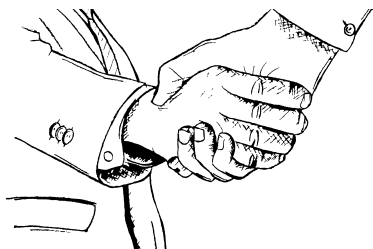
Three months after you register, your employer may receive a financial contribution - *it may be beneficial for the employer and therefore motivating.* Your social worker will help you register at the Labour Office.

We recommend:

- ➔ Immediately after receiving international protection you can start working. It is likely that employers will try to convince you that you need a WORK PERMIT. **In your case, you really DO NOT NEED a work permit.**
- ➔ Try to provide social workers with as much information about yourself as possible. Try to speak about your skills while staying at the asylum centre, it is for your own good. This will help social workers recommend you different types of suitable occupations. Speak about what you have learned in the past, what your hobbies are, what your strengths are, what you have experience with. **The effort you invest in looking for new job opportunities will be your reward later on.**

SEARCHING FOR A JOB

It is recommended to start with searching for a job well in advance, yet before the planned date when you will be ready to start. **The basic rule of a successful person is "if you search for an opportunity, you will definitely find it."**



There are many job opportunities in SR, but it is important for you to know how to find them and at the same time, how to get to them. Part of the assistance when searching for a job will be provided by your social worker, but ***your active approach is absolutely necessary and makes the same part of the success.***

EXPECTATIONS OF EMPLOYERS

Slovaks face difficulties when looking for a job, and at the same time, employers have quite high expectations. For you to be well prepared, according to the experience of Slovaks we recommend the following:

- Never rely on one employer only.
- Try to contact as many employers as you can.
- When the employer tells you that right after interview **he will contact you for sure, it is normal when he will not do so.** Do not get disappointed, and **do not take it personally**, Slovaks looking for a job deal with the same issues.
- During the interview, **show as much flexibility as possible.** Try not to claim too many conditions, because it has counterproductive effect.
- It is also recommended to **show interest in any job offer. Do not say immediately no**, or that it is not something that you expected, be polite and show your gratitude, and tell the employer that you will contact him later on. You will have time to think over it and the person who offered you a job will not be disappointed that you are not appreciating offered help – Slovaks are very sensitive about this.

- **Come to your job interview on time**, or be there 10 minutes in advance, being late gives impression that you are not interested in the offered job or you are unreliable.
- **Try to avoid questions about possibility to do praying at the workplace**, in SR people practice faith in privacy or at religious institutions, not at the workplace.
- It is also not common to get automatically days off from your employer during Ramadan or another religious holiday **as the faith is solely a matter of private character.** If you want to leave for the reasons mentioned above, you can ask your employer for **days off as part of your holiday that you are eligible for according to the law.** It is at least 20 working days a year. It is up to you when you take your holiday, you can do it anytime as long as it adheres to the specific rules of the place you are working in - it does not have to be taken at once.

You can inform yourself about the work also in person. It means that **YOU CAN VISIT THE COMPANY, SHOP OR RESTAURANT YOURSELF WHERE YOU ASK DIRECTLY THE PERSONNEL IF THEY NEED A NEW EMPLOYEE.** At the same time, you should keep in mind that not everybody who speaks with you is competent to decide whether to accept you or not. What can happen is the situation in which a random employee denies your request immediately. However, his or her boss would not maybe do that – the responsible person is usually an owner or a manager of the place.

You can search for work on internet – for example, on www.profesia.sk, or www.istp.sk that is an online guide through different jobs – there are official work positions, which are posted through the Centre of Labour, Social Affairs and Family.

In case you are looking for a job with a specific employer, employers sometimes post available vacancies on their own websites. **If you find a vacancy (available job position) you are interested in, send your CV to the employer as soon as possible.** Even if no vacancy is posted on internet, contact the employer anyway. Some employers do not post vacancies anywhere.

IT IS IMPORTANT THAT YOUR CV IS IN A GOOD FORMAT AND THE INFORMATION IS CLEAR AND WELL DESCRIBED.

Your social worker can help you with writing a good CV.

You can also check some CV samples on internet (www.profesia.sk/napisat-zivotopis/).

A good platform to create more comprehensive and organized CV according to European standards: www.europass.cedefop.europa.eu/

Assistance with searching for a job:

- Migration Office also tries to support beneficiaries of international protection with finding a job by contacting various companies directly. **If you need help, send your CV to diana.bucakova2@minv.sk and do not forget to write what area you would like to work in.**
- **A good CV should contain** – the place where you worked before; what your position was; what tasks you had (some description of your previous work activity); what your education is; what languages you can speak; what interests you have; and the area of work you are interested in.
- **In order to help you, we need to know if you have any documentation (it can be also a copy) from your previous job, school or any other documentation proving your skills (certificate, diploma, transcript of records) – then, the process of official recognition of these documents may begin, without this recognition the employer may not trust you.**
- **But if you do not have any documentation or certificates do not worry**, because the employers look for experience, and if you do not have any experience, you will get an experience over time.

In Slovakia, there are various areas in which you can specialize. First, **try to find yourself in some of the following categories according to your experience or interests, for example:**

- IT
- Languages/interpreting
- Gastronomy/cooking
- Cleaning (housekeeper)
- Manual work (construction work, automobile companies)
- Craftwork (floor installer, bricklayer, painter, carpenter)
- Accounting
- Medicine (doctor, medical assistant)
- Hand work (sewing)
- Beauty (nails, make-up, hair)
- Other

SALARY CONDITIONS

Government of SR yearly sets the amount of minimum gross wage. For the year 2018, the amount of 480,- € was set per month. **HOWEVER in Europe in general, and in this case in SR, EVERYONE SHOULD PAY TAXES and insurance payments** out of this amount.

Tax is a payment to the State, for which we receive back certain benefits in form of public infrastructure, schools, emergency services (medical services, police etc.) and many others. **It is not possible to avoid paying taxes. DOING SO MAY RESULT IN PROSECUTION – it is a serious crime.**

Insurance payments serve for paying pensions (retirement pension, early retirement pension, or disability pension) or they serve for compensation of salary in case you cannot work due to objective circumstances (serious illness, work accident, job loss etc.). Also public health care insurance is paid from the taxes, which means that you have access to free health care.

