

DIGITAL PAYMENTS

A CATALYST FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH AND MODERN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION



INTRODUCTION

Following three rounds of fiscal consolidation, the Slovak government is searching for measures that can stimulate economic growth, strengthen domestic consumption and improve long-term competitiveness. The near-term macroeconomic outlook remains subdued: in its Spring 2026 outlook, the National Bank of Slovakia projected GDP growth of only 0.5% in 2026¹. In such an environment, improving business and government efficiency that would drive economic growth and reduce unnecessary costs become more and more salient policy priorities.

In this context, digital payments should no longer be viewed merely narrowly as a financial-sector issue or a matter of consumer convenience. More than 90% of non-cash transactions now occur in retail and business-to-consumer settings, demonstrating that digital payments have become deeply embedded in everyday economic activity². Reflecting a global trend, payment systems are increasingly evolving into foundational digital infrastructure that enables consumers, businesses and public institutions to interact more efficiently rather than serving merely as transaction-processing tools³. On a macroeconomic level, the increased use of digital payments contributes to the formalization of the economy, supports financial stability, and fosters innovation in public services.

An informal economy study on the effects of payment digitalization in Slovakia, conducted by Kearney and Visa, shows that every 1% increase in digital payments in five consecutive years will bring a GDP increase of € 80 million and an increased tax collection by € 20 million every year, significantly reducing the size of the shadow economy⁴. For small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), digital payments are a practical business tool that simplifies day-to-day operations, improves customer experience, increases revenues, and facilitates participation in the digital economy. At the same time, digitally traceable transactions strengthen tax compliance and reduce opportunities for undeclared economic activity⁵, making it harder for sellers to leave transactions unregistered compared with cash.

Furthermore, McKinsey finds that digital commerce has been the principal driver of growth in Central and Eastern Europe, accounting for more than 80% of digital-economy growth between 2019 and 2021. According to its analysis, the digital economy of the CEE “Digital Challengers” countries, including Slovakia, could generate up to €206 billion in additional value by 2030 through further digitization of both the public and private sectors, stronger ICT investment and continued

expansion of digital commerce⁶. Evidence from the Czechia Pays by Card initiative further illustrates the practical economic benefits of electronic payment acceptance. Participating SMEs reported average revenue growth of approximately 18%⁷, demonstrating how digital payments can support business expansion through higher sales, larger transaction values and improved customer convenience⁸.

This paper therefore more closely examines the current state of digital payments in Slovakia and explores how the Slovak Government can further leverage the transition toward a modern and trusted payment ecosystem to support productivity, economic competitiveness and public sector modernization.

DIGITAL PAYMENTS LANDSCAPE IN SLOVAKIA

Slovakia already ranks among the more advanced digital-payment markets in Central Europe. The Slovak payments ecosystem is highly developed, diversified and broadly trusted by both consumers and merchants. According to Payments Europe Research, 88% of merchants and 92% of consumers are satisfied with currently available payment solutions, while 81% of merchants already prefer digital payments over cash⁹. This is also result of a long-term education of the market - Slovakia was among the European pioneers of contactless card payments, having adopted them in 2008 among first EU countries and subsequently very quickly adopting NFC-based mobile payments as well.¹⁰

Consumer preferences remain strongly oriented towards cards and digital wallets, reflecting their convenience, familiarity and widespread acceptance across both physical and online commerce. According to the Mastercard 2025 survey, nine in ten consumers in Slovakia prefer to pay by card, mobile phone or wearable electronic devices. In brick-and-mortar stores, 78 percent of people favor digital payment methods and this share reaches 91% in case of online shopping. Most dominant methods are traditional physical cards, mobile payments and digital wallets, technologies such as Click to Pay but gradually also wearable electronic devices (watches, rings) are making inroads into the payment market.¹¹ Based on data from the National Bank of Slovakia, in April 2026, Slovak consumers made more than 48.35 million transactions via mobile wallets in a single month, accounting for almost 46% of all 105.3 million card transactions¹². This compares with only around 2% of card transactions made via phone or watch in 2019¹³, illustrating the rapid shift towards new forms of digital payments in the country.

DID YOU KNOW?

The economic implications of payment acceptance are particularly visible in sectors that depend on convenience and spontaneous consumer spending, such as tourism. Slovakia accommodated more than 6.3 million guests in 2025, boosted by stronger international demand¹⁴. International visitors increasingly expect to pay using payment methods they already use at home, whether through payment cards, digital wallets or wearable devices, without the need to download local applications or open domestic bank accounts. Broad acceptance of internationally interoperable payment solutions thus reduces transaction friction, improves visitor experience and enables tourists to spend more easily throughout their stay. In this sense, payment ecosystem naturally forms part of a country's tourism competitiveness and overall attractiveness as a destination¹⁵.

