



Slovakia



Structure

1. History & Geography

2. Slovakia's Path to the EU and Euro adoption

3. Why did Slovakia want to join?

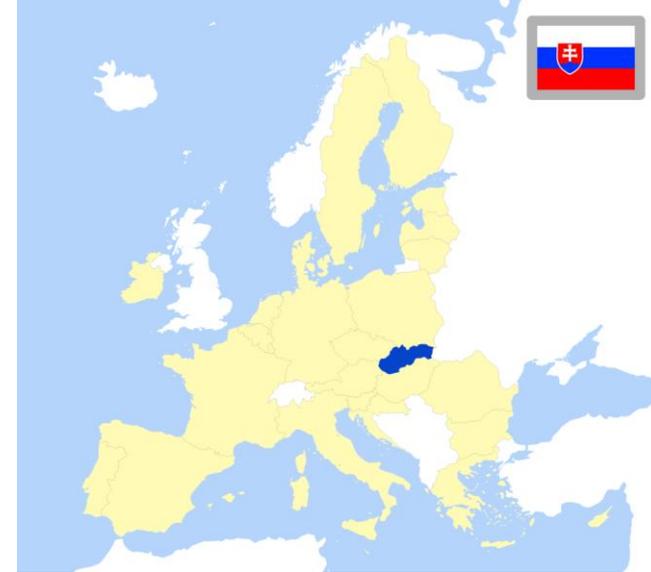
4. Factors shaping Slovakia's European policy

5. Robert Fico and The Ukraine War

6. Energy dependence and Migration crisis

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History & Geography



Centuries as part of the kingdom of Hungary and later the Austro-Hungarian empire

20th c.

1918

after world war I, Slovakia became part of a new state called Czechoslovakia

Communist era: Slovakia under Communist rule (1948–1989) as part of Czechoslovakia.

1948–1989

1989

Velvet Revolution ends communism.

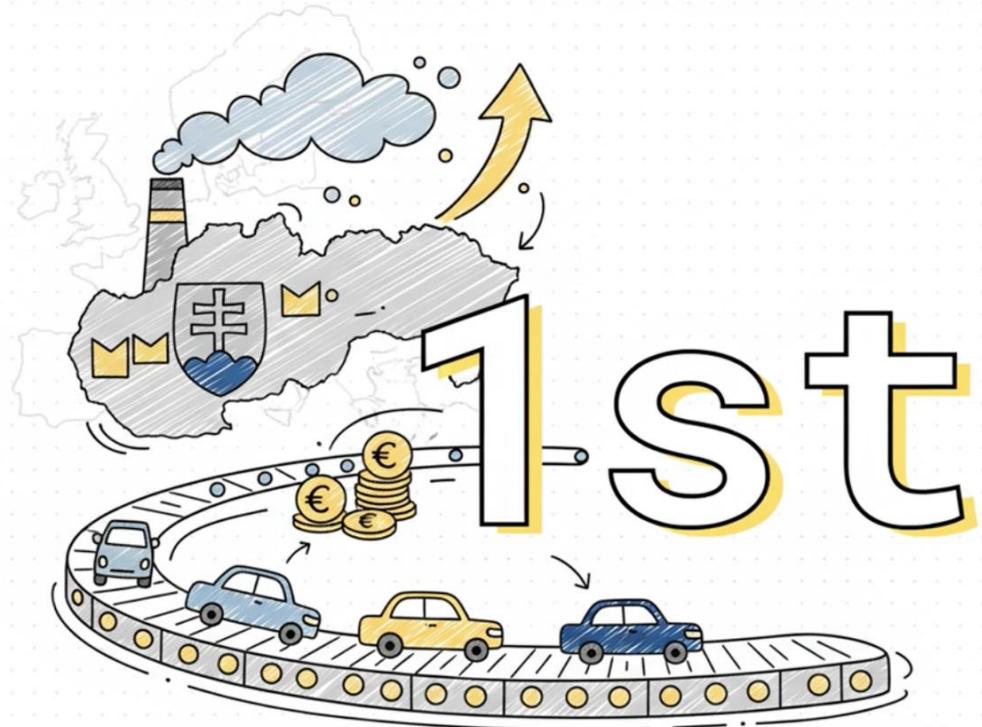
1993: Czech and Slovak Republics split peacefully (the “Velvet Divorce”) Independent Slovak Republic created