ATTENTION! FOR THESE REASONS, YOU WILL SEE TWO DIFFERENT AMOUNTS ON YOUR SALARY BILL:

Gross earning – salary before taxes are withdrawn

Take-home (net) earning – salary reduced for taxes

This take-home earning is the amount of money which you receive from the employer.

This is a useful link for calculating taxes and insurance payments:
www.ekonomika.sme.sk/kalkulacky/kalkulator-cistej-mzdy-2017.php.

The employer usually sends money directly to the bank account of the employee. For this reason and many others, *it is important to open a bank account.*

EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT

Before you start working somewhere you need to sign an EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT on one of the employment terms.

The contract should be agreed on voluntary basis and signed by both sides – the employer and the employee. It is crucial for your own security. **It is even illegal to work without it.** **Do not rely on unwritten “promises”.** In the contract, working conditions are specified. Working hours should be defined there too (usual working time is 8 hours/day) together with financial benefit for conducted work – written in untaxed amount (your salary).

Types of employment contract forms:

Permanent employment contract (*trvalý pracovný pomer*) – this type of employment terms is the most advantageous one because it is associated with **stability**, you receive money regularly – working time is around **42 working hours per week**. However, your employment contract may be dissolved due to reasons stemming from the law (serious breaching of working discipline...).

Contract on work performance (*Dohoda o vykonaní práce*) – serves for the performance of specific activity in a defined time. It may be perceived also as a **one-time work as it is timely limited**. Performance of **work cannot exceed 350 working hours per year**. At the same time, you can have a number of contracts with various employers, or have different contracts on various activities with the same employer. However, even if you have more contracts, altogether you cannot work more than 350 hours per year.

Contract on work activity (*Dohoda o pracovnej činnosti*) – On the basis of this contract you can work only **10 hours per week**.

Contract on student’s temporary work (*Dohoda o brigádnickej práci študentov*) – You can agree on this contract if you are a student not more than 26 years old. With this contract you can work for **20 hours per week**.

OPENING A BANK ACCOUNT AND OTHER FINANCIAL TRANSACTIONS

Tatrabanka, ČSOB, Prima Banka, VÚB, Slovenská Sporiteľňa, Raiffeisen are examples of banks, where you can open a bank account. There is usually a monthly fee for holding the bank account which is mostly around 4 euros per month. Every bank has different terms and conditions under which you open and use your account. But obviously, banks may change their fees.

For example, holding an account at M-Bank is without fees, you pay only for frequent withdrawals from ATM, but you are not charged when paying with a credit card.

Opening a bank account is easy. You only need a document confirming your identity. When you are granted international protection, you will need to demonstrate your residence permit card. Usually you confirm your identity through identity document (ID, passport). Slovaks are used to save their money in a bank account, not in cash.

It is also highly recommended not to walk in streets with high amount of money. It is much safer for the person to have only little money on him/her instead of high amounts. It is better to walk with credit card instead.

ATM withdrawal

→ If you want to economize, withdraw money from ATM of the same bank where you opened your bank account. Withdrawal from a different bank is usually charged.

In SR, it is possible to use services such as Western Union for various financial transfers from/to almost all over the world. In SR, there is also service named Money Gram, which provides similar financial services to Western Union www.secure.moneygram.com.

It is possible to borrow some money from the bank, however **as you borrow, you have to pay some extra fees for borrowing in form of interests – which is not just the amount you were provided, but it is an additional amount in form of fees that you will have to pay in addition.**

Leasing means buying an object (a car for example) on the basis of monthly payments.

Only after you pay the whole amount of money, you will get the ownership rights over the object.

Mortgage loan is a form of loan, when the amount of money is being paid back to the bank on the basis of regular payments over some period of time. People usually take a mortgage loan when buying a house or flat. In turn, you have to pay **some fees (interests) to the bank as in exchange for taking a loan.**

DEALING WITH FINANCES

When starting up a business, taking loans, signing contracts of whatever kind or in situations of serious inability to pay, people are used to seek a lawyer. In this way, they avoid signing texts which they do not understand or the lawyer can simply provide them with a professional advice how to solve the problem. Also, they can get an advice on what should be done next.

Firstly, contact your social worker who will recommend you how to reach the right person.

If you fail to use all options of legal counseling, you can use free legal support guaranteed by the State called **Centre of Legal Support:**

www.centrumpravnejpomoci.sk



HOUSING

By the moment you are granted asylum or subsidiary protection, you will be provided assistance with finding adequate starting accommodation. It depends on the actual offer in various cities, especially in terms of prices as well as work and education opportunities. For individuals, a room in shared dormitory or flat is usually ensured.

“Assignment” of accommodation after getting international protection is done on the basis of communication between Migration Office and NGOs. Factors such as location of accommodation, price, presence of schools/kindergarten (in case of children in particular), social facilities (elderly etc.), work possibilities, presence of any support network of persons who are key during your first months in the new country (social worker, cultural mediator, volunteers, community etc.), are taken into account.

You can refuse the assigned accommodation. In such case however, you will have to cover all accommodation expenses on your own without our assistance.

In Bratislava, housing prices reach enormous heights, which means that sometimes it is better to choose life in a different city.

Also, some people prefer to live on the periphery of the city (in a small village etc.), while they still work in the city what makes their journey a bit longer. Slovaks usually live nearby larger cities, and everyday they take longer way to work – 1 hour journey by train or bus to work is nothing unusual.

After a while you will have to cope with expenses related to accommodation on your own.



When you are going to rent an apartment or a room, ***it is common that the owner may ask for a deposit when signing a contract at the amount of 1-month rent.*** This deposit serves as a guarantee for the owner if some damages occur, or bills for energy remain unpaid. When you agree with the owner to end the contract, deposit will be returned back to you. If you are searching for an accommodation through housing agency, **the agency usually charges a fee (it can be up to the amount of 1-month rent)** for getting you the place. Thus, it can happen that before you move in you will have to pay the amount of 3-month rent (one for renting, another as a deposit, third for agency).