The strong consumer preference for digital payments is equally mirrored by merchant attitudes. According to the survey conducted among Slovak merchants, the principal benefits of card acceptance include guaranteed payments (94%), increased sales (92%), speed and ease of use (92%)¹⁶. What is more, 76% of merchants state that they would lose turnover if restricted to cash-only payments, while 67% believe that handling cash is more expensive than accepting electronic payments¹⁷. According to data from Tatra banka, 35% of customers eventually limit or abandon purchases when cashless payment options are unavailable¹⁸. To sum it up, in an era in which customers expect effortless and secure payments, a wide range of payment options is becoming a must for merchants who want to remain competitive and build long-term customer loyalty.¹⁹

TRUST, SECURITY AND CONSUMER PROTECTION

Trust has become one of the most valuable commodities of the digital economy, particularly in e-commerce, where secure and seamless payments are a prerequisite for further growth. While consumers demand payments to be fast and convenient, research consistently shows that security remains one of the most important factors influencing payment choice²⁰. According to Payments Europe's 2025 survey, 90% of Slovak merchants identify lower fraud risk of cards as the most important attribute of modern payment solutions²¹. Security is also crucial for further development of wearables. According to the Slovak Banking Association, the rapid growth of mobile and wearable payments in Slovakia has been closely linked to the widespread adoption of tokenization technologies, which enable consumers to make secure payments without exposing their actual card credentials²².

As businesses become more dependent on online transactions and digital channels, maintaining resilience requires continuous investment in payment security. Payment architectures are now built around authentication mechanisms and real-time monitoring capabilities designed to reduce fraud exposure while maintaining a seamless user experience²³. At the same time, the nature of fraud is evolving. Visa identifies scams as the largest and fastest-growing category of consumer fraud, with almost \$1 billion in scam-related activity detected globally during the second half of 2025 alone. At the same time, investments in tokenization and network-level security contributed to a 9.6% reduction in token fraud and a 16% reduction in card-enumeration losses, demonstrating that modern payment-security technologies can significantly reduce fraud while supporting continued growth in digital commerce.²⁴

CONSUMER PROTECTION MATTERS

Consumer protection forms an equally important pillar of trust in digital payments. Card-based payment systems operate within mature consumer-protection frameworks that combine strong customer authentication under the revised Payment Services Directive (PSD2), continuous fraud monitoring, dispute-resolution procedures, and chargeback mechanisms. Chargebacks provide consumers with an additional safeguard by allowing issuing banks, under defined card-scheme rules, to reverse unauthorized or disputed transactions or seek reimbursement where goods or services are not delivered as agreed, thereby strengthening confidence in e-commerce and cross-border purchases. Together, these legal and technological protections have been a crucial factor behind the sustained growth of card-based and tokenized payments across Europe.

Artificial intelligence (AI) is indispensably complementing these technologies by strengthening fraud prevention and operational security. AI-powered systems can analyze vast volumes of transaction data in real time, identify unusual patterns and flag potentially fraudulent activity before transactions are completed. Beyond fraud detection, AI is extensively used for transaction monitoring, risk assessment, identity verification and dispute management, helping financial institutions respond more effectively to evolving cyber threats^{25,26}. In 2024 specifically, cybercrime generated global losses exceeding \$9.5 trillion²⁷. Globally, advanced AI capabilities integrated into major payment rails are now utilized to secure roughly 160 billion transactions annually, blocking billions of dollars in potential fraud losses²⁸. Maintaining a sufficient level of security will therefore require continuous investments by both public and private actors to keep the flow of payments and economic transactions going, retaining the trust gained over the last decades.

CURRENT LEGISLATIVE DEVELOPMENTS IN SLOVAKIA

Recent legislative and regulatory developments suggest that Slovakia is gradually building the foundations of a more transparent, digital and interoperable payments ecosystem between public administration, businesses and consumers. While individual reforms address different parts of the economy, together they point toward a broader shift away from cash-dependent processes towards greater transaction transparency to reduce the national tax gap and shadow economy.²⁹ Unlike cash transactions, digitally recorded payments create verifiable audit trails that make underreporting, tax evasion and corruption more difficult to conceal, thereby helping reduce the tax gap and limiting the space for the shadow economy. International evidence and academic research also suggest that a large shadow economy is linked to high levels of corruption and that prevalence of shadow economies is one of the most significant obstacles to any effective anti-corruption effort³⁰ - regulations promoting transaction transparency can thus not only positively drive tax revenues but also increase the quality of public administration.

