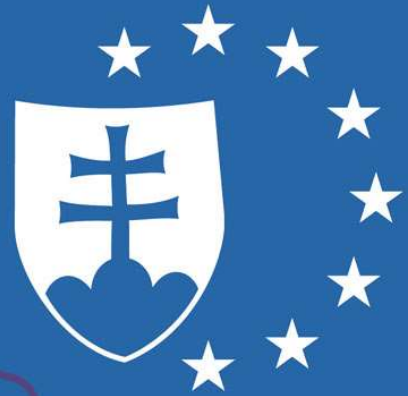




Legislative and policy update

APRIL



SLOVAKIA

MUTUAL ASSISTANCE FUND

The coalition partners agreed on a Mutual Assistance Fund that will be dedicated to individual people whose lives have been affected by novel coronavirus. Coalition MPs, ministers and other people cooperating with the Government will contribute to the fund.

01/04/2020, [NewsNow \(TASR\)](#)

JUDICIARY

Altogether 19 judges of Košice-based courts and the Supreme Court gave up on their positions, with their notices delivered to President Zuzana Čaputová on March 30 and 31. They thus ended in their posts at the end of March.

01/04/2020, [The Slovak Spectator](#)

PRESIDENT

President Called for Measures to Protect Elderly and Victims of Violence. During her meeting with the permanent crisis management team on April 3 President Zuzana Caputova appealed to its members to increase

the protection of elderly people, victims of domestic violence and other vulnerable groups, the president's spokesman Martin Strizinec told TASR on the same day.

03/04/2020, [NewsNow \(TASR\)](#)

SPECIALISED CRIMINAL COURT

A senate of the Specialised Criminal Court in Pezinok on April 6 sentenced Miroslav Marcek to 23 years in prison for the double murder of investigative journalist Jan Kuciak and his fiancée Martina Kusnirova two years ago and an earlier murder of entrepreneur Peter Molnar in 2016. The court took into account the fact that Miroslav M. pleaded guilty, co-operated with the police after his arrest and expressed regret for the murders.

06/04/2020, [NewsNow \(TASR\)](#)

CORONA SURVEY

56 percent of Slovaks Afraid of Coronavirus & Economic Impact. More than one half of Slovaks are afraid of the novel coronavirus and its economic impact, with women expressing concerns more frequently, especially for the health of their loved ones, according to a survey carried out by way of online interviews by agency Actly.

09/04/2020, [NewsNow \(TASR\)](#)

KURZARBEIT

Government decided to help all employers and self-employed affected by COVID-19. Slovakia is to introduce Kurzarbeit-inspired measures, demanded for several weeks by big employers, as soon as the parliament approves them. "The first option will be the so-called Kurzarbeit for every worker who is at home because of an obstacle to work on the part of an employer," Labour Minister Milan Krajniak (Sme Rodina) said.

14/04/2020, [The Slovak Spectator](#)

SLOVAKIA'S INTELLIGENCE SERVICE

President Zuzana Čaputová appointed Vladimír Pčolinský, nominated by the coalition Sme Rodina party, to lead the Slovak Information Service (SIS) intelligence agency. He replaced Anton Šafárik, who had been at the helm of SIS since summer 2016. Pčolinský is brother of Sme Rodina MP Peter Pčolinský.

15/04/2020, [The Slovak Spectator](#)

BUSINESS

Foreign business owners feel a little safer in Slovakia than in their home countries. While many foreigners feel safer in Slovakia, where the spread of COVID-19 is more controlled than their respective home countries, the future remains uncertain, especially for foreign business owners. The Slovak government started to provide economic relief for those who have been hit the hardest, but some small businesses and nonprofits worry whether they will still be in business after the COVID-19 pandemic. Others are prepared to start from scratch.

17/04/2020, [The Slovak Spectator](#)

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

The registered unemployment rate in Slovakia stood at 5.19 percent in March, up by 0.16 percentage points (p.p.) month-on-month and by 0.14 p.p. year-on-year. The number of jobseekers immediately able to start work stood at 142,993, going up by 3.65 percent y-o-y and almost 3 percent m-o-m.