On internet, there are many offers, for example:

www.reality.sk
www.m.byty.sk

After some time, some of you might be willing to buy own house or apartment. In countryside, real-estate is much cheaper in comparison to cities. As a person who holds a status of international protection you are allowed to take a loan, nevertheless **only persons who prove they have stable work and regular income at adequate amount are eligible for taking a loan regardless of being a Slovak or a foreigner.**

HEALTH CARE

In SR, health care is provided by state and private health care institutions. **Asylum holders belong to the category of persons who are included in the public health care system in the same way as Slovak citizens.** Public health insurance applies by the moment the person is granted asylum. Therefore, right after you become an asylum holder, you are obliged to register at the relevant office of the health insurance company (Všeobecná zdravotná poisťovňa, Únion, Dóvera) until **8 days the latest from the beginning of eligibility for public health care – from the moment of receiving positive decision on asylum.**

Useful websites of health care institutions:

www.vszp.sk,
www.dovera.sk,
www.unionzp.sk

If you were provided subsidiary protection, you are eligible for the same services and acts as asylum holders, or Slovak citizens. The main difference is that you will receive a different document (a pink card), however, the extent of eligibility remains the same. Mechanism of refunding is slightly different, because it is the Ministry of Interior which refunds the money directly to the health care institution. As a result, health care is ensured without any difference.

Document about eligibility to receive health care which is issued to the subsidiary protection holder (pink card):

- ➔ Sometimes, doctors look surprised when they see a “pink card” and claim they have no idea what it is. ***BUT anyway, they should have information about this card.*** It is really not associated with administrative burden. ***Your social worker will inform you about this if you participate in the integration project.***
- ➔ **Doctor is obliged to provide healthcare treatment** when this card is shown. **If the doctor refuses to provide you healthcare treatment, the best you can do is to call your social worker right from the place.** If you cannot manage, remember the name of the doctor, so we can deal with it later on.

Doctors have usually working hours from 7:00 am. – 15:00 pm., not the whole day. It is also common to make an **appointment in advance.** For some treatments, people can wait even few weeks.

In special circumstances, when serious health condition comes into question (broken part of body, bleeding, unbearable pain etc.) emergency health care service may be attended. Headache or other temporary condition of ache is not considered as serious condition to seek health care emergency service. At emergency health care service, doctor provides first aid only and orders patient to visit his or her general practitioner according to the location of residence and during working hours.

EDUCATION



Compulsory school attendance means, that every child living in Slovakia must attend school from the age of 6 years until 16 years. Absence of child at school is excused only on grounds of illness or sickness, and when a **written excuse from the doctor is handed to the school teacher or other serious family circumstances are in play.** The school teacher should be informed about the absence of the child at school as soon as possible, ideally by a phone call from the parent yet at the day of absence.

In case parents do not comply with compulsory school attendance – the child does not attend the school, state officials must examine the reasons why it is happening. As a consequence, such action is associated with sanctions – children may be taken from parents and subsequently placed into foster home (specialized facility for children without parents). Parents may become a target of criminal charges for threatening moral education of youth.

Children and school

In schools, it is common that **all students, both girls and boys, stay in the same class, have the same schedule, and together they attend the same lessons.** They have, for example, compulsory sports lesson, which may sometimes include also swimming or any other sport activity.

In Slovakia, **10 years of school attendance is compulsory starting usually from the age of 6 years.**

TYPES OF SCHOOLS:

Kindergarten (age 3-6) provides children with basic knowledge and skills, develops their language skills, thinking and interests. Attendance of kindergarten from the age of 5 is obligatory and serves as a preparation for entrance into elementary school (pre-elementary education). Children are enrolled in kindergarten which lies in the area of your permanent or temporary residence address.

Elementary school (age 6-15) has 9 grades, and is divided into 1st (1-4) and 2nd (5-9) degree. Parent of the child is obliged to enroll the child into elementary school to comply with compulsory school attendance in the district of residence at the time of enrollment.

HIGH SCHOOL

Gymnasium (Grammar school) – general education, preparation for university studies (lasts 4-5 years)

Specialized high school – provides students with education for work purposes (crafts, gastronomy, sport) or for university studies

Conservatory – it is a specialized school, which offers a mixture of arts and pedagogic education (6 years – it is associated with earlier finish of elementary school)

UNIVERSITY

Generally, university education is divided into two degrees ➔ I. Bachelor degree (3 years), II. Master degree (2 years).

In universities, education is mostly provided in Slovak language. Here you can find all information about universities in Slovakia: www.portalvs.sk

There are some examples of universities where you can also study in language other than Slovak (usually English language):

Comenius University in Bratislava offers a possibility to study in English language in the following programs:

➔ **Faculty of Medicine:** General Medicine, Dentistry
www.fmed.uniba.sk/en/study/for-applicants/entrance-examination/

➔ **Philosophical Faculty:** I. degree: Central European Studies
www.fphil.uniba.sk/en/studium/uchadzac-prijimacie-konanie/

➔ **Faculty of Pharmacy:** II. degree: Pharmacy
www.fpharm.uniba.sk/en/education/admissions/

➔ **Faculty of Natural Sciences:** I. degree: Environmental Studies; Biochemistry
www.fns.uniba.sk/en/study/

➔ **Jessenius Faculty of Medicine in Martin:** General Medicine
www.jfmed.uniba.sk/en/studium/uchadzaci-prijimacie-konanie/

➔ **Faculty of Mathematics, Physics, Informatics:** II. degree Physics of the Earth
www.fmph.uniba.sk/en/admissions/

➔ **Faculty of Management:** I. and II. degree
www.fm.uniba.sk/en/studium/

For foreigners, who would like to study at Comenius University and their mother language is not Slovak language, there is a preparatory grade. During the studies at preparatory grade, students focus intensively on studying Slovak language as well as acquiring the core academic knowledge: www.cdv.uniba.sk/en/ilps/courses/

Economic University in Bratislava – focuses on areas such as international economic relations, management...

➔ **Faculty of Business Management:**

- I. degree: Business Economics and Management

www.fpm.euba.sk/medzinarodne-vztahy/bachelor-s-programme,

- II. degree: General Management

www.euba.sk/studium/studijne-programy-v-cudzich-jazykoch/international-management

➔ **In French language in Faculty of Commerce:**

- II. degree: Sales Management

www.obchodnafakulta.sk/en/

➔ **In German language in Faculty of Economic Informatics**

- II. degree: International Finance Management

www.fhi.euba.sk/en/

Technical University Košice (TUKÉ)

- Faculty of Mining, Ecology, Process Control and Geotechnology; Faculty of Metallurgy; Faculty of Mechanical Engineering; Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Informatics; Faculty of Civil Engineering; Faculty of Manufacturing Technologies (Prešov); Faculty of Economic, Faculty of Arts; Faculty of Aeronautics
www.studium.tuke.sk

UNIVERSITY APPLICATIONS:

➔ Applications for studies are filled out and submitted couple of months in advance. In some faculties, deadline for application is already in February, even though semester begins in September.