Several measures adopted in 2025–2026 directly support Slovak Government's efforts in this regard. From 1 January 2026, the new sales-recording framework eliminates nearly all previous exceptions when it comes to recording sales through the digital eKasa system for the purpose of greater transparency and easier verification of economic activity³¹. In parallel, from 1 May 2026, merchants required to record sales through eKasa must offer at least one cashless payment method for transactions above €1, whether through payment cards, mobile payments, or QR-based solutions³². These measures intended to tackle shadow economy are further complemented by the reduction of the cash-payment threshold for transactions involving businesses to €5,000 (€15,000 applies only to transactions between natural persons), supporting more auditable money flows and less room for undocumented high-value cash circulation³³. Finally, the full roll-out of e-invoicing from 2027 is definitely a measure that will help tackle tax fraud and shadow economy activities in the country. Due to these long-term benefits for Slovak business environment, it is a project that AmCham Slovakia has actively supported all the way - from initial inputs into legislation during the

consultation process up to awareness-raising activities and ongoing dialogue between state and business representatives.

Slovakia is also simultaneously implementing several EU-driven digital initiatives. Slovak banks are now required to receive instant euro payments under the EU Instant Payments Regulation, while alignment with the EU Digital Identity (eID) Wallet is already underway. The Interior Ministry is expanding the use cases for its mobile ID solutions (via the eDoklady and eldentita apps), aiming e.g. at integration package for third parties to enable remote identity verification, which would enable banks or telecom operator to integrate eDoklady into their own systems and apps, or expanding the use of eDoklady beyond ID cards and driver's licenses to support additional documents³⁴. Legislative amendments³⁵ in force from December 2025 simultaneously initiate the gradual transition of administrative and judicial fee collection from the existing closed-loop 'eKolok' system operated by the Slovak Post (Slovenská pošta) to a payment infrastructure managed directly by the State Treasury by 2029. In practice, this will allow citizens to pay fees directly at public offices through POS terminals and other digital-payment channels, provide the state with faster access to collect revenues and create a unified framework for payment collection across public institutions.

Despite this progress, AmCham sees further potential to digitize payment-related services within the Slovak public administration. This would make these services more efficient and improve the experience of citizens and businesses. The time and financial resources saved could then be redirected toward productivity and economic growth, which Slovakia and the wider EU urgently need in the current geopolitical and economic environment.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SLOVAKIA

Inspired by successful examples from other EU countries, Slovakia could consider the following practical measures to further modernize its payments ecosystem, strengthen economic competitiveness and improve the efficiency of its public administration.

EXPAND DIGITAL PAYMENTS AND AI IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

The ongoing modernization of administrative and judicial fee collection provides Slovakia with an opportunity to build a broader digital-public-services ecosystem around the State Treasury's payment infrastructure. The end game would be to integrate majority of public-sector payments into this infrastructure, including those administered by municipalities and higher territorial units (e.g. local taxes, waste charges, or permit fees). The State Treasury has already launched this transformation under the ÚHRADY project, aiming to unify existing payment channels (payment gates, POS terminals, bank transfers, QR codes...) for taxes, contributions, fees and other public-sector payments, with integrated reconciliation and refunds services, while maintaining the security of the entire payment ecosystem. ÚHRADY project is already running at the Industrial Property Office and Slovak diplomatic missions worldwide, with expansion planned to Ministry of Interior's document departments (ID, passports...) in January 2027 and municipal construction permit-procedure fees in June 2027. Another best practice example is the Bratislava Account (Bratislavské konto), which already enables residents to pay municipal waste fees and property taxes digitally. From the citizen's and entrepreneur's perspective, the level of government receiving the payment is largely irrelevant: the priority is the ability to complete the entire administrative process quickly, securely and through the payment method of their choice.

