

COUNTRY PROFILES

Slovak Republic

The research into literature on Slovakia's approach to international cultural policy suggests a positive attitude towards cooperation with other European countries vis-à-vis the rest of the world and this is demonstrated, in one way, by its involvement and commitment to the aims of the Visegrád group.

Slovakia's foreign policy is characterised by the active development of forms of cooperation. Slovakia regards activities in the fields of culture, science and technology as "effective components of foreign policy." These activities are viewed as constitutive conditions "for bringing people and nations closer to one another and for eliminating social and political barriers." However, common European action in the field of culture should not infringe upon the principle of subsidiarity.

Slovakia considers an active approach to issues such as respect for human rights and freedoms as a "moral imperative" and as an "investment into the future growth and prosperity of the world." Other axioms of Slovakia's foreign policy are: respect for international law, expanding the space of democracy, freedom, peace, stability and prosperity, respect for fundamental human rights and solidarity among nations.

Both the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Culture are active in international cultural cooperation. The Ministry of Education is active in international educational cooperation.

M i n i s t r y o f F o r e i g n a f f a i r s

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is responsible for the development of relations with other states and the cooperation with multinational and international organisations, in particular in the area of foreign and security policy, bilateral relations, economic cooperation, culture, science, technology, and education. The Ministry also monitors the observance of the rights of Slovak citizens abroad and presents and spreads information about Slovakia abroad. However, according to an EFAH/Interarts report, culture does not in practice play a central role in Slovakian foreign policy, perhaps due to financial restraints of the state budget.

The Ministry maintains a network of cultural institutes since 1993. They were established by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic, and are managed by the Ministry's Bilateral Relations Section, and directed by the Cultural Contacts and Expatriates Department. They also cooperate with the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Education. The Slovak Institutes present Slovakia and Slovak culture abroad and disseminate objective information and knowledge of Slovakia, and promote local entrepreneurial, investment and tourism opportunities. The institutes also maintain ties with expatriate communities.

Through its development agency - SlovakAid - Slovakia wishes to share its experience of the process of democratic transition. Some non-governmental organisations are active in "civil diplomacy," especially in the field of democratisation processes of neighbouring countries.

M i n i s t r y o f C u l t u r e

The Ministry of Culture is currently in the process of reform. Following the announcement by the Slovakian government in 2002 that it will "prepare and implement a strategy for the presentation of Slovak culture and arts abroad," the Ministry of Culture created a Draft Strategy of the State Cultural Policy that was presented in Autumn 2004. Its strategic goal in international cultural relations is to promote Slovak culture and artistic creation abroad and to support cultural activities with Slovak expatriate communities. The Government's policy statement also mentions the presentation of foreign cultures in the Slovak republic in line with existing agreements on cultural cooperation and other international commitments. Priority areas include:

- protection of cultural heritage;
- support of art and artistic creation;
- development of the media environment;
- support of culture of ethnic minorities.

The Ministry of Culture is responsible for multilateral cooperation in the cultural field, and for the monitoring and administration of bilateral and trilateral treaties and agreements, following the policies of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The Pro Slovakia State Funds for culture support cultural activities on a project-by-project approach, which includes projects with an international dimension (EFAH/Interarts).

Slovakia is part of the Visegrád group, and participates in the Central European Initiative (CEI) and in the Community of the Danube countries (AGRE). Slovakia supports the further development of regional cooperation and regards the experiences of the Visegrád Group a potential example for the Central European Initiative. Slovakia is also an observer in the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF).

P o l i c y f o c u s

Slovakia's goals in international cultural policy are the promotion of Slovak culture abroad and the support of cultural activities with Slovak expatriate communities.

G e o g r a p h i c a l f o c u s

Slovakia's international relations claim to focus on Central European, Eastern (especially the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary and Austria) and South Eastern countries, including the Western Balkans, Ukraine, Belarus and Russia. The Member States of the EU, especially Germany and smaller EU Member States, and the members of NATO provide additional focus. Slovakia also states that it aims to expand relations with the Middle East.

Slovakia houses seven cultural institutes within the EU: Germany (Berlin), Poland (Warsaw), Czech Republic (Prague), Hungary (Budapest), Austria (Vienna), Italy (Rome) and France (Paris).

Slovakia is also active within the framework of the four countries of Visegrád (V4 – Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Hungary). This group is now committed to helping other non-EU countries in the region.

Further commitment to collaboration with neighbouring countries can be seen in that:

- Slovakia has three cultural institutes housed within neighbouring non-EU countries: Romania (Bucharest) and Bulgaria (Sofia) and Russia (Moscow);
- Slovakia takes part in the Central European Initiative (CEI) and in the Community of the Danube countries (AGRE).

This emphasis on collaboration in the region is not surprising as Hungarians, Romany, Czechs, Moravians, Ruthenians, Ukrainians, Carpathian Germans, Poles and Croats form a large group of minorities within the country. These, as well as Slovak communities living abroad, present a potential base for trans-national cooperation activities.

H i g h l y r e c o m m e n d e d r e a d i n g

Government of the Slovak Republic, (2002) Policy Statement of the Government of the Slovak Republic, Chapter II.3.D. on Culture,

E-Doc Link: <http://www.culture.gov.sk/english/doc/policyst.pdf>

General statement on Slovakian cultural policy that includes a section on "Promotion of Slovak culture abroad." It reads: "The Government will prepare and implement a strategy for the presentation of Slovak culture and arts abroad as a part of Slovakia's integration efforts.