➔ It is possible that you will have to repeat the same year at school. The reason for that is a need to improve your language skills and get your previous studies officially recognized. For SR, it is often complicated to recognize different school system, such as the one from the country you come from.

THE WAY OF LIFE IN SR

INDIVIDUALISM

In comparison to other countries, in Slovakia as in other EU countries, everybody relies on himself/herself. It can be in terms of work or education. **Community life which might be typical for other regions of the world is not common in Slovakia.**

However, there are obviously neighborhoods or associations, in which people help each other. **People may become connected through work, interests, sport, religion, or other shared activities.**

RAISING CHILDREN

Raising children is normally in hands of their parents, although the school teacher may be involved in it as well. As part of education, Slovak parents are used to give children some rules. It is why it may seem parents are very strict. **School teacher also expects certain discipline** which children learn especially “at home”.

Average Slovak family has 1-3 children, which can be slightly different from your country of origin. Having no children in family is likewise very common in Slovakia.

KNOWLEDGE OF SLOVAK LANGUAGE

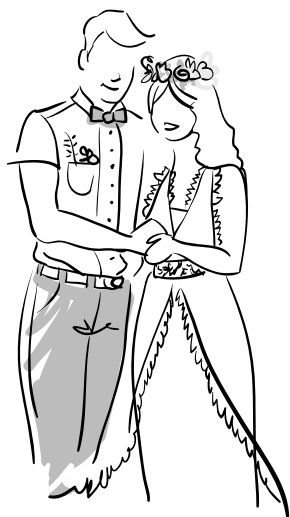
For the above mentioned reasons it is important to know Slovak language, to express what you want and feel, and also for the others to be able to react to your signals. Knowledge of Slovak language will facilitate you creation of new social networks. **Although SR is a small country, language is crucial for your own security and future Slovak citizenship.**

WOMEN AND SOCIETY

In SR, women have the same position and rights as men. They study and carry out all types of employment according to their own skills. It is common that men meet women in all areas of public life.

Women in Slovakia move around with or without company of others.

People can publicly express their feelings regardless of gender, be it by hug or kiss, which does not necessarily determine any relationship between them.



MARRIAGE AND PARTNERSHIP

Marriage is a contract **between one man and one woman. By law, it is not allowed to be married to more than one person. If this happens, this person may be sentenced to even two years in prison. In case the person would like to get married again, it is necessary to demonstrate an evidence about divorce or death certificate of former wife/husband.**

In addition, contrary to some other EU countries, same sex marriages are not allowed in SR.

In case of insoluble disputes in marriage, one of the partners may apply for a divorce at relevant court. According to the statistics from 2013, for 100 marriages there were 43 divorces.¹⁾ In Slovakia, divorce is a frequent phenomena. By divorce, the court may decide which parent will care for and stay with children.

Also “alternate care” is quite often phenomena in SR. It means that parents alternate children in regular intervals after they get divorced. When it comes to questions related to prospective divorce, your lawyer may help you as part of the legal counseling.

In SR, it is also common to live in a partnership. Man and woman live together without being married. Likewise, it is also usual when one parent (it does not matter if it is a man or woman) raises children alone. In Slovakia, approximately quarter of children lives in incomplete families.

In general, BOTH MAN AND WOMAN CONTRIBUTE TO THE COURSE OF HOUSEHOLD ON THE BASIS OF MUTUAL AGREEMENT (they both do activities such as cooking, cleaning, care for children etc.).

In SR, it is possible to meet with people who have **homosexual orientation** (partnership vs. feelings of a man toward another man/of a woman to another woman). **It is legal in Slovakia.** There are people who support LGBT views, others, on the other hand, deny these views. But for **all of the people**, there is law to be complied with, which protects individual rights and freedoms.

EXPRESSIONS OF HATRED TOWARDS ANY GROUP ARE NOT ACCEPTABLE AT ALL.

¹⁾ Štatistický úrad SR

PREGNANCY VS. BIRTH-CONTROL AND ABORTION

Using contraception and ending pregnancy through abortion under strict conditions are legal in SR. Deciding over one of these methods of preventing or ending pregnancy depends solely on the decision of a woman, it is very personal.

Every woman in Slovakia has her own gynecologist, who may be a woman or a man. Gynecologist may advice methods of protection against undesired pregnancy. Few types of birth-control exist, which may be prescribed under agreement with a gynecologist.

Slovak legislation allows for pregnancy interruption on the basis of the law on pregnancy interruption. In Slovakia, there are two categories of pregnancy interruption: interruption for health reasons, and interruption without health reasons, but as a claim by the woman until 12 weeks of pregnancy the latest.

If you decide to get an abortion, contact your gynecologist, who will give you more details about the hospitals, where the abortion is done.

Another possibility is to bear a child and put the newborn for adoption (www.adopcia.sk).

In case the mother wishes to stay anonymous, there is a couple of options:

SECRET CHILDBIRTH

The law enables a woman, who wants to keep her pregnancy in secret for some reasons, to undertake the so called "secret childbirth." The law stipulates that the woman with unintended pregnancy may go to any hospital with a request that she would like to deliver a child in the regime of secret childbirth. It is a safe way of solving unintended pregnancy. The newborn child has a free legal status and is determined for adoption. From the medical perspective, both child and mother stay in adequate care.

For doing so, mother needs to fill out a formula when being accepted to the particular department of hospital. Information is subsequently well hidden and securely put in the safe-deposit box of that hospital. Mother is registered at the department only under number.

EMERGENCY BED (Hniezdo záchrany)

In case the woman gives birth to a child and has serious personal reasons for hiding it, she can deliver the child without impunity to the so called "emergency bed", where health care will be provided right away. On this website: www.hniezdozachrany.sk, you can find a list of cities, in which these beds are located as well as legal issues related to it together with a manual how to use the incubator. This option is considered to be as a solution of last resort. If the woman decides to undertake such solution, it is always safer for the woman and child to opt for secret childbirth.

Anyway, such solutions are usually not recommended since leaving the child with his or her mother is always the best solution.

Websites where you can find more information:

www.health.gov.sk
www.hniezdozachrany.sk
www.adopcia.sk

In case you want to become pregnant and you cannot succeed, there is an option of artificial insemination or adoption of children from parents who could not provide care to them, for example:

www.gyn-fiv.sk
 or
www.iscare.sk



TRAVELING IN SLOVAKIA AND TO ABROAD

In SR, people usually use public transport to get from one place to another such as by using buses and trains. Taxis are much more expensive and therefore used only occasionally.