The primary objective should therefore be to improve the user experience for both citizens and businesses through greater personalization, easier access to public services and reduced administrative burden. AI-powered chatbots, virtual assistants, and automated client-support tools are already being used globally in tax

administration, compliance monitoring and benefits management, where machine-learning systems help improve revenue collection, automate routine administrative tasks, and support more efficient public administration.^{36,37} Slovakia could leverage this transformation to improve how citizens interact with public administration more broadly. AI-enabled assistants could be gradually integrated into existing government platforms such as Slovensko.sk, the Financial Administration portal and eDoklady. Illustrative use cases include:

- **Tax administration** (Ministry of Finance / Financial Administration / Ministry of Interior / Ministry of Investments): An AI assistant (upgraded "Taxana") integrated into the national eGovernment portal and connected to the State Treasury payment infrastructure could help citizens and businesses understand their tax obligations, provide personalized reminders regarding deadlines and payments, explain filing procedures and guide users through the entire process from submission to payment. In the future, citizens could securely store payment credentials within eDoklady and use them to pay taxes, administrative fees, and other public charges.
- **Identity documents and administrative services** (Ministry of Interior): AI-powered assistants integrated into eDoklady or Slovensko.sk could guide citizens through passport, identity-card and driving-licence renewal procedures, explain documentation requirements, and enable payment of administrative fees within the same digital workflow. This would reduce administrative burden while creating a more seamless user journey across public services.
- **Grants, subsidies and business support** (Ministry of Investments / Ministry of Economy / Office of the Deputy Prime Minister for the Recovery Plan & the Knowledge Economy): AI-powered advisory tools could help SMEs, entrepreneurs and startups identify relevant grant schemes, subsidies and public-support programs by aggregating information from multiple ministries and public agencies. This issue is timely as the state is already planning the 2028-2034 EU funds period. One pioneer private sector example is the kdezacatpodnikat.sk platform, which provides businesses with AI-supported guidance on establishing and operating a

business, helping entrepreneurs navigate administrative procedures and identify relevant obligations through a single digital interface. Such solutions have the potential to reduce the time SMEs spend searching for information across multiple public institutions, allowing entrepreneurs to devote more time to productive business activities. Use of AI in SMEs can already now save each worker around 5-6 hours weekly on average³⁸, so utilizing AI and digital tools in public services for businesses can further drive efficiency gains.

Several European countries are already therefore moving in the direction of digitizing its payments. In Poland, local-government offices (incl. large cities such as Warsaw or Łódź) already enable citizens to pay local fees directly through the national mObywatel digital-identity application. According to the Ministry of Digital Affairs, the solution streamlines administrative processes, reduces errors and supports the delivery of cashless public services. Romania has pursued a similar approach through the national Ghişeu.ro platform, which enables citizens to pay taxes, fees and other public charges electronically to more than 1,200 public institutions. The platform has been adopted by more than 1.4 million users and processes millions of digital-payment transactions annually, illustrating the growing role of integrated digital payments in modern public administration. Similarly, Croatia has gradually expanded online and card payments across public administration through the e-Građani (“e-Citizen”) platform and the e-Pristojbe (“e-Fees”) system since 2016, allowing citizens and businesses to electronically pay administrative fees as part of digital public-service workflows³⁹. Italy also centralized public-sector payments through the PagoPA platform integrated into the national IO application⁴⁰, while Estonia embedded digital payments directly into pre-filled online public services and tax administration⁴¹.

SUPPORT DIGITAL DISTRIBUTION OF SELECTED SOCIAL BENEFITS

The Slovak Ministry of Labor could explore the digital payment solutions for selected social-benefit and targeted public-support programs, such as prepaid cards or restricted-purpose payment cards, enabling faster disbursement, reduced administrative costs and better targeting of public support.

Government-to-consumer (G2C) payments represent an important component of public-service delivery, particularly during periods of economic uncertainty or crisis response. According to a 2023 analysis of government disbursement systems, cash- and cheque-based distribution models remain operationally demanding for governments due to physical cash handling, manual administration and limited traceability of funds⁴². On the other hand, digital disbursement systems can help reduce administrative costs, improve oversight of public spending and lower fraud risks associated with cash-based welfare distribution. Globally, approximately 44% of government social-welfare disbursements are still distributed in cash despite increasing adoption and operational advantages of digital payment ecosystems⁴³.

However, several European countries have already piloted targeted digital-disbursement programmes using prepaid payment cards. In Romania, prepaid payment cards financed partly through EU funds are currently used to distribute targeted social support to approximately 2.5 million vulnerable citizens annually, while simultaneously supporting broader payment acceptance infrastructure in underserved communities. The program achieved a 95% card activation rate, demonstrating strong user adoption, while also contributing to wider acceptance of digital payments among local merchants and improving access to cashless payment methods in rural areas. The Romanian experience illustrates that digital government-to-person (G2P) payments can simultaneously improve the efficiency of public support delivery, promote financial inclusion and accelerate the digital transformation of local economies as well as remote, cash-reliant villages.

