

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

In my view, the key question today is not how many people we have, but how well we can work with human capital and its potential. How can we develop it, keep people economically active for longer, and connect their capabilities more effectively with the needs of companies and the economy.

I see education as the foundation. It is both a critical and a long-term issue. Slovakia needs a clearly defined and professionally led strategy for education development, one that remains consistent even as governments change. If we want to move forward as a country, we must prepare people systematically for a fast-changing world. This is not a task for one or two governments, but at least for one or two generations. Without meaningful changes in education, we will not address the causes of the problem, only its consequences. The first condition for success is the willingness of those in positions of greatest responsibility to take this issue seriously and address it with discipline and continuity.

At the same time, there are areas where progress can come sooner. One of them is the role of the "silver generation". In Slovakia, people over fifty are still too often seen as being past the peak of their working lives. I see it differently. With the right conditions, reasonable flexibility, and good work organization, older employees can be a highly stable, loyal, and valuable part of the workforce. If we want to respond to population aging in a sensible way, we need to look beyond stereotypes and recognize the benefits this generation can bring to employers and colleagues. Very soon, this may not apply only to people in their fifties, but also to those in their sixties...

It is also not enough to have job openings and people willing to work if the two cannot meet geographically. Workforce mobility within Slovakia and more flexible working models are still discussed less often than they should be. Transport, housing availability, part-time work, and other flexible work arrangements can all play an important role here. In my view, this remains an underused area with room for practical and relatively quick improvement.

Another issue I see very strongly is continuous learning within companies. The labor market is changing faster than formal education can respond. That is why ongoing reskilling and upskilling throughout a person's career are increasingly important today. In my opinion, companies need to accept that some of the talent they need will not simply be available on the market. They will have to develop it intentionally within their own organizations and then find ways to retain it.

This is closely linked to the quality of leadership and the overall way companies work with people. Talent shortages can be addressed in part through more focused and intensive search for the right candidates. But it is just as important whether companies can retain people, develop individuals and teams, and create an environment where people want to stay. In practice, results are often shaped by the quality of management, the ability to work with internal potential, and company culture. Many of our clients today do not only need help finding the right people. They also want to learn how to work with people more effectively: how to identify and attract the right talent, develop soft skills, strengthen leadership, and build a healthier culture and way of working across the organization.

In my view, Slovakia also needs to become more open to and better prepared for international talent, and more intentional in attracting people from abroad, including Slovak graduates of foreign universities. However, if we want to attract and retain talent from outside the country, Slovakia must become more attractive not only as a place to work, but also as a place to live.

To sum up, Slovakia's response to aging, talent shortages, and workforce transformation must be systemic, practical and long-term. Better education, longer economic activity, higher mobility, continuous learning, stronger leadership and company culture, and a greater ability to attract talent from outside. In this combination, I see a realistic path to continuous strengthening the competitiveness of both the country and the companies operating within it.

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Educated as a veterinary doctor, he began his professional journey in academic field. When new opportunities were opening across Central Europe, he moved into business in the early 1990s. He entered the pharmaceutical industry, where he built a career from frontline sales to top country leadership, later taking on regional and European responsibilities. Co-founding MenkynaPartners Management Consulting 20 years ago brought together his business experience with executive search expertise. Over time, his work expanded beyond pharma and executive search itself, into a broader advisory perspective mainly represented by in-depth interviews, coaching, mentoring, career partnership, and management consulting. Robert is committed to being genuinely useful through a combination of professional depth and human dedication.