1993

- Slovakia is a Central European country with a total area of 49,000 km²
- Population: approximately 5.4 million people

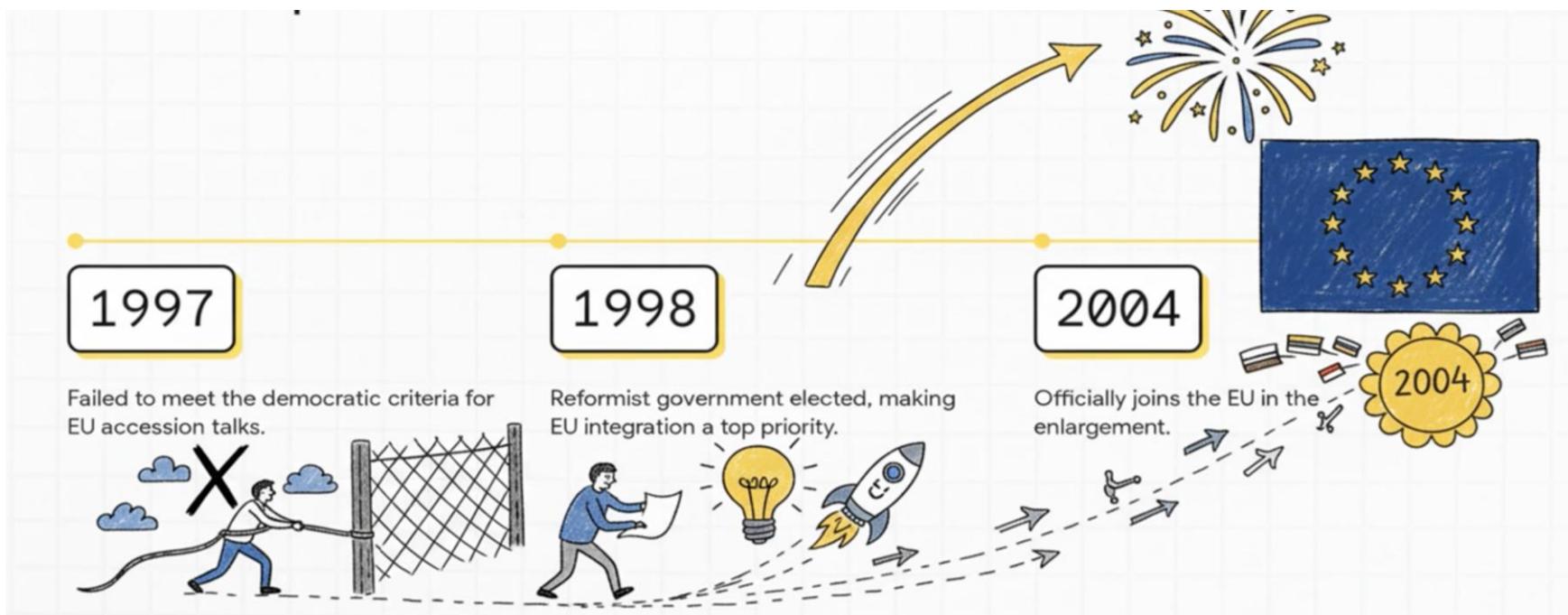


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- It borders five countries: Austria, Hungary, Czechia, Poland, and Ukraine
 - Bratislava is the only capital city in the world that borders two countries — Austria and Hungary
 - Its central location makes Slovakia a key connector between Western, Central, and Eastern Europe
 - Top car production per capita



Path to the EU

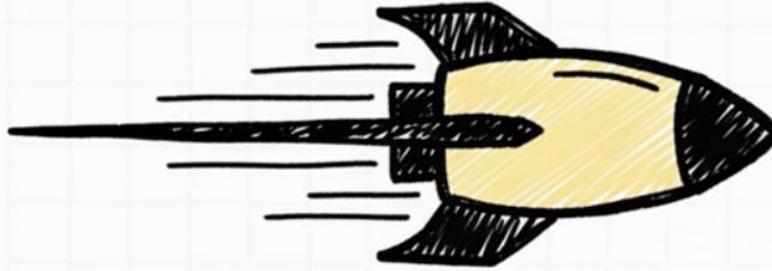
- **1993 – 1997:** Under Prime minister Vladimír Mečiar, the country was criticized for issues of Democracy, making Slovakia is the only one among the 10 candidate countries at the time to receive such a strong negative assessment.
- **1998:** a more reformist government came to power, which was strongly supporting EU integration.
- **2004:** After the efforts of the new government, Slovakia officially joined the EU and NATO



