



# Legislative and Policy Updates

DECEMBER 2021



## SLOVAKIA

### Health Care Reform

On December 14, the Parliament approved the long sought-after reform of health care system, including optimisation of hospitals, proposed by Health Minister Vladimír Lengvarský. The health care facilities should work according to new rules from the beginning of 2024, as hospitals will be divided into first and second leagues. Some smaller hospitals will not be fully-fledged anymore; they will become aftercare institutions.

15/12/2021 <https://spectator.sme.sk/c/22804298/hospitals-will-be-divided-into-first-and-second-leagues-parliament-approved-crucial-reform.html>

### National Park Reform

On the very same day as the health care reform, the Parliament passed the amendment allowing all national parks to “enter into the 21<sup>st</sup> century”. The administration of forest lands within national parks owned by the state will fall under the Environment Ministry. Protected areas in the fourth and fifth level of protection will fall under state nature protection, new legal entities will be created to protect the parks. The key date is March 31, 2022, when administrations of the national parks will be established as individual organizations of environmental protection. The next day the administration of the affected property will be delimited.

15/12/2021 <https://spectator.sme.sk/c/22804307/parliament-passes-national-park-reform-parks-will-enter-21st-century-minister-said.html>

## Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF)

Slovakia is one of the three EU member states ready to draw portions of its RRF plan and start implementing the proposed reforms, following the signed Operational Agreement with the European Commission. The reforms and investments in the plan will help Slovakia become more sustainable, resilient, and better prepared for the challenges and opportunities of the green and digital transitions. To this end, the plan consists of 196 “mutually agreed deliverables”, namely qualitative milestones and quantitative targets that track the progress in implementing the plan’s reforms and investments.

15/12/2021 <https://www.planobnovy.sk/aktuality/slovensko-je-pripravene-na-realizaciu-planu-obnovy/>

## Population of Slovakia

The Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic reported that as of September 30, 2021 Slovakia had 5 452 025 inhabitants. While the natural increase in the third quarter of 2021 reached the value of 1 725 persons and the net foreign migration reached 648 persons, Slovakia increased its total population by 2 373 persons.

15/12/2021

[https://slovak.statistics.sk/wps/portal/ext/products/informationmessages/inf\\_sprava\\_detail/!ut/p/z1/tZFBu8IwEIV\\_iceQTZM26bEw2BaREbBKc3HSkkqFpgU6Rf69qeNFHZjx4F6yO\\_N253t5WOI\\_VlkZ15atqy9qonZ1T6b3MeSyGQxIADKcU4sndchaNbp0wcfHzd4GYLcYQPwYP4WLCCDAXy-v7T1himZu2aTc4rbOj2iBtUGkKpLbtDdimPISWpjMaHZuD6s430B11u7UvzSj3uO-j3FEUMZ9SpLRWiKy5r4ngOoeiP9\\_k5Rqn3CWOn\\_M1orwQiCnGUCY8joAwR2sCmjD-085v3t4OXKgA7L78llzCIGJ8CiCmoQtXECULf04pBPRlCOVGahn4RQZilbtSn3Bi-p\\_Z4eUfLUaAJ1iWWTU45dUABlxwoJwL5jDfcyntMy\\_f9nsZ2GBq0-r3Fq\\_-I5mmSipBz2hb3I8pk-kHxy7hQ!!/dz/d5/L2dBISEvZ0FBIS9nQSEh/](https://slovak.statistics.sk/wps/portal/ext/products/informationmessages/inf_sprava_detail/!ut/p/z1/tZFBu8IwEIV_iceQTZM26bEw2BaREbBKc3HSkkqFpgU6Rf69qeNFHZjx4F6yO_N253t5WOI_VlkZ15atqy9qonZ1T6b3MeSyGQxIADKcU4sndchaNbp0wcfHzd4GYLcYQPwYP4WLCCDAXy-v7T1himZu2aTc4rbOj2iBtUGkKpLbtDdimPISWpjMaHZuD6s430B11u7UvzSj3uO-j3FEUMZ9SpLRWiKy5r4ngOoeiP9_k5Rqn3CWOn_M1orwQiCnGUCY8joAwR2sCmjD-085v3t4OXKgA7L78llzCIGJ8CiCmoQtXECULf04pBPRlCOVGahn4RQZilbtSn3Bi-p_Z4eUfLUaAJ1iWWTU45dUABlxwoJwL5jDfcyntMy_f9nsZ2GBq0-r3Fq_-I5mmSipBz2hb3I8pk-kHxy7hQ!!/dz/d5/L2dBISEvZ0FBIS9nQSEh/)

## Future of energy

The Slovak government is explicit in its ambition of becoming a leader in the development and usage of hydrogen technologies in road transport. So much so that two hydrogen vehicles were the main lures of its exhibition at the Expo 2020 in Dubai. The sports car and the bus, both made in Slovakia, are equipped with unique tanks developed by experts from the Technical University of Košice (TUKE) in cooperation with innovative local companies. The basic advantage of using hydrogen in transport is the zero production of emissions during its reaction in the fuel cell.