For Slovakia, similar solutions could initially focus on carefully selected programs where digital distribution may improve targeting, enable pre-defined uses to prevent misuse of funds (e.g. for tobacco, gambling, alcohol...) and enhance operational efficiency while preserving accessibility and consumer choice. This might require amendments to Section 117, paragraphs 1-2 of the Act No. 461/2003 Coll. on Social Insurance, which would add “payment instrument” among the existing disbursement methods, but these small changes could enable the state a much more efficient, quicker and targeted disbursement.

SECURE SUSTAINABLE FINANCING FOR CYBERSECURITY, INCL. CYBERSECURITY OF PAYMENT FLOWS

As Slovakia continues modernizing its payments ecosystem, ensuring long-term resilience and cybersecurity of digital infrastructure will become essential. This is particularly important because digital transformation among micro-businesses is accelerating, while cybersecurity preparedness remains uneven and many smaller businesses still lack sufficient cybersecurity preparedness despite growing exposure to digital threats. Recent research shows that 54% of EU micro-businesses reported cybersecurity incidents in the past two years. Despite the risks, many EU micro-businesses (43%) use no cybersecurity tools and only 15% plan to adopt new tools in the coming 12 months⁴⁴.

This is particularly concerning given that in Slovakia, reported cyber incidents increased from 478 to 703 (47%) between 2023 and 2024, making the public-administration the most targeted sector⁴⁵. In 2025, the Slovak National Security Authority recorded 1,650 reported cyber incidents in Slovakia, up from 1,178 in 2024, including 75 serious cybersecurity incidents, compared with 23 in 2024⁴⁶. Cyber incidents affecting public institutions, including the cyberattack on the Slovak Geodesy, Cartography and Cadaster Authority (ÚGKK) and attempted intrusions into other state systems have highlighted the vulnerability of critical digital infrastructure⁴⁷. The National Security Authority reported that 163 cybersecurity audits in the public-administration sector found that only 37% of assessed requirements were compliant with cybersecurity requirements⁴⁸. The Authority identifies insufficient financing, shortages of cybersecurity specialists and reliance on fragmented project-based funding as persistent structural weaknesses⁴⁹.

The growing deployment of artificial intelligence across the economy and public sector adds a new dimension to cybersecurity challenges. While AI can enhance productivity and innovation, it also enables more sophisticated cyber threats and increases the demand for robust cybersecurity safeguards, regulatory preparedness and investment in digital resilience.

Slovakia must therefore continue supporting investments into cybersecurity, incl. digital payments ecosystem resilience, digital capabilities and cybersecurity expertise across both public institutions and the private sector.

Targeted support should focus particularly on SMEs, municipalities and public institutions facing new obligations stemming from existing and upcoming EU legislation. In this context, the upcoming 2028–2034 EU Multiannual Financial Framework could provide an important opportunity to strengthen digital resilience and long-term competitiveness of the Slovak economy. Recalling the words of Milton Friedman — “There’s no such thing as free lunch,” we need to acknowledge that there is no such thing as free secure digital space or free safe digital payments - investments into cybersecurity are crucial to developing the digital ecosystems of the future that serve citizens and governments alike.

SUPPORT DIGITIZATION OF TRANSPORT MOBILITY THROUGH OPEN-LOOP “TAP-TO-PAY” SYSTEMS

Today, digital payments in public transport allow passengers to pay easily with their bank card or mobile wallet, eliminating the need for cash, paper tickets or dedicated transit cards. For transport operators, open-loop payment systems reduce the costs associated with cash handling and proprietary ticketing infrastructure while improving the passenger experience, particularly for tourists and occasional users.^{50,51} Evidence from international deployments suggests that open-loop payment systems generate benefits extending far beyond fare collection. A survey by the Visa Economic Empowerment Institute covering 75 transit agencies globally found that 80% experienced increased ridership following implementation, while almost 70% reported better data for transport planning and 78% observed growth in usage by visitors and non-resident passengers.⁵² Slovakia has already made visible progress in modernizing transport payments in several cities through contactless “tap-to-pay” systems introduced in cities such as Bratislava, Košice, and Žilina. Building on these foundations, the country could further support interoperable open-loop payment solutions across urban and regional transport networks as part of broader smart-mobility and tourism strategies.