Euro Adoption



2004



2009

- Met EU economic criteria in 2008, only five years after joining the European Union Slovakia Adopted the euro on 1 January 2009, becoming the eurozone's 16th member
- Slovakia became the only Visegrád Group country (Slovakia, Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary) to adopt the euro
- As a small export-oriented economy, adopting the euro reduced exchange-rate risks, eased trade within the EU, and attracted more foreign investment—especially in the automotive and industrial sectors

Wanna join? Why in 2004 ?

Democratic reform



- to avoid political isolation after being the only country to receive a negative assessment

Security and stability



- To participating in the single market and have access to huge structural and cohesion funds



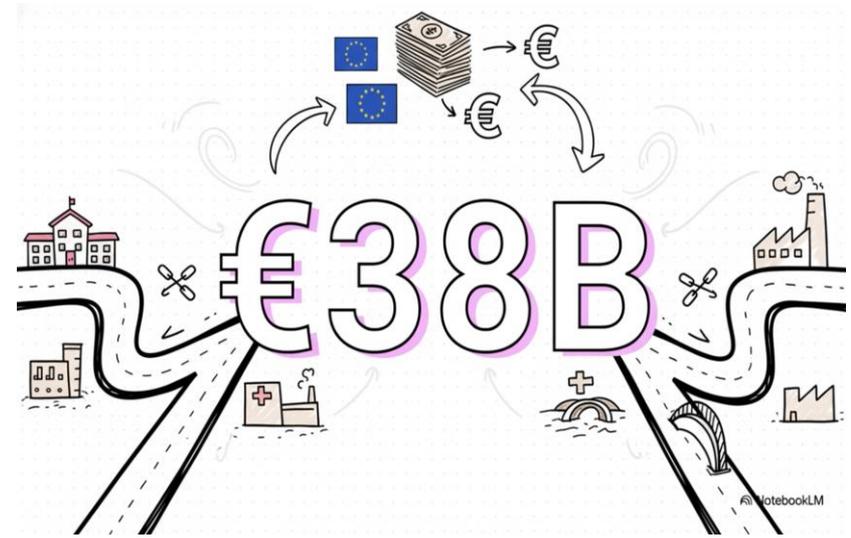
With 93% voting "Yes," Slovaks set a record in terms of Euro-enthusiasm among the five countries that had already held referendums on EU membership.

Economic opportunity

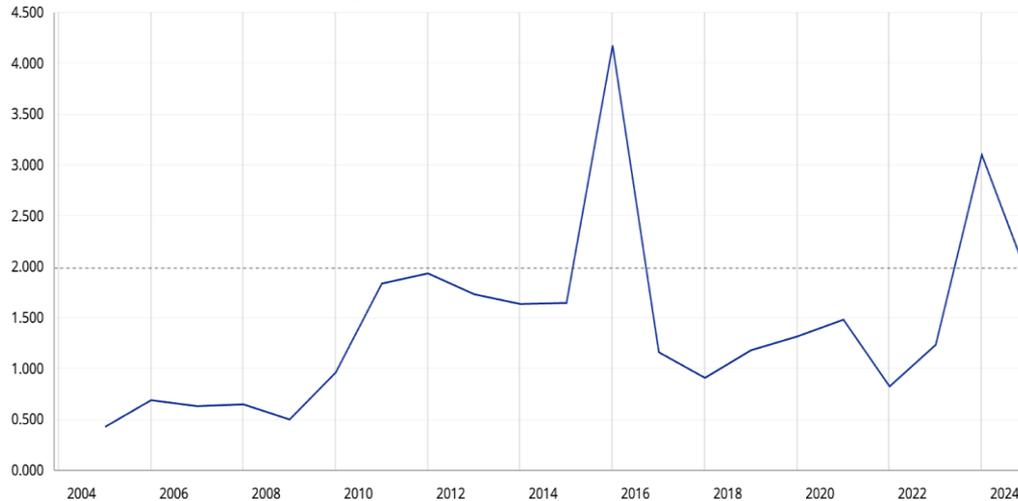
National consensus

Economic position

- GDP per capita is around 75% of the EU average
- Since 2004, Slovakia has received over €38 billion in EU funds
- Always a net recipient of the EU budget
- Funding supports schools, hospitals, roads, railways, and regional development