In Bratislava, you can get from one place to another by bus or tramway (električka) – you can search buses or tramways on this website: www.dpb.sk or there is a useful android app iTransit BA; in Kosice it is the same, you can find information here: www.dpmk.sk.

Traveling in Slovakia – from one city to another you can travel by bus or train.

More information on: www.cp.sk

Also, there are private transport companies such as Regiojet (www.regiojet.sk) which provides also intercity and international bus connections as well as train connections. Another one is for example Arriva, which offers long-distance bus journeys or trains on the direction to Prague, Czech Republic (www.arriva.sk). Often, these companies are cheaper than classic buses or trains.

Information solely about trains you can find on: www.zsr.sk. By train you can also access areas nearby or at corner part of Bratislava (Vrakuša, Nové Mesto, Devínska Nová Ves) from Main Railway Station (Hlavná vlaková stanica).

Train tickets can be bought directly on this website: www.slovakrail.sk – it is much faster, you only have to keep the electronic ticket on your phone and then show it to the ticket inspector when being on a train.

How to travel to other countries?

- In case you are an asylum holder you are eligible to apply for a travel document according to Convention of 28 July 1951 valid for 2 years. Since Slovakia issues the travel document, the same conditions apply as for citizens of SR, but only within the Schengen area. To countries outside EU, you must fulfill specific visa requirements of the specific country.
- In case you are a holder of subsidiary protection and you do not have any passport, the Alien's Passport may be issued to you valid for one year. Similarly to asylum holders, if you want to travel to countries outside EU, you should fulfill specific visa requirements of that particular country.
- To other EU countries you can travel with valid travel document and residence permit in SR.



DRIVING LICENSE

In SR, you are eligible to do a driving license course. It is possible that driving license from certain countries of origin will not be recognized in Slovakia, so you will have to apply for a new one and pass the driving course.

Driving licenses issued abroad are recognized only if the state which issued the driving license is also a party to the Vienna or Geneva Convention on Road Traffic. Following states are party to the convention, which means that driving license or international driving license issued by these countries is also valid on the territory of Slovakia. In particular, it is:

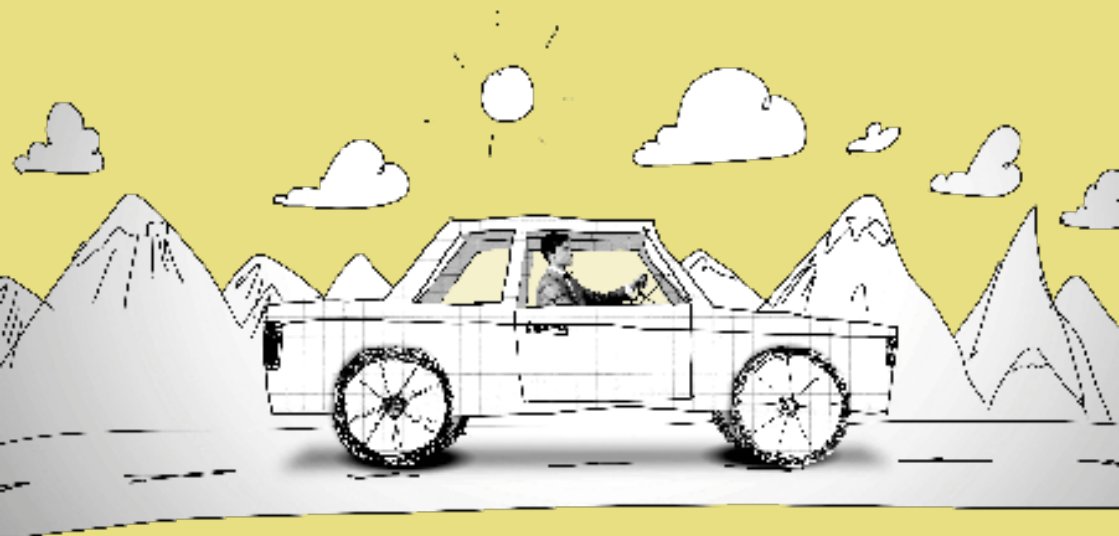
→ **Cambodia, Ghana, India, Iran, Namibia, Pakistan, Rwanda, Syria, Ukraine and others.**

In case you will get a residence stay in Slovakia, you are obliged to ask for replacement of your original driving license for the Slovak driving

license. You can apply for it when you are granted international protection and 185 days pass from the moment you become a holder of residence stay permit.

After getting residence permit card +185 days you can replace your original driving license within 60 days at Police Authority. After the expiry of 60 - day period, your driving license becomes invalid.

If your driving license is issued by a country, which is not a party to the Vienna or Geneva Convention about Traffic Rules, you need to undertake a driving license course, which is paid (this amount is around 600 € - 650 €). Similarly to the course, the examination to successfully finish the course is only in Slovak, Hungarian or English language. Subsequently, when you finish the course you will be granted driving license with which you will be allowed to drive a car in all EU countries.



FOOD - WHAT IS COMMON IN SLOVAKIA?

The main elements of Slovak cuisine are **potatoes, cabbage** (esp. sauer cabbage), lentils, **beans (dry), flour** - from which bread is made, **cheese** - from cow, sheep, **eggs, chicken and pork meat**, as well as **beef**. Slovaks also eat a lot of fish like carp, trout. Fruits and vegetables are consumed according to its availability in the particular period - depending on the period in which they grow in Slovakia.