14/12/2021 <https://www.exposlovakia2020.sk/en/exposition/hydrogen-car-mh2/>

## First Aid+ Package

Small and medium-sized enterprises forced to close their premises from late November or early December will be able to request state assistance. The government has restored the measures within the First Aid+ package, enabling businesses to ask for assistance if their revenues drop by 40 percent and more. Only companies with no more than 50 employees will be entitled to ask for the aid. The aid should particularly go to companies active in gastronomy and tourism. If the companies see a drop in their revenues by 40-60 percent, they will receive €450 per employee.

13/12/2021 <https://spectator.sme.sk/c/22803031/state-will-assist-small-businesses-that-need-to-be-closed.html>

### **Traffic law**

The approved amended traffic law reads that the distance from the cyclist should be at least one meter when the speed limit is up to 50 km/hr. and 1.5 meters when the speed is above 50 km/h, effective as of March 2022. The primary aim of the amendment is to protect vulnerable road users, especially cyclists and walkers. The rights of towns and municipalities when it comes to parking will be reinforced. The novelty is that pavement parking for personal vehicles will be allowed in cases where a traffic sign allows it.

1/12/2021 <https://spectator.sme.sk/c/22794622/road-law-amendment.html>

### **Lockdown and Manual for Employers**

Following the official declaration of the Government of the Slovak Republic on 24 November 2021, a limited lockdown for all citizens (including curfew) and a 90-day national emergency have entered into force on November 25 at midnight and will last at least until January 9. At the same time, the new rules for entering a workplace, which counts on employees having either confirmation of vaccination, recovery from Covid, or a negative test result, should be applied as of 29 November 2021 until the end of the year.

25/11/2021 <https://amcham.sk/press-room/news/273617-slovakia-entering-lockdown-as-of-november-25-manual-for-employers>

### **New Head of EU Representation in Slovakia**

Vladimír Šucha was appointed as Head of the European Commission's Representation in Bratislava and will take office on 1 January 2022. In this function, he will act as the official representative of the European Commission in Slovakia under the political authority of President Ursula von der Leyen. He is endowed with robust experience in managing senior teams and is also well versed in a range of EU policies. Combined with his many years of involvement in European and Slovak diplomacy, his background makes him particularly suitable to effectively manage key political relations as well as communication and strategic coordination related tasks as Head of Representation.

# EUROPE & WORLD

## EU Legislative Priorities 2022

The leaders of the EU institutions signed a Joint Declaration identifying key legislative priorities for 2022, and welcomed progress on the 2021 priorities. On 16 December, European Parliament President David Sassoli, Slovenian Prime Minister Janez Janša, on behalf of the Presidency of the Council, and Commission President Ursula von der Leyen signed the Joint Declaration on EU legislative priorities for 2022. The Declaration sets out the institutions' shared vision for a transformed, more resilient Europe. It demonstrates the institutions' determination to enable the EU to emerge stronger from the COVID-19 pandemic and the dramatic consequences of climate change and other global crises.

16/12/2021 <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20211214IPR19455/eu-institutions-agree-priorities-for-2022-for-a-resilient-and-reinvigorated-eu>

## Horizon Europe

The EU Commission adopted an amendment to the Horizon Europe work program for 2021-2022, increasing the total budget to €15.4 billion: that is an increase of €723 million compared to the original budget of €14.7 billion. This new budget includes €673.24 million dedicated to the roll-out of EU Missions, which were launched in September to tackle big challenges and achieve ambitious goals in health, climate and the environment by 2030.

16/12/2021 [https://ec.europa.eu/info/news/commission-invests-additional-eu673244-million-roll-out-eu-missions-health-climate-and-environment-2021-dec-16\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/news/commission-invests-additional-eu673244-million-roll-out-eu-missions-health-climate-and-environment-2021-dec-16_en)

## Cross-border energy infrastructure

New EU rules for cross-border energy infrastructure and future Projects of Common Interest were agreed in principle, following the political agreement reached by Council, European Parliament and Commission negotiators at their trilogue meeting on 14 December. Based on the Commission proposal for renewing the Trans-European network for Energy (TEN-E) Regulation, tabled in December 2020, the agreement backs the main thrust of the Commission approach, namely to modernize the existing regulation (which dates back to 2013) and to fully align it with the Green Deal objectives.