Balance of Member State vis-à-vis the EU budget (net receiver + / payer -), percent of GDP, Slovakia, Annual



Source: data.ecb.europa.eu

Trade integration

- EU share of total exports (2023): 74.7%
- EU share of total imports (2023): 80.4%
- Slovakia is deeply integrated into the EU single market

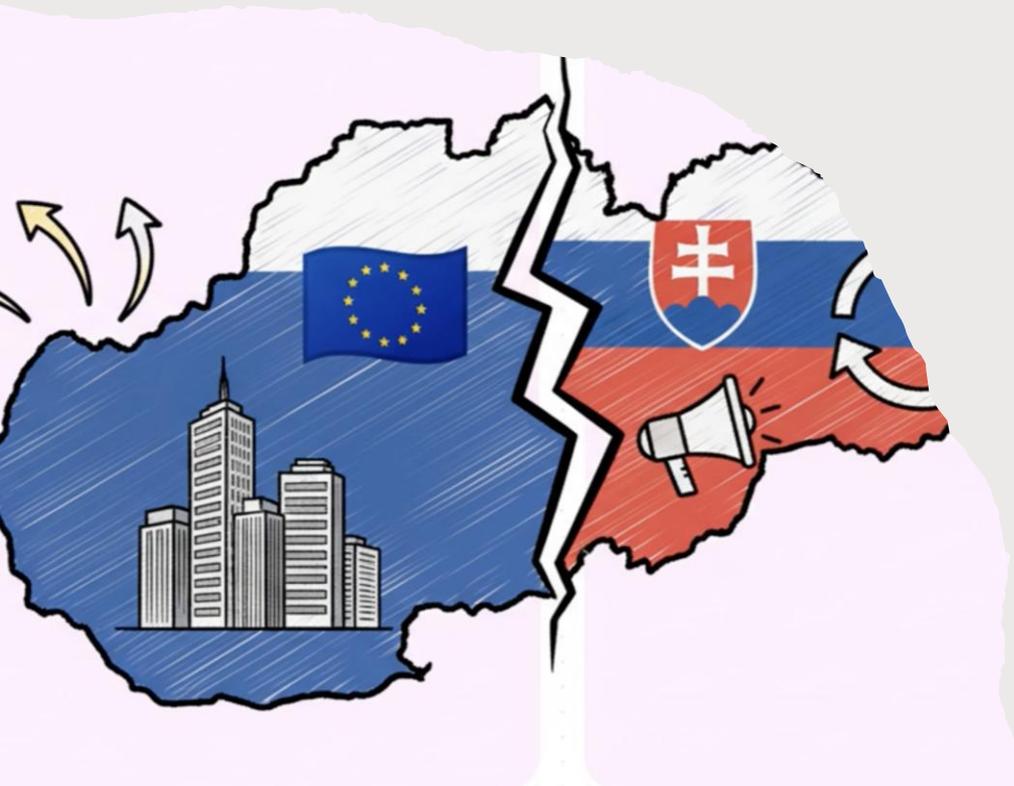
Fiscal Indicators (2024)

- National debt: 59.3% of GDP → below the Maastricht 60% limit
- Budget deficit: -5.3% of GDP → above the Maastricht 3% limit

Domestic Political Context

President: largely ceremonial

Prime Minister: holds real executive power



SMER–SD

- - Populist left / nationalist
- - Suspended 2023, expelled from S&D 2025
 - - 5 MEPs, currently Non-inscrits
 - - 2023 election: 22.94%, 42 seats

Progressive Slovakia (PS)

- - Liberal, pro-EU; member of Renew Europe
- - 6 MEPs
- 2023 election: 17.96%, 32 seats

HLAS–SD

- - Centre-left, moderate
- - No MEPs in the European Parliament
- - 2023 election: 14.7%, 27 seats
- Plays a key role domestically as a coalition “kingmaker”

