

# RICHARD KELLNER

COUNTRY MANAGER  
& EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
KOMERČNÍ BANKA, A.S.,  
POBOČKA ZAHRAŇIČNEJ BANKY



Richard Kellner has built an extensive career in the banking sector since graduating from the University of Amsterdam in 2000. He has held various senior positions in banking both abroad and in Slovakia. After spending nine years working in Amsterdam, he returned to Slovakia in 2008 and continued his career with ING Bank. In early 2013, Richard joined Komerční banka Slovakia as Director of Corporate Banking, where he focused on driving the bank's business activities. As of June 2025, he took on the role of Country Manager and Chief Executive Officer of Komerční banka in Slovakia. In addition to his executive role, Richard serves as President of the Dutch Chamber of Commerce in Slovakia and is a member of the Supervisory Board of Circular Slovakia.

## WHAT SHOULD SLOVAKIA PRIORITIZE TO REMAIN COMPETITIVE WITHIN THE EU AND GLOBALLY?

Slovakia needs to make a clear shift from a cost-based economy toward a value-driven one. That means accelerating digitalisation, supporting innovation, and deliberately strengthening higher value added sectors. Today, the challenge is not a lack of ambition, but execution. Slow decision-making, regulatory uncertainty, and fragmented responsibilities reduce our ability to move quickly. If Slovakia wants to remain competitive within the EU, we need faster decision cycles, predictable rules, and stronger cooperation between the public and private sectors. At the same time, Slovakia needs a strong rule of law, a transparent and predictable business environment, and clear and consistent geopolitical communication confirming our alignment with EU values. These are essential for maintaining investor confidence and long-term stability.

## HOW SHOULD SLOVAKIA RESPOND TO DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE, TALENT SHORTAGES, AND WORKFORCE TRANSFORMATION?

We are already experiencing the impact. Talent shortages are becoming one of the main constraints to sustainable growth. The response must be comprehensive. We need to make better use of domestic talent, including women returning to the workforce and older employees, while also adopting a more structured and open approach to attracting skilled professionals from abroad. At the same time, companies must take greater ownership of reskilling. Lifelong learning is no longer a benefit—it is a necessity for both individuals and businesses navigating rapid change.

## IF YOU COULD DEFINE ONE BOLD REFORM OR STRATEGIC SHIFT, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

A practical overhaul of the education system, with less emphasis on theory and a stronger focus on real-world skills. The labour market increasingly needs graduates who can think critically, work with data, and adapt quickly. Education must be better aligned with market needs and more flexible in responding to change. Without this shift, Slovakia's long-term competitiveness will remain at risk.

## WHAT ACHIEVEMENT FROM 2025 ARE YOU MOST PROUD OF, AND WHY?

In 2025, we strengthened our role as a responsible and engaged corporate citizen while continuing to deliver solid business results. We focused on education, inclusion, and targeted community support, and actively involved our employees in these initiatives. What I value most is that responsibility and engagement are no longer seen as side projects, but as a natural part of how we operate every day.

## WHAT IS THE BIGGEST STRATEGIC CHALLENGE YOUR COMPANY IS CURRENTLY NAVIGATING?

The pace of change. We are accelerating digital transformation across processes, services, and culture, while maintaining trust, stability, and strong client relationships. Balancing innovation with reliability is one of the most demanding—and most important—challenges companies face today.

## HOW IS AI OR DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION CHANGING YOUR INDUSTRY, AND HOW ARE YOU RESPONDING?

AI is moving the industry from a reactive approach to a more predictive one. It enables deeper client understanding, more efficient processes, and stronger risk management. At the same time, technology alone is not enough. The real differentiator is how it is implemented—responsibly, transparently, and with a strong emphasis on security and trust.

## WHAT LEADERSHIP QUALITY IS MOST ESSENTIAL IN TODAY'S COMPLEX ENVIRONMENT?

Clarity in uncertainty. Leaders are increasingly required to make decisions with incomplete information, provide clear direction, and communicate openly. At the same time, trust, consistency, and the ability to listen are essential for keeping teams engaged and resilient in a rapidly changing environment.