20/04/2020, [NewsNow \(TASR\)](#)

BUDGET

Slovakia failed to meet its budgetary plans last year, Eurostat confirmed. Only six EU member countries had worse results than Slovakia. Originally, the Peter Pellegrini cabinet planned to close the year 2019 with the first balanced budget in the history of modern Slovakia. Nevertheless, in the autumn it changed its plans and aimed to close the year with a general government deficit of 0.68 percent of GDP. But it failed to meet this plan too when Slovakia ended 2019 with a deficit of €1.22 billion or 1.3 percent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP).

22/04/2020, [The Slovak Spectator](#)

TAXES

Coronavirus crisis will reduce tax incomes. The incomes are projected to drop by nearly €3.1 billion this year, according to the recent IFP prognosis. While in 2019, the income from taxes and payroll levies rose by 5.7 percent, this year they are expected to drop by 6.9 percent, the main reason being the drop in Slovakia's economy.

23/04/2020, [The Slovak Spectator](#)

INSOLVENCY MORATORIUM

On 23 April, the so called "insolvency moratorium" was approved by the National Council, imposing a temporary bankruptcy protection for companies, which find themselves in default due to the current corona crisis. The bankruptcy law is expected to put more protection on debtors' side and temporarily fail to provide creditors with basic rights they have been used to so far.

28/04/2020, [DennikN](#)

EXAMS

No admission exams for high schools this year. There will be no entrance tests for secondary schools this year. The admission of students will be decided by their grades so far or their success at subject competitions, Education Minister Branislav Grohling (SaS) announced, as reported by the SITA newswire.

29/04/2020, [The Slovak Spectator](#)

GOVERNMENT MANIFESTO

Matovič government gained parliament's trust. MPs voted in favor of the Government Manifesto and thus expressed their confidence in the government of Igor Matovič, the 12th government in the post-1993 history of Slovakia. The manifesto for economy and public finances suggests the corona crisis may trigger the needed

reforms. The improvement of the business environment, prudent and responsible fiscal policy, the reduction of red tape and tackling tax evasion are just some of many objectives listed in the document.

30/04/2020, [The Slovak Spectator](#)

WORLD & EUROPE

EU SOLIDARITY

The EU Commission started to further increase its response to the corona crisis by proposing to set up a €100 billion solidarity instrument to help workers keep their incomes and help businesses stay afloat, called SURE. It is also proposing to redirect all available structural funds to the response to the coronavirus.

02/04/2020, [European Commission](#)

MEDICAL DEVICES REGULATION

The EU Commission adopted a proposal to postpone by one year the date of application of the Medical Devices Regulation to allow Member States, health institutions and economic operators to prioritize the fight against the coronavirus pandemic. This decision took into account the unprecedented challenges of the coronavirus pandemic and the need for an increased availability of vitally important medical devices across the EU whilst continuing to ensure patient health and safety until the new legislation becomes applicable.

03/04/2020, [European Commission](#)

REFUGEES

MEPs called for solidarity and measures to prevent Covid19 crisis in refugee camps. The situation of refugees in Greece called for a concerted EU response to avoid a Covid-19 outbreak, according to MEPs on the civil liberties committee. As Europe has grappled with the challenges of the coronavirus crisis, concern is also growing over the living conditions of asylum-seekers in camps on the Greek islands. The situation at the Greek-Turkish border

escalated at the beginning of March when Turkey opened its borders to asylum seekers and refugees by breaking the 2016 migration pact with the EU.

03/04/2020, [European Parliament](#)

MEDICINE

The EU Commission called on Member States to optimize supply and availability of medicines. The pandemic highlighted significant challenges in ensuring the supply of the critical medicines needed and the impact such an outbreak can have on the supply chain of medicines in the EU. The Commission guidelines focus on the rational supply, allocation and use of vital medicines to treat coronavirus patients as well as medicines which may be at risk of shortage due to the pandemic. The proposed actions should allow for a more coordinated approach across the EU, preserving the integrity of the Single Market whilst protecting public health.