Prime Minister Robert Fico

- **Robert Fico** joined the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in 1986.
- After the fall of communism, he remained politically active in its successor party, the Party of the Democratic Left.
- Break with old structures (1999): Fico left the post-communist left and founded a new party, SMER, later renamed SMER–Social Democracy (SMER–SD).
- SMER–SD positioned itself as a centre-left, social-democratic party and joined the Party of European Socialists (PES).
- Fico became Prime Minister in 2006, 2012, and again in 2023, making him one of the most influential figures in Slovak politics.



nowadays

Robert Fico is a controversial EU figure

- Robert Fico has made Slovakia more widely known in the EU by vetoing or blocking EU policies, especially on sanctions against Russia.
- He is a rare European leader who has met President Vladimir Putin at least twice since the war in Ukraine began.
- Instead of strongly criticizing Russia, Fico has focused on opposing EU military aid to Ukraine, arguing it prolongs the conflict.
- He strongly opposes EU plans to phase out Russian gas and oil, warning that Slovakia's economy would suffer due to high energy dependence.

the Ukraine War

Previous Government (2022–2023)

- Strongly pro-Ukraine, aligned with EU & NATO
- Sent MiG-29 fighter jets, S-300 air-defense system, ammunition
- Supported sanctions against Russia
- Advocated for continued EU military & financial aid
- Messaging: “Ukraine must win; Slovakia stands with Ukraine”

Current Government (from late 2023, led by SMER)

- More cautious and critical of military support
- Stopped sending weapons from state stockpiles
- Focus on humanitarian aid only
- More skeptical of sanctions; emphasizes peace negotiations

Energy Dependence on Russia

Slovakia has long relied heavily on Russian energy, especially natural gas and oil, due to historical infrastructure and long-term contracts.

Before 2022, most of Slovakia's natural gas imports came from Russia, mainly through Soviet-era pipeline networks.

Slovakia's main oil refinery (Slovnaft) is technically designed to process Russian Urals crude oil, making diversification more difficult and costly.

Slovakia's nuclear power plants use Russian-supplied nuclear fuel, further increasing strategic dependence.

Because of this dependence, Slovakia has been cautious about EU sanctions on Russian energy and has requested temporary exemptions and transition periods.

While supporting energy diversification in principle, Slovakia emphasizes gradual transition to avoid economic and social damage.

Migration crisis

In 2015–16 Slovakia refused mandatory quotas for resettling refugees .

Slovakia was asked to take in 802 asylum seekers under an EU relocation plan, but it objected.

Robert Fico vowed Slovakia “will not implement” mandatory EU quotas on its territory .

The Slovak government even sued the EU in 2015 to block the quota decision .

Minimal intake: Slovakia received very few asylum applications and accepted almost no refugees (only 16) under EU plans.

Public Opinion in Slovakia on the EU (2024– 2025)

- **Hard Euroscepticism – 2024**
- “My country is better off inside the EU”:
- → 24% disagree (Spring 2024)
- → 29% disagree (Autumn 2024)

- **Soft Euroscepticism – Spring 2025**
- 47% think the EU is going in the wrong direction
- 41% think the EU is going in the right direction
- **Support for the single currency (euro): 86%**
- Only 12% oppose the euro
- **On granting EU candidate status to Ukraine:**
- → 52% agree, 42% disagree

Is Slovakia a difficult partner?

For most of its time in the European Union,
Slovakia was not a difficult partner.

2004–2010: Cooperative Member

Strong support for EU integration
Adoption of the euro in 2009
Rare use of veto power

2010: Greek Bailout Dispute

Only eurozone country to initially reject the
Greek bailout
Concern about fairness and financial burden

2015–2016: Migration Crisis

Strong opposition to mandatory EU
refugee quotas
Legal challenge against the EU quota
system
Very limited intake of asylum seekers

2020s: Selective Confrontation

Opposition to EU energy and migration
policies
Emphasis on national sovereignty and
veto rights

Is Slovakia a difficult partner?

- Slovakia is often seen as a pretty challenging partner in recent issues especially under Prime Minister Robert Fico
- Slovakia still maintains economic and security benefits from the EU
- selective and pragmatic rather than a comprehensive confrontation
- However, it has never questioned its EU membership. The conflicts are selective and issue-based, not systemic.
- PS remains strongly pro-European, and EU policy could shift again if a new government takes power.

Thank You