Transport for London (TfL) pioneered this approach more than a decade ago by becoming the first city worldwide to introduce contactless open-loop payments across its public transport network and has since become the benchmark for transport authorities worldwide.

Today, open-loop payments have become the standard across much of Europe, including Central Europe. In Czechia, contactless EMV payments are now available across the public transport systems of Prague, Brno and Ostrava, where passengers can travel using a bank card or mobile wallet without purchasing a paper ticket. A particularly noteworthy example is the Netherlands, where the nationwide OVpay system allows passengers to use the same payment card or mobile wallet across trains, metros, trams, buses and ferries throughout the country. Unlike city-specific implementations elsewhere in Europe, OVpay provides seamless interoperability across all public transport operators, making it the first nationwide open-loop public transport payment system globally.⁵³

Slovakia's recent launch of a unified national ticketing and mobility ecosystem through the National Integrated Ticketing System (NICL) therefore represents an important opportunity to build on proven European experience by leveraging the open-loop model and Pay As You Go (PAYGO) system.⁵⁴ Over time, Slovakia could extend the Pay As You Go to the regional transport as well and enable citizens and visitors to use a single globally familiar payment method across public transport, micromobility services and, potentially, related mobility services such as parking or EV charging as open-loop payment systems can also provide transport authorities with richer mobility data for planning and service optimization⁵⁵. For Slovakia, this represents not only a transport modernization measure, but also an opportunity to strengthen tourism attractiveness, smart-city development and broader economic modernization through trusted, secure and internationally interoperable digital payment ecosystem.

RECOMMENDED ACTION PLAN

RECOMMENDATION	LEAD INSTITUTION	LEGISLATIVE/POLICY ACTION	ROLE OF PRIVATE PARTNERS
Expand digital payments in public administration	Ministry of Finance, State Treasury, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Informatization, (MIRRI)	Complete the transition from the eKolak system and gradually integrate local-government payments into the State Treasury payment infrastructure.	Payment providers, banks and technology companies can support implementation of secure payment gateways, POS infrastructure, digital identity integration and user-centered payment solutions.
Deploy AI-enabled government assistants	Ministry of Interior, Financial Administration, Ministry of Informatization (MIRRI)	Integrate AI assistants into Slovensko.sk, eDoklady and the Financial Administration portal to support end-to-end administrative procedures, including payments.	Technology companies have now got several years of experience developing and refining AI bots based on the latest security standards, which can help speed up administrative procedures between the state and citizen/business
Digitize selected social-benefit payments	Ministry of Labor, Social Insurance Agency	Consider legislative amendments to Section 117, paragraphs 1-2 of the Act No. 461/2003 Coll. on Social Insurance, adding “payment instrument” among the existing disbursement methods	Multiple local and international companies active in the payment sector can help Government with digital disbursements, e.g. on pre-paid cards, to drive efficiency and limit misuse of public funds
Strengthen financing for cybersecurity	Ministry of Informatization/ Finance, National Security Authority	Prioritize digital-payment resilience within the 2028–2034 EU Multiannual Financial Framework and future national cybersecurity strategies.	Private sector companies can support the state with necessary expertise and feedback on the market needs when it comes to strengthening cybersecurity of payments.
Support open-loop transport payments	Ministry of Transport	Secure smooth roll-out of the National Integrated Ticketing System (NICL) based on open-loop standards and extend the Pay As You Go (PAYGO) model to regional transport.	Transport operators, acquiring banks, payment-service providers and mobility technology should jointly work on implementing open-loop ticketing solutions beyond NICL and integrate them with broader smart-mobility services.

CONCLUSION

The direction of travel is clear. The question is no longer whether digital payments matter - the data already show that they do. Slovak consumers overwhelmingly prefer cards and digital wallets, merchants associate electronic payments with higher revenues and lower costs, and policymakers are progressively creating the legislative foundations for a more transparent and digital economy.

Across Europe and globally, digital transactions continue to grow rapidly worldwide and are expected to rise from 1.7 trillion in 2024 to 3.5 trillion in 2029⁵⁶. Hence, countries that invest in trusted, secure and widely accepted payment ecosystems will be better positioned to support innovation, tourism, entrepreneurship and long-term competitiveness.

As Slovakia modernizes its payments landscape, the objective should not be to privilege one payment method over another, but to support a secure, interoperable and trusted ecosystem where consumers and businesses can choose the solutions that best meet their needs. In this context, trusted and technologically resilient digital payment ecosystems including globally accepted card-based solutions — remains an important pillar of competitiveness, consumer confidence and economic modernization.

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