



## **Weekly Briefing**

**Slovakia social briefing:**  
**Impact of Immigration and Population Change on Economic and  
Social Development in the Slovak Society**

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# **Impact of Immigration and Population Change on Economic and Social Development in the Slovak Society**

## **Summary**

*Slovakia has traditionally been rather a country of emigrants than a target country of foreign citizens. In spite of that, the country has been slowly transforming into a multicultural society, with people of dozens of nationalities living here. Similarly, Slovakia has been subject to dynamic population changes. The objective of this briefing is to provide an overview of migration and demographic trends in Slovakia. Furthermore, we attempt to illuminate how immigration and demographic developments influence the economy and the society.*

## **Introduction**

One of the consequences of globalisation is increasing diversity amongst populations. Countries from all around the world are experiencing migration tendencies, frequently resulting in changes in demographic structures of those countries, such as diversification of nationalities, age structure, and similar. Moreover, intercultural encounters are happening often than in the past. Some countries have already a long history of immigration, others still seem not to be ready for such a phenomenon. Statistics show that in case of Slovakia, many more people have migrated from the country throughout decades in comparison to the number of people from the abroad that have relocated to the country. However, even though Slovakia does not belong to countries with a long history of immigration, one can currently observe a development towards increasing diversity.

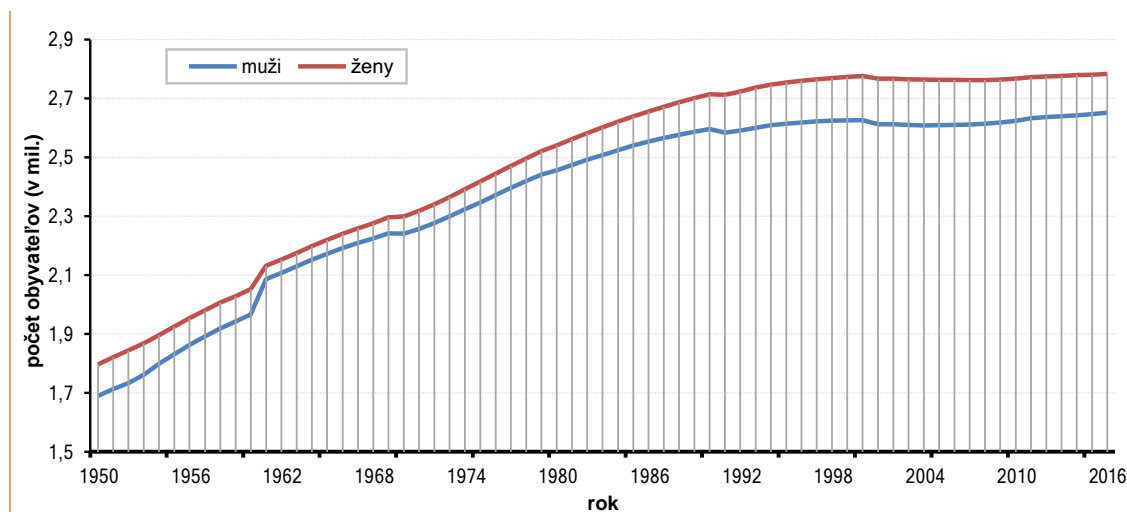
Apart from migration, the demography of Slovakia is changing also with regards to the age structure of the population (with population ageing being an issue frequently discussed), or for instance postponed parenthood, marriage and attitude to divorce.

## **Overview of the Current Demographic Trends in Slovakia**

As for its population, Slovakia belongs to smaller countries. At the end of 2020, the number of inhabitants amounted to approximately 5.46 million. In 2020, mortality was higher than the number of children born. However, more than 4300 persons moved to Slovakia from

foreign countries, thus contributing to the overall population growth amounting to more than 1900 people.<sup>1</sup>

Indeed, the population of the Slovak Republic is growing, although with no exceptional intensity. Graph 1 showcases how the number of Slovakia's inhabitant has been developing since 1950, with the red curve standing for women and the blue one for men. The numbers on the Y-axis are in millions.



