

POTENTIAL OF EASTERN SLOVAKIA



REGIONAL CAPITAL
#eastinnovation

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www.amcham.sk

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In 2023, AmCham Slovakia launched the “Mapping the Potential of Eastern Slovakia” initiative, its biggest and most ambitious project to uplift this part of our country. Thanks to our members and partners, we were able to put together a big team of passionate individuals with expert knowledge, who sat down to identify the challenges that need to be addressed with the biggest urgency.

Our outlooks were shaped by the long-term global trends and the on-going shift towards digitalization, as well as the recently announced investment which has the potential to speed up the transformation of the region. Our joint efforts in 2023 focused on identifying the key challenges Eastern Slovakia faces and agreeing on the most effective and feasible solutions to address them.

Through dedicated work we have uncovered both the strengths and weaknesses of the region and we have moved on to the next stage of the project. On January 31, the outcomes of this

collective effort were revealed in the form of our position paper with 18 key recommendations to help Eastern Slovakia fulfill its potential.

Katarína Miňová, AmCham’s Regional Manager, and Peter Rusiňák, AmCham’s Deputy Director, introduced the position paper and briefly presented each of the 18 recommendations on the stage of Kasárne/ Kulturpark in Košice. The presentation of the position document was followed by two interesting panel discussions which adopted a broader perspective on the transformative efforts, covering various challenges identified in our position paper and offering first-hand experience with dealing with them.

The ‘Business Talk’ panel featured speakers with extensive business experience in the region, who shared the challenges they have faced as investors and employers entering the region, as well as their strategies to overcome them. They emphasized



the crucial importance of education, ranging from the establishment of international schools for the children of foreign workers, to career planning for older students.

In general, human capital ranged among the top challenges from the employers’ perspective and it needs to be approached at several levels, which include acknowledging and using the untapped potential of marginalized communities, establishing closer cooperation between business and academia, or taking specific steps to prevent regional brain drain. Jaroslav Grygar shared Whirlpool’s extensive experience in successfully integrating people from marginalized communities

and an environment of generational poverty into their workforce.

The panelists also brought up practical issues related to the local infrastructure, another issue addressed in our position paper, especially in the context of the new Volvo plant. They highlighted the need for improvements in transportation infrastructure, including strengthening air connections, improving road infrastructure (with highway completion as a crucial condition of any improvement in this regard), and last but not least – the necessity to enhance public transport as a key factor for a green and innovative future of this region.

The second panel explored the same pressing issues related to the local labor market, education system challenges, and the ongoing brain drain phenomenon, but through a different optic. The speakers in the “Talent Talk” panel are all directly involved in the education environment, although each of them in a different area. The conversation was focused around the impact of the new investor on businesses, youth, and workforce development

in the region. The main challenges were clearly defined – replenishing the local talent pool and providing efficient support services to develop it in line with the needs of the labor market. They also discussed the significance of supporting Slovaks returning from abroad and expats relocating to Slovakia, emphasizing the need for well-designed support systems to ensure a smooth transition.

One of the obvious outcomes of this event is the clear realization that fostering mutual understanding, trust, and collaboration among all sectors and stakeholders is paramount for the region’s future success.

In the next phase of our Mapping the Potential of Eastern Slovakia initiative, we are going to focus on individual recommendations from our position paper. We will organize a series of follow-up discussions which will explore selected recommendations in more depth, and try to set in motion actionable steps and efforts to implement them, or find ways to support the existing initiatives and policy efforts. Through these discussions, we hope



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GENERAL PARTNER



CONTENT PARTNER



IN-KIND PARTNERS



MEDIA PARTNERS



to involve stakeholders from various sectors and create opportunities for collaboration leading to a more prosperous and inclusive future for Eastern Slovakia.



Here's an overview of the 18 recommendations produced by our "Mapping the Current State of Eastern's Slovakia Potential" initiative. Nine of them are highlighted - these are the recommendations we have selected as our priorities for 2024 based on their feasibility and urgency.

These recommendations will be introduced in detail in the next issue

of the Connection magazine.

1. Brand and Identity of Eastern Slovakia
2. Regional Platform for Labor Market Needs
3. East Slovak Brainport - Soft Landing Institution
4. Inclusion and Support for Marginalized Groups
5. Career Plan for Students
6. Synergy in the University Ecosystem
7. Education as an Innovation Accelerator
8. Unification of the Innovation Community in Eastern Slovakia
9. Attracting and Motivating Healthcare Personnel
10. Better Conditions for Healthcare Personnel
11. Continuity and Long-Term Strategy of Healthcare Policies
12. Setting Transparent Selection Processes in Healthcare
13. Introduction of Multi-Source Financing
14. Prevention and Innovation in Healthcare
15. Prioritization of public transport with a focus on the modernization of the railway junction in Košice
16. Transparent Availability of Rental Housing
17. More Efficient Processes in Construction Legislation
18. Verification of the Availability of Electric Power, Water, and Waste Management Resources



PANEL DISCUSSION - BUSINESS TALK
From left: Jaroslav Grugar, Senior Manager, Business HR and WEEC at Whirlpool Corporation; Ján Bača, Director of Public Affairs, U. S. Steel Košice; Martin Seman, Head of Public Affairs, Volvo Cars Košice; Bibiana Kollárová, HR Manager & HR Business Partner, Deutsche Telekom IT Solutions Slovakia; and Miloslav Durec, CEO, Valaliky Industrial Park



PANEL DISCUSSION - TALENT TALK
From left: Matuš Draganovský, Partner, SUVko Coaching; Denis Sedlák, Partnership Developer, DASATO Academy; Miriam Šebová, Faculty of Economics, Technical University of Kosice; and Laura Dittel, Director, Karpatská Foundation



The opinions varied, but all the experts agreed that trust and open cross-sectoral communication are key prerequisites for the successful implementation of all solutions. Each proposed measure requires transparency, communication, mutual trust, and collaboration across all levels.



KATARÍNA MIŇOVÁ