08/04/2020, [European Commission](#)

ECONOMY

Rebuilding Europe after Covid-19: MEPs called for decisive action. Europeans expect the EU and governments to act decisively to pave a way out of the crisis and build a more resilient Europe, MEPs said during a plenary debate on 16 April. In a discussion with Charles Michel, President of the European Council, and Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, MEPs said that solidarity and ambitious new solutions were needed to overcome the coronavirus outbreak and the resulting economic challenges.

16/04/2020, [European Parliament](#)

VIRTUAL PLATFORMS

WTO members discussed use of virtual platforms during COVID-19 lockdown. At a virtual meeting of all WTO members on 17 April, over 50 delegation heads took the floor to exchange views on the use of online discussions and written procedures to continue WTO work and decision-making during the COVID-19 lockdown. Director-General Roberto Azevêdo also used the informal session to urge members to submit information about pandemic-related trade measures to the WTO Secretariat's ongoing monitoring exercise.

17/04/2020, [WTO](#)

PRODUCTION

Agri-food and drink products whose names are protected by the European Union as “Geographical Indications” (GIs) represent a sales value of €74.76 billion, according to a study published on April 20, by the European Commission. Over one fifth of this amount results from exports outside the European Union. The study found that the sales value of a product with a protected name is on average double that for similar products without a certification.

20/04/2020, [European Commission](#)

FOOD CRISES

Global Report on Food Crises revealed scope of food crises as COVID-19 poses new risks to vulnerable countries. The report indicates that at the close of 2019, 135 million people across 55 countries and territories experienced acute food insecurity (IPC/CH Phase 3 or above). Additionally, in the 55 food-crisis countries covered by the report, 75 million children were stunted and 17 million suffered from wasting in 2019.

21/04/2020, [European Commission](#)

EXPORT RESTRICTIONS

WTO report found growing number of export restrictions in response to COVID-19 crisis. Eighty countries and customs territories so far have introduced export prohibitions or restrictions as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic according to a new report by the WTO Secretariat. The report, which is based on information from official sources and news outlets, drew attention to the current lack of transparency at the multilateral level and long-term risks that export restrictions pose to global supply chains and public welfare.

23/04/2020, [WTO](#)

CORONAVIRUS GLOBAL RESPONSE

The European Union will spare no effort to help the world come together against coronavirus, said Ursula von der Leyen, the President of the European Commission, at the joint press conference with a number of world leaders, which the World Health Organization hosted on 24 April. She announced the EU was joining forces with global partners to kick-start a pledging effort – the Coronavirus Global Response – on 4 May 2020. “The aim is

to raise EUR 7.5 billion to ramp up work on prevention, diagnostics and treatment. This is a first step only, but more will be needed in the future. Because beating coronavirus will require sustained actions on many fronts," she said.

24/04/2020, [European Commission](#)

TRADE RESTRICTIONS

IMF and WTO heads called for lifting trade restrictions on medical supplies and food. International Monetary Fund (IMF) Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva and WTO Director-General Roberto Azevêdo issued a joint call on 24 April for governments to refrain from imposing export and other trade restrictions on key medical supplies and food and to quickly lift those put in place since the start of the year.

24/04/2020, [WTO](#)

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The EU will provide additional financial support to member states to protect jobs and workers affected by the coronavirus pandemic. Many businesses are experiencing economic difficulties as a result of the Covid-19 crisis and have had to temporarily suspend or substantially reduce their activities and the working hours of their staff. To support employers and to protect workers and the self-employed from losing their jobs or incomes, the European Commission proposed a new temporary instrument called SURE (Support to mitigate Unemployment Risks in an Emergency), to complement national efforts to protect employment. It is expected to be operational by 1 June 2020.

28/04/2020, [European Parliament](#)

PRESS FREEDOM

In a resolution adopted on 17 April, MEPs said that disinformation on Covid-19 is a major public health problem, that all people should have access to accurate and verified information and that a free independent and sufficiently funded media is necessary for democracy. Freedom of expression, media freedom and pluralism are enshrined in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, as well as in the European Convention on Human Rights.

29/04/2020, [European Parliament](#)