OUT OF COMMON ARTICLES OF FOOD WHICH ARE COMMONLY CONSUMED TOGETHER WITH THEIR AVERAGE PRICES ARE:

- ☞ chlieb - bread - 0,80 to 1,50 €
- ☞ 250 g maslo - butter - 1 to 2 €
- ☞ 1 l mlieko - milk - 0,45 to 1 €
- ☞ 1 kg kuracieho mäsa - chicken meat - 2,50 to 4 €
- ☞ 1 kg hovädzieho mäsa - beef - 4-15 €
(it so much depends on which part)
- ☞ 1 kg bravčového mäsa - pork meat - 3,50 - 7 €
- ☞ 1 kg teľacieho mäsa - veal - 6 - 11 €
- ☞ 1 kg syr - cheese - 5,50 to 10 €
- ☞ 10 ks vajcia - eggs - 1,15 to 1,60 €
- ☞ 1 ks rožok - bread roll - 0,07 €
- ☞ 1 kg kryštálový cukor - crystal sugar - 0,75 to 1 €
- ☞ 1 kg múka - flour - 0,59 to 1 €
- ☞ 1 kg ryža - rice - 1,49 to 2,50 €

COMMONLY CONSUMED DRINKS AND OTHER ARTICLES:

- ☞ 1 l džús - 1 l juice - 0,90 to 1,50 € (juice in SR does not mean 100 % fresh, but rather a drink with a taste of fruits. 100 % fresh juice is slightly more expensive around 2 - 3 € per 0,5 litre)
- ☞ 2 l coca-cola - 2 l Coca-Cola - 1,20 to 1,40 €
- ☞ 1 porcia zmrzliny - 1 ladle of ice-cream - 0,50 €
- ☞ 100 g káva - 100 g coffee - 1 to 2 €

- ☞ 0,5 l pivo - 1 bottle/ 0,5 l beer - 0,40 to 1 €
- ☞ 0,5 l alkohol 40 % - 0,5 l of alcohol 40 % - 3,80 to 10 €
- ☞ cigarety - cigarettes - 2,60 to 3,50 €

HOW TO SAVE MONEY?



Tips:

- ➔ Rice in the Slovak Republic is imported. Each of the supermarket chains offers several types of rice, but their price is different. Basmati rice, jasmine or parboiled rice (usually packed in paper boxes) is twice as expensive as regular rice. In specialized grocery stores, it may sometimes be more advantageous to buy in large packs, and in regular supermarkets during discounts.
- ➔ It is most preferable to buy groceries in supermarkets, especially when you follow discounts - discounted products in a given week (Lidl, Tesco, Kaufland, Terno ...), which you can find on weekly leaflets of every supermarket chain.

THE FOLLOWING VEGETABLES ARE CONSUMED THE MOST:

SPRING (March - May) - lettuce, spinach, asparagus (starting in April)

SUMMER (June - September) - courgette, eggplant, tomatoes, peppers, lettuce, peas, strawberries (beginning in late May), raspberries, blackberries, blueberries, peaches, nectarines, grapes

AUTUMN (September - November) - pumpkin

WINTER (November - February) - cabbage

During the whole year - carrots, parsley, celery, dill, potatoes, onions, garlic and, of course, apples (all of the listed items will last for several months if stored well)

Curiosity:

- Because vegetables and fruits do not grow in winter, those grown in summer or autumn are conserved or fermented, especially cucumbers, cabbage, peaches, apricots ...

Where to buy fruit and vegetables cheaper?

- ideally in local markets and seasonal (those ones growing in the given period)
- in Bratislava we recommend visiting the market on Miletičova Street
- in Košice there is a big market in the Dominican Square

Tips:

In the winter months, non-seasonal fruits (such as strawberries, watermelons, tomatoes, and many others) are imported and are therefore twice or even three times more expensive.

TRADITIONAL FOOD:

Bryndzové Halušky

(potato dumplings with sheep cheese "bryndza" and bacon) is one of the national dishes in Slovakia.



Traditional homemade dishes include potato pancakes "lokše". Favorite soups are cabbage soup, garlic soup, lentil soup, bean soup, various vegetable soups (carrots, parsley, cauliflower, peas...), and consommés. Soup represents essential part of every lunch.

Traditional Slovak cakes are made of chou pastry or they are stuffed cakes (šišky) filled with jam, poppy seeds, cottage cheese or nuts. Very popular are also salty cakes such as cabbage (kapustník) and potato cakes (pagáče), and pancakes - sweet and also salty. The specialty is steamed dumplings (parené buchty), trdelník, as well as pirohy.

www.slovenskepovestikdebolotambolo.webnode.sk/typicke-jedla-pre-slovensko/



In addition to typical Slovak dishes, you can find also dishes typical for other countries, Italian restaurants serving pizza and pasta, Asian restaurants or bistros serving sushi, falafel, noodles etc., we have many Vietnamese bistros and also great number of kebab places.

DRINKS

- **Kofola** - has a delicate coffee flavor and is similar to Coca Cola
- **Vinea** - is a drink made from grapes
- **Hot beverages** - coffee (Nescafé type of coffee is common, also Poprad's coffee "Popradská káva" is popular among Slovak people), tea (especially herbal tea - mint, thyme, balm, camomile...), boiled wine with wedges and punch (during the Christmas season)
- **Žinčica** (sheep milk)

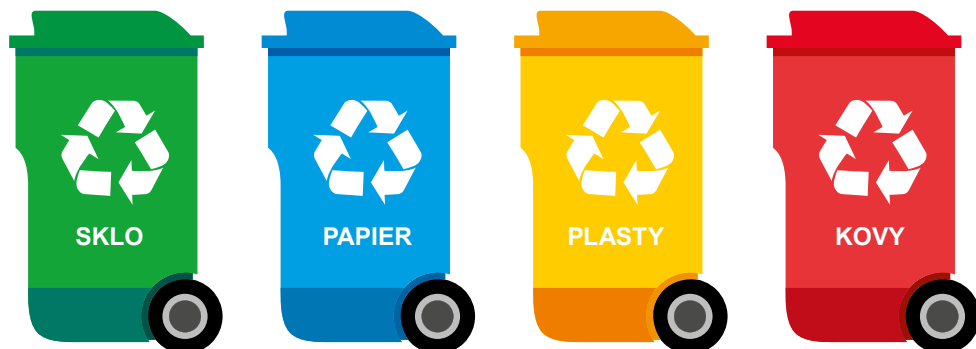
ALCOHOL

Consumption of alcohol at reasonable amount is socially accepted. There are many breweries, bars, pubs in SR, where you can drink beer. The consumption of alcohol is accepted equally for men and women.

WASTE

Waste is never thrown freely onto the ground. If doing so, the person may receive a high financial sanction.

Waste classification - where waste is disposed, it should be separated if possible. This means that glass like bottles is thrown into a recycle bin for glass, plastic (most of the bottled water is made of plastic) is thrown into a recycle bin for plastic and the paper goes to the recycle bin for paper, and metal is put into a bin for metal.



CONNECTION WITH THE OTHERS - PHONE CALLS, MEDIA, INTERNET...

In case you participated in a TV interview, radio or any public debate, you should be aware that the information you publicly present will be made available to a large number of citizens as well as foreign people.

