

ICT: a driving force in the Slovak economy



Slovakia offers many business advantages, such as, relatively low wage costs for a talented and well-educated labor force, foreign languages spoken at rather high level (English and German in particular), a business friendly environment, and a considerably good quality of life. Many international companies like Dell, IBM, Hewlett-Packard, AT&T, Lenovo, Accenture, and NESS have already discovered Slovakia and have taken advantage of the opportunity to open their operations and shared services centers here.

The Information and Communications Technology (ICT) sector in Slovakia is currently dominated by small-scale companies with less than ten employees. Between some 5,000 small ICT companies and some 10,000 additional

self-employed individuals, there are around 30,000 IT positions in Slovakia. Approximately ten large companies employ a third of this number, including Slovak companies like ESET and Asseco in addition to the abovementioned foreign firms.

The information and communication technology sector has a solid position in the Slovak economy and in many aspects is able to overcome the automotive sector. Although the number of employees is at only 2%, the ICT sector contributes almost 4% to the GDP. Indicators such as employment, volume of production, and exports indicate clearly to the strength of automotive producers, but considering added value to the state other parameters must be included. The Slovak ICT sec-

tor employs 30 to 40 thousand people. It consists of about ten thousand business owners and more than six thousand small to medium-sized companies. Wages in this sphere are characteristically double the national average. The average wage in the sector is 1,500 euros, while programmers earn up to 1,700 euros. As a result, through social security and health insurance costs, people working in ICT contribute roughly twice as much to the state coffers as the average worker. The amount paid through income taxation is also significantly higher; thus, cumulatively, employees in the ICT sector put more money back into the economy than workers in the automotive industry.

This sector could provide GDP growth by 0.1% by each 1%

invested into it. It seems that the ICT sector is a main engine of crises recovery. It shall be vital to focus on support of this relatively fast growing industry and invest into relevant education as well as support development of the language skills that are still lacking in this segment. For example, university graduates are inadequately prepared to use ICT in everyday life and the labor market because of the lack of creative or sophisticated skills being taught, lack of lessons, too formal teaching of informatics, or ignoring the latest trends. These are all serious concerns that should motivate us to improve.



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