Zdroj údajov: ŠÚ SR

**Graph 1: Development of population in the Slovak Republic since 1950**

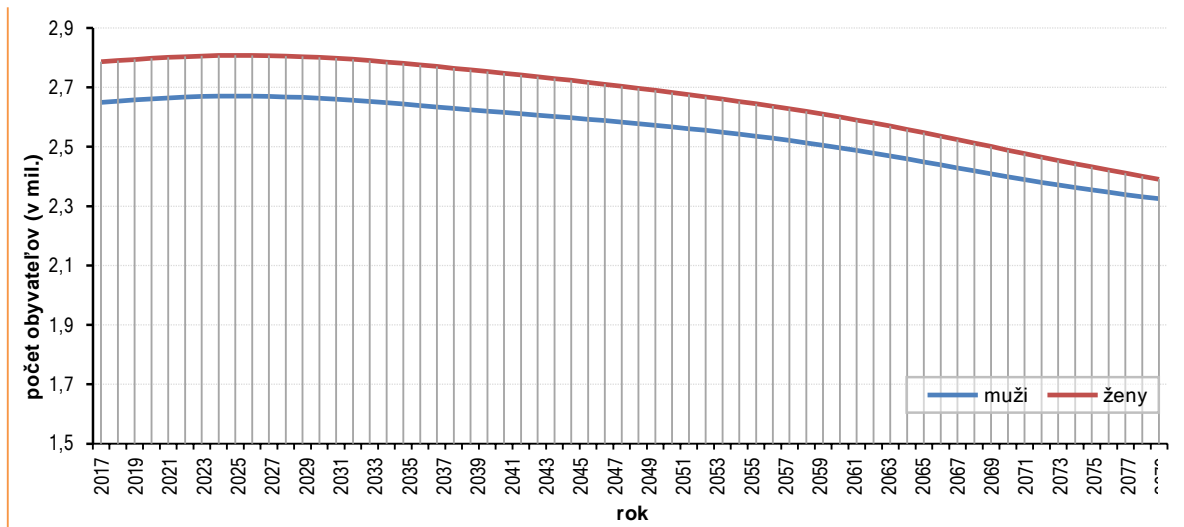
*Source: Podmanická, Z. (ed.) (2017): Hlavné trendy populačného vývoja v SR v roku 2016. Bratislava: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic, p. 7.*

Despite the tendency of the Slovak population to continuously grow since 1946, according to the prognosis, a decrease in the number of Slovakia's inhabitants should start soon, probably in 2025.<sup>2</sup> Graph 2 below demonstrates the expected development of the Slovak population until 2080, with the red curve standing for women and the blue one for men. The numbers on the Y-axis are in millions.

<sup>1</sup> Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic (2021): Stav obyvateľstva v SR k 31. decembru 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Podmanická, Z. (ed.) (2017): Hlavné trendy populačného vývoja v SR v roku 2016, p. 8.