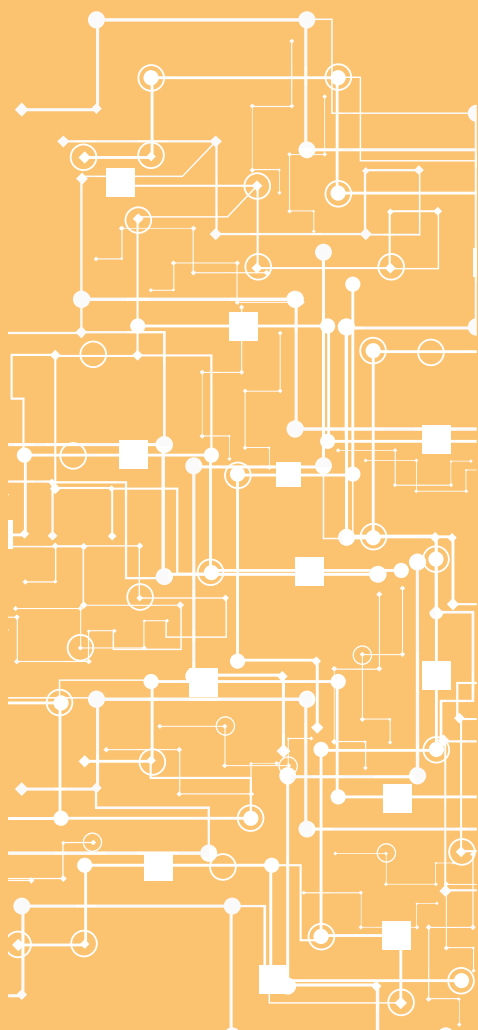
Without your consent, TV, newspapers, radio or other persons are not allowed to post your personal information (name, surname, date of birth, photographs, videos) in any way. This is a major interference in the right to protection of personality. In the event that your personal information is disclosed without your consent, you can contact the lawyer for assistance in preventing this situation.

There is a large number of television stations in Slovakia (RTVS, Markíza, JOJ, TA3...), radios (RTVS, FunRadio, Expres, Europe 2...) and newspapers (SME, Pravda, Hospodárske noviny). You can get insight into events around the world and also in Slovakia, by reading them you can slowly improve the Slovak language.

Mobile operators where you can buy a SIM card in SR and ask for internet connection:

- Slovak Telekom (www.telekom.sk)
- Orange (www.orange.sk)
- O2 (www.o2.sk)
- 4ka (www.4ka.sk) - possibility of purchasing a SIM card at any Slovak Post Office
- Tesco Mobile (<https://m.tescomobile.sk>)

You can pay for your SIM card on a monthly basis or you can buy "credit" with any amount of money to be spent on calling.



WHAT TO DO IN YOUR LEISURE TIME?

There are several non-governmental organizations in Slovakia that either jointly with the Migration office or independently organize activities aimed at the integration of migrants into the Slovak society.

NGO Mareena, formerly known as the civic association "Who Will Help" (www.ktopomoze.sk) is an association that organizes various cultural events for foreigners and brings together people who want to help foreigners and get to know them better.

FESTIVAL FJÚŽN (www.fjuzn.sk) – a festival that actively engages foreigners, organizes various debates, thematic events – through food, community based creative activities, educational activities – www.facebook.com/festival.fjuzn.

BABINEC – It is a multi-cultural association that is attended by various women of different nationalities. Its aim is to provide space for interesting moments shared in the community and accompanied by handmade art (e.g. henna ornaments). Meetings are held several times a year (the group can be found on facebook).

The Goethe Institute in Bratislava offers free use of the library with internet access and also the possibility of taking a course of German language (free of charge).

E-learning of Slovak language – in this way you are able to learn Slovak anywhere and anytime online – www.e-slovak.sk

Language cafes are here as a place to practice language skills with random people while talking about anything:

Language Café in Bratislava:
www.m.jazykovanie.com/news/jazykova-kaviaren/

Language Café in Košice:
www.jazykovakaviaren.sk/index.php

Once in a while Migration Office organizes non-formal meetings with those who have been granted international protection in SR.

Public libraries – free book rental – possibility to read magazines and newspapers free of charge (domestic and foreign), reader's pass is cheap and so it is a perfect opportunity to improve your Slovak language and meet new people.





You can also visit **theater performances** (e.g. Slovak National Theater in Bratislava - www.snd.sk), overview of all theaters and performances in Bratislava can be found here: www.citylife.sk/miesta/divadla. Here you can search for various activities in Košice: www.visitkosice.eu; www.kosice.sk.

Various interesting musical events are also organized by the Slovak Philharmonic Orchestra (www.filharmonia.sk) or Slovak Radio, as well as by other alternative music clubs that can be found depending on the music genres.

There are also many exhibitions and galleries such as the Slovak National Gallery (www.sng.sk - free entry), or Bratislava Danubiana (www.danubiana.sk) where you can see an interesting collection of modern paintings not only of Slovak but also foreign art. In addition, Bibiana might be very interesting for children (www.bibiana.sk). Slovak National Museum has a number of branches all over SR (www.snm.sk).



An overview of all cultural events in Bratislava can be found: www.citylife.sk, and in Košice: www.visitkosice.eu

Most towns and villages in Slovakia have their own websites with an overview of everyday cultural as well as sporting events. During the open days, many institutions have free entrance.

There are many castles, chateaus and mansions

in SR. It is worthwhile to visit some of them. In the vicinity of Bratislava you can visit the castle Červený Kameň (about 30 km), further north there is Bojnice castle, the Spiš castle in the east and many others, see: www.hrady-zamky.sk or www.muzeum.sk/?obj=hrad&ix=1&zoznam.



Cycling is quite popular in SR from spring to autumn, which means that people are sitting on a bicycle and go exploring the nature, surrounding villages etc.

In summer, **public swimming pools** are often visited, in winter you can warm yourself up in **hot water pools** (near Bratislava, for example, Veľký Meder and Patince, in the north there is Bešeňová and others - www.kupeleslovenska.sk, www.kupele.org).

BASIC RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS

Basic rights and freedoms are ensured on the territory of SR regardless of gender, race, skin color, language, religion, political or other thinking, national or social origin, belonging to some nationality or ethnic group, property, status, or other position.

Besides rights and freedoms people are required to follow the law. The law is superior to religious rules. **Sanctions follow when the law is breached – from warning, financial sanction to stay in the prison.** In SR, there is no death sentence.

