

# Mapping the Current State of Eastern Slovakia's Potential

ROUNDTABLE  
DISCUSSIONS



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On May 25, 2023, 90 relevant experts from different sectors – from the business sector, through academia, public sector including state and municipal level and nonprofit sector - were gathered by the American Chamber of Commerce in Košice to discuss the current state of Eastern Slovakia's potential. Seeing the new investors entering the region, as well as considering other economic and geopolitical factors, Eastern Slovakia is going through a game-changing economic and societal transformation. 7000 new to-be-created jobs within the next 36 months in Košice and Prešov

regions, unprecedented inflation rates, global energy crises and dramatic geopolitical change of landscape will determine the success of Eastern Slovakia in the years to come.

Our policy discussions were aimed at identifying the current state of the region's potential and identifying challenges and development drivers ahead of the Phase 2 session scheduled for October 5, 2023, focused on solution-seeking in the areas of Attractivity and Visibility, Human Capital, Innovation Ecosystem, Manufacturing, Healthcare, and Hard Infrastructure.

THANK YOU  
FOR YOUR  
PARTICIPATION



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# KEY FINDINGS / PHASE 1

## ATTRACTIVITY & VISIBILITY

roundtable



The discussions highlighted three key areas: (1) local government and state, (2) industry and business, and (3) sports and culture. The challenges identified included a weak infrastructure, the problem of brain drain, and a negative mindset among locals. Positive development factors included the presence of influential personalities, culture, historical landmarks, positive international reputation, the IT sector, investments, stakeholder collaboration, and quality workforce.

### QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED IN PHASE 2 INCLUDE:

- How can we help individuals/officials/politicians to be less cautious and more courageous?

## HUMAN CAPITAL

roundtable



The discussions focused on two personas, a 14-year-old student and a 45-year-old accountant, to assess the region's challenges and the state of human capital. The drivers for development were identified as collaboration with universities, foreign investments, and resilient and innovative individuals. The barriers included underdeveloped infrastructure, untapped economic potential, and a mismatch between labor market needs and education outcomes. Local patriotism, a lower cost of living, and quality of life were also identified as development drivers.

### QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED IN PHASE 2 INCLUDE:

- How to strategically manage university infrastructure in Eastern Slovakia to support human capital development at the tertiary education level?
- How to activate economic and social potential of the marginalized Roma communities?
- How to set the education policy of both Prešov and Košice self-governing regions to meaningfully reflect the current and future needs of the labor market?

## INNOVATION ECOSYSTEM

roundtable



The discussion identified three target groups: talent, companies, and public administration. Collaboration across the different sectors, alignment within the IT companies, and leadership and change management were seen as the drivers of regional development, while distrust, lack of vision, and talent shortage were viewed as the main obstacles. Other challenges included a lack of capital, insufficient political support, and inefficient legislation. The discussion participants stressed the importance of collaboration, different forms of support, and talents for the success of the innovation ecosystem.

### QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED IN PHASE 2 INCLUDE:

- How to pursue a common goal and build trust for future successful cooperation?
- How to ensure that public policy helps the innovation ecosystem from above and how to define innovation so that its importance and priorities are understood by the entire political spectrum?
- How to create and cultivate an attractive region for foreigners?

## MANUFACTURING

roundtable



The stakeholders emphasized the strengths of the manufacturing sector in Eastern Slovakia, such as geographic location, natural resources, culture, and foreign investments. Positive dynamics, technical education opportunities, research and development, and willingness to collaborate were also highlighted. The challenge lies in adopting a problem-solving attitude, promoting science, improving education quality, fostering innovation, and maintaining an open mind.

### QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED IN PHASE 2 INCLUDE:

- How can we, in collaboration with local government and the national government, define the strategic focus of the region and, through new infrastructure and educational policies, attract, motivate, and retain the workforce with a focus on long-term sustainability in the industry?

# KEY FINDINGS / PHASE 1

## HEALTHCARE

roundtable



The discussion identified three target groups: government, local administration, and doctors. Positive factors for development included motivated professionals, quality education, and innovation/digitalization. Barriers included the lack of human resources, chaos in healthcare management, and insufficient finances. Local patriotism, perseverance, private capital inflow, and a willingness to collaborate were identified as advantages. Political instability, weak regional competencies, and resistance to change were seen as barriers.

### QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED IN PHASE 2 INCLUDE:

- How can we attract and motivate healthcare professionals to eliminate the shortage of human resources in healthcare?
- How can we depoliticize the management of the healthcare sector at all levels?
- How can we optimize and increase financing in healthcare?

## INFRASTRUCTURE

roundtable



The discussion focused on personas such as investors, district offices, railways, airports, and municipalities. Challenges included inadequate infrastructure, unfavorable demographic indicators, legislative barriers, bureaucracy, and ineffective work with marginalized groups. Development factors included a qualified workforce, improved communication, modernized railways, and infrastructure development in municipalities. The wrong mindset, inadequate education, and lack of cooperation between stakeholders were seen as hindrances. In conclusion, the stakeholders identified a range of challenges and development drivers across the discussed topics. They emphasized the need for collaboration, improved infrastructure, effective governance, and innovation.

### QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED IN PHASE 2 INCLUDE:

- How can we involve the Roma community in the region's development based on their specific needs?
- How can we expedite the preparation processes, find sources of financing, and complete projects in the road and railway infrastructure sector?
- How can we stop brain drain from the region?



In conclusion, the discussions in Phase 1 highlighted common factors and specific challenges across various areas of focus in Eastern Slovakia's potential. Improved collaboration & trust, well-built infrastructure, effective governance, and sufficient talent emerged as key factors for successful transformation. However, each area, including Attractivity & Visibility, Human Capital, Innovation Ecosystem, Manufacturing, Healthcare, and Hard Infrastructure, presented its unique set of

challenges and development drivers. Phase 2 will address important questions such as promoting courageous decision-making, managing university infrastructure, attracting and retaining talent, depoliticizing healthcare, and expediting infrastructure projects. By addressing these challenges, Eastern Slovakia can successfully navigate its economic and societal transformation and create a prosperous future for the region.