**Graph 2: Prognosis of the population development in the Slovak Republic until 2080**



Zdroj údajov: Eurostat

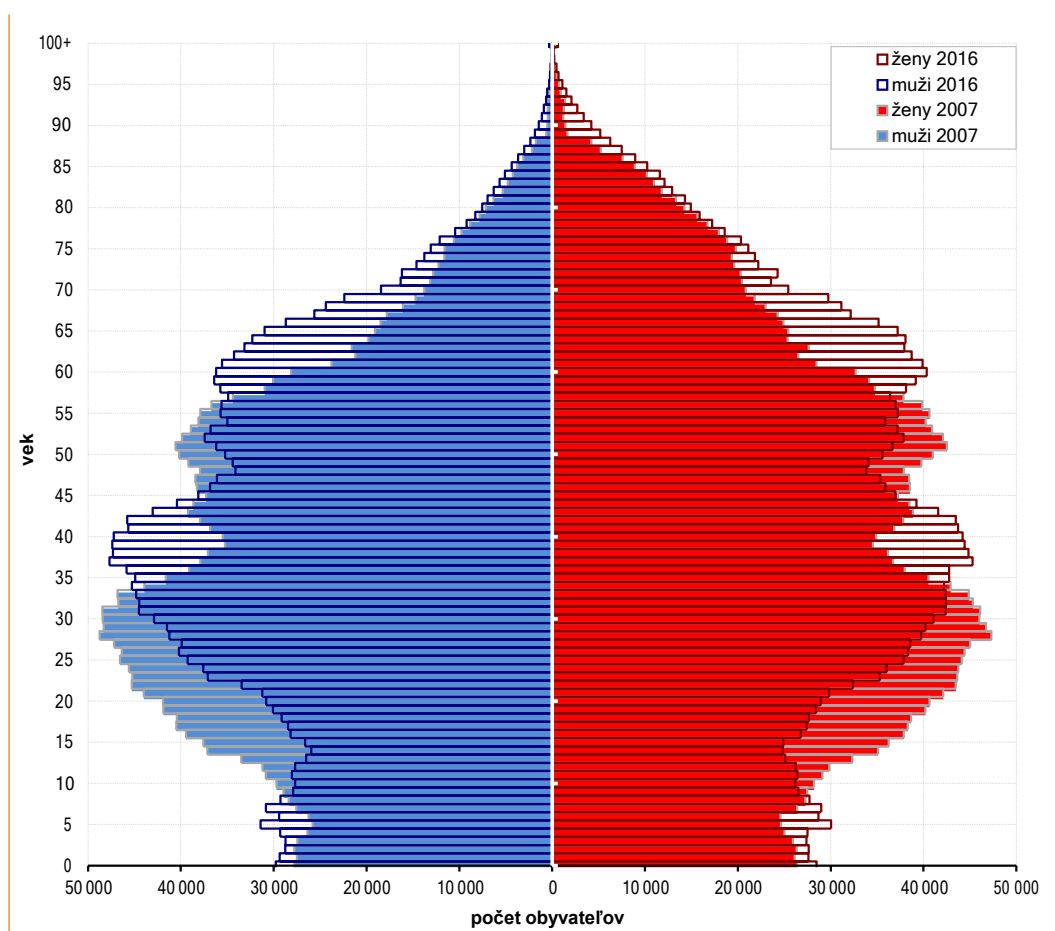
*Source: Podmanická, Z. (ed.) (2017): Hlavné trendy populačného vývoja v SR v roku 2016. Bratislava: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic, p. 8.*

Some of the changes in Slovak demography were highlighted also in our June Social Briefing. What is especially visible is the phenomenon of shrinking families and postponed parenthood. In the past, it was not uncommon for an 18-year-old to give birth to her first child, having eventually more children. Indeed, the generation of baby boomers or the Z generation is pretty strong in Slovakia. People who are today in their 70s, for instance, often come from a family with five or even more children. Nowadays, studies, career opportunities or financial independence are frequently considered when planning one's own future. Hence, it happens often that women wait until they are 30 or more to become a mother. Additionally, having more children is rather an exception; many couples decide to have only one child, which is again linked to avoiding long career breaks or to financial stability.<sup>3</sup> All of this contributes to so called population ageing. The phenomenon that is most striking in countries such as Italy or Japan has as well become Slovak reality. As the population pyramid (Graph 3) below shows, the most represented in Slovakia is the group of people in their 40s and even 60s; the child-component of the pyramid is smaller. What is more, the graph shows the situation in 2016 and 2007, thus

<sup>3</sup> Čiefová, Michaela (2021): Slovakia social briefing: Slovak Pension System in a Nutshell, pp. 1-2.

providing an illustration of how the situation is progressing in time. We could easily imagine further movement of the pyramid upwards to see the approximate distribution of the age categories in the future. The red part of the pyramid stands for women; the blue one for men. The X-axis represents the number of inhabitants; the Y-axis their age.