Examples of activities, which are forbidden in Slovakia, and which are associated with severe consequences in form of criminal sanctions:

Theft

You are committing theft in case you take some object which does not belong to you from some place (in a shop for example) or from other person without consent of that person. For such doing you may be sentenced up to 2 years in prison.

Defamation

Situation, when the person spreads false information about someone else, which damages status of that person in the society, can lead up to 2 years in prison.

Not announcing criminal activity

In case you know about some activity against the law being a criminal activity, you are obliged to announce it to the police authorities. If you do not do so, you may be sentenced up to 3 years in prison.

Attack

You will be punished for physical attacking of other person depending on how serious damage on health you caused that person.

For such doing, you may be sentenced up to 2 years in prison. In case you cause a very serious health condition of the person, it may rise up to 10 years in prison, and in case you caused death of the person, you may be punished up to 20 years in prison.

Female genital mutilation

Female genital mutilation/genital cutting is forbidden in all EU countries. Its practice in SR may be assessed as a crime. By practicing female genital mutilation, the person who has carried it out may be sentenced to almost 10 years in prison.

→ Those women who had to undergo this harmful procedure in the past are recommended to seek a gynecologist right away.

Domestic violence

In Slovakia, **it is not allowed to punish physically or psychologically close relatives** (such as wife, husband, grandparent, child) – **offensive language, extortion, limiting personal freedom, sexual violence (including rape and forcing towards sexual act).**

Filling up sexual appetite requires acceptance from your counterpart. If one side says NO, which is not respected, it is not a sex, BUT VIOLENCE.

This includes beating, kicking by hitting, causing wounds, humiliating...

IN SR, WOMAN HAS THE SAME RIGHTS AS MAN = they are equal.

In Slovakia, woman has equal right to life without violence as man, as well as protection against violence be it violence by husband/wife or partner.

Children shall not be punished physically – if father hurts a child and mother knows about it but she does not announce it to the relevant authorities, **both father and mother may be put**

under criminal charges and end up sentenced in prison. Also, child may be withdrawn from the parents and placed in a foster home. For committing violence on relatives, there may be sanction of sentence up to 8 years in prison.
www.linkadeti.sk/deti/nasilie-v-rodine

Drugs (weed, cocaine, methamphetamine, LSD, hashish, khat...)

In SR it is not allowed to keep drugs or get involved in drug industry in any way (sale, production, transfer, import, export...). It includes any drugs and elements which can serve for drug production. For such doing, according to the extent of your involvement and amount of drugs, you may be sentenced to prison up to 3-10 years.

Sexual harassment of women

Culture of SR does not allow men to touch women without their agreement regardless of whether the man likes the woman or not. Touching and one-way attempts to closer contact are not acceptable in the society of SR.

Violent behavior towards women (touching, attempt to kiss without consent of the woman) for a reason that you would like to get to know her can be assessed as an attempt to rape or attempt to sexual harassment. **For such doing you may be sentenced up to 10 years in prison.**

As a sexual harassment it may be considered also using words which intentionally address sex, and other inappropriate words aimed at someone. By committing sexual harassment, touching the person does not have to be necessarily involved.

Argument such as: „*She should not have had so short skirt. That is why she became the target, it is therefore her fault.*” is not acceptable at all.

ADVICE:

→ Too much flirting and quick moves towards the other gender (or the same gender) may be understood as a harassment or attempt to rape. **IN SR, IT IS NOT ACCEPTABLE TO TOUCH A WOMAN WITHOUT HER ACCEPTANCE. Similarly, continuous eye contact may be easily misunderstood.**

→ Likewise, it is not acceptable to physically punish animals at all. People often have very close relations with them (a dog or a cat are perceived as part of the family, they live together with people at home).

Furthermore, also breaching of night silence by loud noises may be considered as a violation, which means that you can get a fine for doing so (setting music aloud, singing, moving furniture, loud praying etc.).

As a violation we could also consider provoking public by disgraceful conduct (peeing, getting undressed in public), insulting someone – dishonor (insulting words, mocking remarks), breaching of traffic rules, disturbances.

Sometimes it may happen that you become a target of crime you have not committed. Simply, it can happen for the fact that you do not know the language, so you cannot explain exactly what has happened and since you are in a new country you do not know how to react. That is why the blame may be transferred on you because of your vulnerability. You may therefore become an easy target due to language and cultural barriers
→ IN SUCH CASES, IT IS IMPORTANT TO KNOW HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF, BECAUSE YOU HAVE LEGAL SECURITIES IN SLOVAKIA.

In cases when this situation arises, you can contact integration managers of Migration Office who are available on following numbers:

Integration managers:

- Martin **0908 795 468** (western and central part of SR, especially Bratislava and nearby areas)
- Laco **0907 914 058** (eastern SR, especially Košice and nearby areas)

or contact your social worker.

- Number of help to victims of violence **0850 111 321**
- Police **158**

UNCOMFORTABLE SITUATIONS - EMERGENCY CALLS



In case you become a victim of robbery, attack, or you are injured and need help, try to keep calm and call emergency number 112, or ask people passing by for assistance to help you call emergency services and police.

➡ Especially due to the language barrier, try to get contact on a person who speaks your language and may help you forward the information to the relevant authorities working in emergency situations. Try to get it already during your stay in the asylum centre. You can also discuss it with your social worker.

To be able to contact other persons, **get a SIM card** for your mobile phone. It is also useful to **use a wifi connection in public areas** for you to be connected with the others.

IMPORTANT NUMBERS:

EMERGENCY CALLS	112
EMERGENCY HEALTH CARE SERVICE	155
POLICE	158
FIREMAN SERVICE	150
ALIEN POLICE	09610 507 01
HELP TO VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE	0850 111 321
IOM MIGRATION INFORMATION CENTRE	+0850 211 478
HUMAN RIGHTS LEAGUE BRATISLAVA	+421 (0)2 44 35 437
HUMAN RIGHTS LEAGUE KOŠICE	+ 421 (0)918 682 457

OTHER USEFUL LINKS:

Registered churches and religious associations in SR:

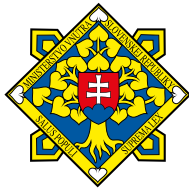
<http://www.culture.gov.sk/registrovane-cirkvi-a-nabozenske-spolocnosti-f9.html>

The list of churches with Catholic Church services all over Slovakia:

www.dokostola.sk

Evangelical Church: www.velkykostol.sk

Orthodox Church: www.pravoslavni.sk



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