

BEYOND COMPLIANCE

LEADING THE AI REVOLUTION IN CENTRAL EUROPE

For decades, Slovakia's economic growth was fueled by physical labor and industrial capacity. We became the "automotive heart" of Europe, a title that brought stability but also a dangerous level of path dependency. Today, that model is under siege. The fundamental transformation Slovakia is facing is driven by a shift from hardware to software, from assembly lines to algorithms. As we enter 2026, the question is no longer whether we will adapt to the digital age, but whether we will have the courage to lead it.

The challenges—skilled labor shortages, demographic decline, and rapid technological acceleration—are no longer theoretical. They are the new baseline. To remain competitive, Slovakia must transition from being a passive consumer of global technology to an active architect of its own digital destiny.

THE AI ACT: FROM REGULATION TO COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Serving on the European AI Board, I have seen firsthand the tension between regulation and innovation. Many see the AI Act as a hurdle. I see it as a blueprint for trust. In a world where "black box" algorithms can influence everything from healthcare to credit scores, trust is the ultimate currency.

We are currently in the last phase of the creation of the national AI law to implement the AI Act in Slovakia. This is not

about adding layers of bureaucracy; it is about creating a "Regulatory and Innovation Ecosystem" where innovation can be supported within safe boundaries. By providing a clear, predictable legal framework, we are giving Slovak businesses a head start. We are ensuring that "Made in Slovakia" AI is synonymous with ethical, high-quality, and legally compliant technology—a standard that the global market is beginning to demand.

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UNLOCKING THE POWER OF DATA AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Innovation cannot exist in a vacuum; it requires fuel. That fuel is data. However, Slovakia's data remains fragmented, trapped in silos within public administration and private enterprises. To drive real

competitiveness, we must move toward a Unified National Data Ecosystem.

As we oversee the implementation of national initiatives, our focus is on creating a seamless flow of information that respects privacy but enables progress. Whether it is healthcare data to improve patient outcomes or industrial data to optimize energy grids, the state must act as an orchestrator. We are not just building infrastructure; we are building a digital commons. This requires moving past the excuse of technical limitations and addressing the real bottleneck: the lack of a collaborative mindset between the state and the business community.

THE HUMAN ELEMENT: RESILIENCE OVER RESISTANCE

Technological progress is often met with fear. There is a persistent myth that AI will eliminate work. In reality, AI will reshape it. While administrative and accounting roles face higher risks of automation, the demand for creativity, complex problem-solving, and adaptability will skyrocket.

Our strategy must be obsessed with human capital. Retaining talent requires more than patriotic appeals; it demands an environment where an AI researcher or a cybersecurity expert has the same career trajectory in Bratislava or Košice as they would in Silicon Valley or Zurich. The development of digital competencies



RADOSLAV ŠTEFÁNEK

Government Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Republic for Artificial Intelligence

Ing. Radoslav Štefánek is an experienced leader in the field of digital transformation and innovation within public administration. He specializes in strategic management and crisis management, with extensive experience in key positions across both state administration and public enterprises.

At the Ministry of Investments, Regional Development and Informatization of the Slovak Republic, he led the key initiatives of digital transformation in public administration, including information technologies, innovation, and cybersecurity. He was responsible for strategic coordination, policy development, and the effective implementation of the ministry's priorities. In his current role as the Government Plenipotentiary of the Slovak Republic for Artificial Intelligence, he is building Slovakia's AI vision.

Previously, he was Director General of the Railways of the Slovak Republic (2023) and as a member of the Board of Directors and Director of the Services Division at Railway Company Slovakia (2016–2022). At the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic, he held several management positions, including Director of the Office of the Secretary General of the Service Office (2012–2016), Director of the Management Support Department, and Director General of the Inspectorate for Social Affairs (2024–2025).

He studied marketing and management at Tomas Bata University in Zlín, where he graduated with an engineering degree. He completed further professional education at RISEBA University of Applied Sciences in Riga, specialising in project management.

is not a one-off training session; it is a permanent state of evolution.

CONCLUSION: A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

The future of Slovakia will not be decided in Brussels, Washington or Beijing; it will be decided by the speed at which we implement these reforms at home. The innovations in the digital age are here. We have the expertise, the regulatory seat at the table, and the

strategic vision. What we need now is the collective will to execute.

The American Chamber of Commerce and its members are essential to this mission. Your feedback, your investments, and your expertise are the catalysts we need to turn legislative frameworks into economic reality. Let's stop talking about transformation and start proving that Slovakia is ready to lead.