**Graph 3: Population pyramid of the Slovak population until 2016**



Zdroj údajov: ŠÚ SR

*Source: Podmanická, Z. (ed.) (2017): Hlavné trendy populačného vývoja v SR v roku 2016. Bratislava: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic, p. 35.*

Next issue we would like to briefly point out within this text is the development concerning marriages. As stated in a publication produced by the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic, marriage is closely linked to other demographical processes, such as natality or migration.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, we believe we should briefly reflect on selected interesting facts

<sup>4</sup> Podmanická, Zuzana (ed.) (2019): Štatistika v súvislostiach. Hlavné trendy vývoja sobášnosti v SR v roku 2018, p. 27

concerning it. In connection to migration, statistics show that Slovak women marry a foreign man more often than Slovak men marry a woman from the abroad.<sup>5</sup> As for divorce, it is much more common and accepted in the present as it used to be. The divorce index in 2018 was 31 divorces for 100 marriages, which is, however, not the highest number registered so far. In 2006, for instance, 49 out of 100 marriages ended up in divorce. Apart from the divorce frequency, what has changed as well is the way divorce as a societal phenomenon is regarded. Even though divorce is still perceived as a negative phenomenon, it is also viewed as a possibility for those divorced to re-marry and thus contribute again to natality.<sup>6</sup>

In 2021, census took place after 10 years. For the first time in the history, the whole process was conducted online. For those with no access to the internet or lack of technical skills, a supporting team was established, which we perceive as a very reasonable step, as there are many (elderly) people in Slovakia with nobody to lead them through this process.

According to The Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic, the objective of this census has been to gather reliable and unique information concerning the state of the society, culture, demography, as well as socio-economic issues and housing conditions of the country's inhabitants.<sup>7</sup> When finalising this briefing in September 2021, the results and detailed data of the census has not been published yet. We are contemplating to reflect on the census results in one of our future texts on Slovak society.

### **Immigration and Population Change as Phenomena Impacting the Society**

Historically, Slovakia does not belong to typical target countries of migrants. On the contrary, thousands of people have migrated from Slovakia throughout decades. According to the World Bank data, immigrants amounted to some 3% of the whole population in Slovakia (ca 158 thousand) in 2013, while Slovak emigrants abroad represented approximately 11% of the Slovak population (i.e. some 592 thousand).<sup>8</sup> As a result of these historical processes, descendants of Slovaks as well as Slovak-born citizens can be found basically all around the globe. Additionally, many Slovaks commute to work for instance to Austria on a daily basis, without changing their permanent residence.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. P. 32.

<sup>7</sup> Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic (2020): Sčítanie obyvateľov, domov a bytov.

<sup>8</sup> World Bank (2016): Migration and Remittances Factbook 2016, p. 226.

As for representatives of different nationalities in Slovakia, there are people of many nationalities currently living in Slovakia. Very common is migration to Slovakia for family reasons such as marriage, or labour migration. Serbian or Ukrainian citizens, for example, have found employment in the country, mainly in the industrial production. Citizens of Slovak nationality, however, prevail markedly; approximately 80% of people living in Slovakia is of Slovak nationality. The second largest group is constituted by Hungarians, precisely 8.5% of the whole population. Other minorities with a relatively large representation are the Roma, Czechs, but also Ukrainians, Russians, or Germans.<sup>9</sup>

When it comes to coexistence between the foreigners and the representatives of the autochthonous population, it is not possible to live in isolation from each other. On the contrary, it comes to intended or unforeseen intercultural encounters, which often need a certain set of skills to be handled properly.<sup>10</sup> From our point of view, representatives of other national cultures should be regarded foremost as carriers of distinct worldviews and values, that in many cases can enrich the domestic culture. However, what is different is often considered dangerous or unwanted. As far as we are concerned, such attitudes could certainly be re-shaped by means of intercultural education or training.

## **Conclusion**

In this briefing we attempted to outline the most significant changes in Slovakia's demography, with specific attention paid to migration. Moreover, we tried to demonstrate how these phenomena influence the society and the country's economic processes.

We can expect the migration tendencies and developments concerning the population will be reflected in the political discourse, and will have to be taken into account by policy-makers as well. It needs to be considered that we are talking about highly dynamic processes that can have long-term consequences. Hence, it is critical to address them accordingly.

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<sup>9</sup> Government Office of the Slovak Republic (2021): Základné údaje.

<sup>10</sup> Čiefová, Michaela (2016): Význam jazykovej kompetencie a jazykovej politiky v migračnom aspekte, p. 45

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