Based on agreements on cultural cooperation and other international commitments, it will ensure the presentation of foreign cultures in Slovakia. The Government will support and foster active participation of the Slovak Republic in international governmental and non-governmental organisations operating in the areas of culture and art, as well as the implementation of international cultural projects in the territory of Slovakia and abroad, as an important part of presentation of the nation and state.

Government of the Slovak Republic, (2002) Policy Statement of the Government of the Slovak Republic,

E-Doc Link: http://www.government.gov.sk/dokumenty/programove_vyhlasenie_vlady-20021104_eng.rtf

The complete policy programme of the Government of Slovak Republic; the section on foreign policy includes statements on the European Union, NATO, relations with neighbouring countries and cross-border cooperation, other areas of bilateral and multilateral diplomacy, and optimisation of the diplomatic service.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, (2005) The Strategy of Developing Relations between the Slovak Republic and the Russian Federation,

E-Doc Link: <http://www.foreign.gov.sk/En/add.php3?text=Documents&file=file645.shtml>

Details on Slovak policy strategy towards the Russian Federation.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Medium-Term Foreign Policy Strategy of the Slovak Republic until 2015,

E-Doc Link: http://www.foreign.gov.sk/files/strategy_fp_sr_until_2015.pdf

The current strategy paper on foreign policy includes a chapter on “Values and Interests of Foreign Policy” that reads: “In the implementation of its foreign policy the Slovak Republic will continue pursuing international relations based on democratic principles. The axioms of Slovakia’s foreign policy are: respect for international law, expanding the space of democracy, freedom, peace, stability and prosperity, respect for fundamental human rights and solidarity among nations. It is the citizens who will ultimately benefit from the outcomes of foreign policy of the Slovak Republic. Basic and durable foreign policy interests of the Slovak Republic are: safeguarding the territorial integrity of the state, security of its citizens, and creation of optimum conditions for sustainable economic, social, environmental and cultural development of Slovakia.” “Activities in the sphere of culture, science and technology are effective components of foreign policy. They create propitious conditions for bringing people and nations closer to one another and for eliminating social and political barriers. The development assistance programme – SlovakAid – promotes the development of relations with the recipient states in which Slovakia can provide material assistance and share her experience with the process of democratic transition.”

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Slovakia’s Key Goals and Interests as regards the Middle East and North Africa,

E-Doc Link: <http://www.foreign.gov.sk/En/add.php3?text=Documents&file=file641.shtml>

Details on the Slovak policy towards the MENA-region.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, (2005) Slovakia’s Key Goals and Interests as regards the Western Balkans,

E-Doc Link: <http://www.foreign.gov.sk/En/add.php3?text=Documents&file=file646.shtml>

Details on Slovak policy towards the Western Balkans

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, (2005) Slovakia’s Key Goals and Interests as regards Ukraine,

E-Doc Link: <http://www.foreign.gov.sk/En/add.php3?text=Documents&file=file580.shtml>

Details on Slovak policy towards Ukraine.

G e n e r a l / b a c k g r o u n d r e a d i n g

Council of Europe, (2003) The national cultural policy of the Slovak Republic: provisional version of the national report - summary,

E-Doc Link: http://www.coe.int/T/E/Cultural_Cooperation/Culture/Policies/Reviews/CDCULT-BU%282003%292A_EN.pdf?L=EN

Analysis and evaluation of the cultural policy pursued in Slovakia until 2002 as part of a larger project financed by the Council of Europe. The presentation of the report before the

Council for Cultural Cooperation of the Council of Europe encouraged the Ministry of Culture to create a Draft Strategy of the State Cultural Policy.

Denel, Francis, The national cultural policy of the Slovak republic: report of a group of European experts,
E-Doc Link: http://www.coe.int/T/E/Cultural_Cooperation/Culture/Policies/Reviews/CDCULT-BU%282003%292B_EN.pdf?L=EN
This report is parallel to the National Report on the Cultural Policy of the Slovak Republic that was financed by the Council of Europe.

EFAH, Interarts (2003) Study on cultural cooperation in Europe: Annex 1 - National reports - Slovak Republic,
E-Doc Link: http://europa.eu.int/comm/culture/eac/sources_info/pdf-word/annex1national_reports3.pdf
Background to structures, competencies and institutes.

Meseznikov, Grigorij, Miroslav Kollár (2005) Slovakia 2004. A global report on the state of society, Bratislava, Institute for Public Affairs, ISBN: 80-88935-79-2, Slovakia Link
The authors of Slovakia 2004 attempt to “diagnose the actual state of society and scout for possibilities of favourable future developments in the various fields of public life.” It is divided in four parts (Domestic Policy; Foreign and Defence Policy; Economics; and Society). It includes chapters on foreign policy and culture.

Ministry of Culture, (2005) Official website,
E-Doc Link: www.culture.gov.sk
Official website explaining the structure, mission and policy areas of the Ministry

Ministry of Education, (2005) Official website,
E-Doc Link: www.minedu.sk
Website unavailable in English.

Slovakaid, (2005) Official website,
E-Doc Link: <http://www.slovakaid.mfa.sk/en/>
The official web page of the Slovak Official Development Assistance (ODA). Explains programmes and policies.

UNESCO, (2005) National Commission of the Slovak Republic,
E-Doc Link: <http://www.unesco.sk/>
Official website for the National Commission of the Slovak Republic to UNESCO.