15/12/2021 [https://ec.europa.eu/info/news/political-agreement-reached-revised-ten-e-rules-cross-border-energy-infrastructure-2021-dec-15\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/news/political-agreement-reached-revised-ten-e-rules-cross-border-energy-infrastructure-2021-dec-15_en)

## **Digital Finance**

The EU Commission presented a new strategy to improve and modernize financial supervisory reporting in the EU. The strategy's main objective is to put in place a system that delivers accurate, consistent, and timely data to supervisory authorities at EU and national level, while minimizing the overall reporting burden on financial institutions. This strategy will contribute directly to the objectives of the European Data Strategy and the Digital Finance package to promote digital innovation in Europe. Moreover, this strategy contributes to the objectives of a Capital Markets Union and helps to achieve a single market in financial services. This will ultimately benefit citizens, through more efficient and agile supervision that ensures the stability of the financial system, market integrity, and investor protection. It will also help companies by reducing the reporting burden where possible.

15/12/2021 [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP\\_21\\_6774](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_21_6774)

## **New EU data and cloud alliance**

The new European Commission-powered Alliance for Industrial Data, Edge and Cloud was officially launched on December 14. With 39 members, the initiative gathers some of Europe's top-notch tech companies to collaborate on next-generation computing technologies. The new alliance has been in the pipeline since last year's European data strategy, with a view to creating innovative synergies between European computing tech companies and advising the EU executive on its industrial strategy and investments plans. The Alliance is not pursuing the same objectives as Gaia-X, the European flagship cloud project, nor will it have a similar governance structure, stressed some members. Instead, it is meant as a "forum for discussion" of the major issues facing the cloud and edge technology industry, and not a "standardization body" aiming at harmonizing technical requirements.

15/12/2021 <https://www.euractiv.com/section/digital/news/european-commission-launches-new-data-and-cloud-alliance/>

## **Global Debt**

According to the International Monetary Fund, in 2020 we observed the largest one-year debt surge since World War II, with global debt rising to \$226 trillion as the world was hit by a global health crisis and a deep recession. Debt was already elevated going into the crisis, but now governments must navigate a world of record-high public and private debt levels, new virus mutations, and rising inflation. Global debt rose by 28 percentage points to 256 percent of GDP, in 2020, according to the latest update of the IMF's Global Debt Database. Borrowing by governments accounted for slightly more than half of the increase, as the global public debt ratio

jumped to a record 99 percent of GDP. Private debt from non-financial corporations and households also reached new highs.

15/12/2021 <https://blogs.imf.org/2021/12/15/global-debt-reaches-a-record-226-trillion/>

### **Digital Markets Act**

EU Parliament gave its green light to begin negotiations with member states on rules setting out what big online platforms will be allowed to do and not do in the EU. The proposal blacklists certain practices used by large platforms acting as “gatekeepers” and enables the Commission to carry out market investigations and sanction non-compliant behaviors. The text approved by Parliament sets new obligations and prohibitions directly applicable to such platforms, with a view to ensuring fair and open markets. The proposed regulation will apply to the major companies providing so-called “core platform services” most prone to unfair business practices.

15/12/2021 <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20211210IPR19211/digital-markets-act-parliament-ready-to-start-negotiations-with-council>

### **Future of Europe**

Ways to ensure the respect of EU values, strengthen democracy and tackle discrimination were among the proposals of the citizens' panel held in Florence, Italy on 10-12 December. The meeting of some 200 Europeans took place as part of the Conference on the Future of Europe. It was the third and final session of the European citizens' panel dedicated to European democracy, values and rights, rule of law and security. Due to the current Covid-19 situation, panel members were also able to join remotely.

13/12/2021 <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/eu-affairs/20211209STO19123/future-of-europe-citizens-panel-proposals-on-democracy-and-eu>

### **OECD Economic Outlook**

The global recovery is continuing, but its momentum has eased and is becoming increasingly imbalanced according to the OECD's latest Economic Outlook. The failure to ensure rapid and effective vaccination everywhere is proving costly with uncertainty remaining high due to the continued emergence of new variants of the virus. Output in most OECD countries has now surpassed where it was in late-2019 and is gradually returning to the path expected before the pandemic. However, lower-income economies, particularly ones where vaccination rates against COVID-19 are still low, are at risk of being left behind. The outlook projects a rebound in global

economic growth to 5.6% this year and 4.5% in 2022, before settling back to 3.2% in 2023, close to the rates seen prior to the pandemic.

1/12/2021 <https://www.oecd.org/newsroom/oecd-economic-outlook-sees-recovery-continuing-but-warns-of-growing-imbalances-and-risks.htm>

## World Migration

The International Organization for Migration launched its flagship World Migration Report 2022 which reveals a dramatic increase in internal displacement due to disasters, conflict and violence at a time when global mobility ground to a halt due to COVID-19 travel restrictions. The report, the eleventh in IOM's World Migration Report series, draws upon the latest data from around the world to explain key migration trends as well as issues that are emerging on the migration policy horizon.

1/12/2021 <https://iom.sk/en/news-events/1452-press-release-iom-s-2022-world-migration-report-shows-global-displacement-rising-despite-covid-19-mobility-limits-en.html>

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