

The International, Foreign and Social Policies of Slovakia

Slovakian international and foreign policy

- Shift to a more nationalist – "Slovakia First" mentality since Prime Minister Robert Fico came to power
- Pragmatic foreign policy balancing between EU/NATO membership and at times pro-Russian stances
- In some ways similar to Hungary
- Policy of "opening to the four corners of the world" since 2023 – more intense relations with non-EU partners, especially BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa)
- However this is controversial politically: mass protests, motion of no confidence in 2025
- Slovakia aims for a stronger global presence through non-permanent membership in the UN Security Council which it is seeking for 2028-29
- See: <https://www.pism.pl/publications/to-the-four-corners-of-the-world-slovakia-focuses-foreign-policy-on-non-eu-partners>

Shift from previous foreign policy

- Robert Fico has been Prime Minister before (2006-2010, 2012-2016, 2016-2018, 2023-)
- Upon returning to power he implemented a new foreign policy - "to the four corners of the world"
- Similar to and inspired by the Hungarian strategy of Connectivity
- Slovakia has also had stronger relations with Russia since the return of Fico, similar to Hungary
- A reason for this is to ensure Slovakian gas supply and nuclear fuel
- Slovakia does not support EU sanctions against Russia, thinks relations should be normalized
- Fico wants Russian-Ukrainian peace summit in Slovakia (similar to Orbán)
- This has put a strain on Polish-Slovakian relations

Relations with China

- Relations with China have been stepped-up
- Strategic partnership signed in 2024
- High hopes for an influx of Chinese investors – as a result Slovakia opposed the imposition of tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles (Also Germany, Hungary, Slovenia, Malta)
- Backed a peace plan by China and Brazil but criticized by the Ukrainian government

Further relations

- Strategic partnership with Turkey - focus on security (joint military training and counterterrorism measures) and energy
- Turkey important for sourcing Russian gas without it going through Ukraine
- This is also why Slovakia has started signed a strategic partnership with Azerbaijan
- Government strategy announced for closer ties to the Indo-Pacific region as there is a shift in geopolitical and economic power
- Fico was the first Slovakian PM to visit Brasil
- Supports the EU-Mercosur agreement (Orbán does not)

Relations with the US

Similar to Hungary's relationship with the US

Ideological closeness but the US is also one of Slovakia's most important trade partners

Fico and Trump both survived assassination attempts

Fico sees Trump as someone who will end the Ukrainian-Russian war

Transatlantic cooperation strong, highlighted areas: trade, energy, defence, support for international security

Social policy

- Managed by Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family
- Similar to the Hungarian and Czech systems
- Social protection has four parts: health care, social insurance, state social support, social assistance
- Mandatory health insurance (paid by employer and employee). Mix of public and private insurance. Public and private healthcare providers. Mostly free but there are some out of pocket payments
- High standard of healthcare but shortage of nurses
- Similar to Hungary, Slovakia has one of the highest mortality rates from treatable and preventable causes in the EU

Family benefits

- Family support is similarly important as in Hungary
- Highly comprehensive family support system
- Parental allowance (paid to caregivers, up to 3 years), child allowance (monthly, need based), birth allowance (one time), tax bonus, special benefits (twins etc.)
- Maternity leave (34 weeks, 75% of previous pay, employer has to keep their position), paternity leave (generally two weeks but fathers can take over the maternity benefit for up to 28 weeks)

Pension system

- Three pillar system
- Pillar 1: mandatory pay-as-you-go
- Pillar 2: mandatory private savings
- Pillar 3: voluntary supplementary savings
- Retirement age is 64 years old for both men and women (needs at least 15 years of insurance)