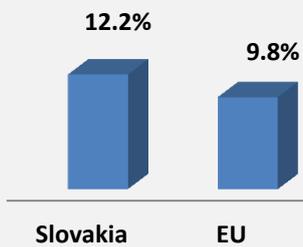


Recent history

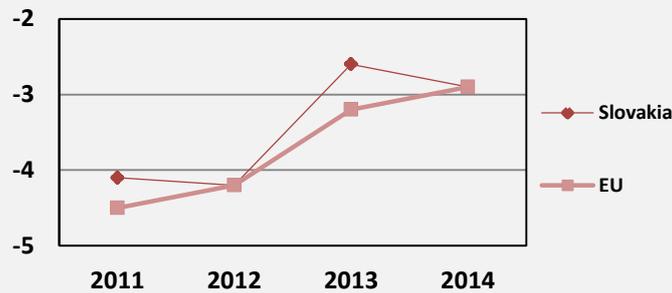
During the Cold War, Czechoslovakia was under communist rule and was an ally of the USSR through the Warsaw Pact. Soon after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the people of Czechoslovakia overthrew their communist government in what was dubbed the 'Velvet Revolution'. Although Czechoslovakia remained a single country, the tensions between the majority Czech and minority Slovak populations made this situation unsustainable. On 1 January 1993, the two countries separated in a peaceful 'Velvet Divorce'.

As an independent state, Slovakia set about adapting to the democratic liberal economic system. It was the Czech Republic that initially made the most rapid development, however, Slovakia has recently made huge advances to become one of the most dynamic economies in central Europe. In 2004, as well as joining the EU, Slovakia also became a member of NATO.

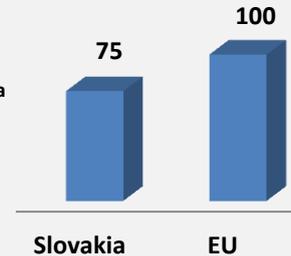
Unemployment rate (2015)



Public budget deficit/surplus



GDP per capita in PPS (2013)



Current government

Slovakia is a parliamentary republic. The Head of State is the President, currently Andrej Kiska, who was elected in 2014 having run against Prime Minister Robert Fico. Kiska had no previous political experience or any party affiliations – a fact that worked in his favor as he secured almost 60% of the vote. He replaced the previous President Ivan Gašparovič who was the first Slovakian President to be re-elected for a second term in 2009. The President has relatively limited powers (and is seen as a figurehead) as most political power rests with the Slovakian Prime Minister, who is officially appointed by the President following parliamentary elections.

The Slovak Parliament has one chamber – the *Narodna Rada Slovenskej Republiky* - which has 150 members. The members of the Parliament are elected by a system of **proportional representation** every four years. In October 2011, following disagreement in the Parliament over the ratification of changes to the European Financial Stability Facility (EFSF) and accusations of corruption, then Prime Minister Iveta Radičová's *Slovak Democratic and Christian Union* (SDKU) party government, which had taken office in July 2010, collapsed under pressure from the opposition parties. Elections were called for March 2012. The current Prime Minister is Robert Fico of the left-wing *Direction-Social Democracy* (Smer) party, who had previously been Prime Minister between 2006 and 2010. Fico's party was elected in March 2012, making history as the first party to rule without a **coalition** partner since Slovakia's independence in 1993.

Slovakia: key facts



❖ Capital	Bratislava
❖ Population	5 million (2014)
❖ % of total EU population	1.1%
❖ Official language	Slovak
❖ Year of EU accession	2004
❖ Currency	Euro since 2009
❖ Schengen Area member	Yes, since 2007
❖ Seats in European Parliament	13



Slovakia and the EU

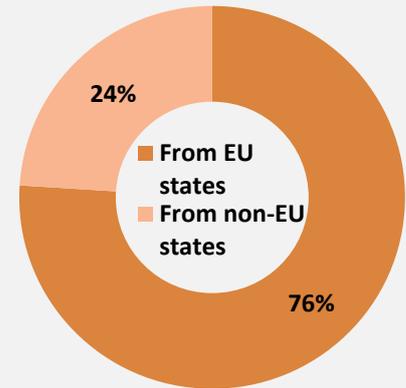
Membership of the European Union was a key goal of the Slovak government. However, the reform process in Slovakia did not happen as rapidly as in the Czech Republic.

Before 1998 there were severe doubts about whether Slovakia would be ready to join the EU at the same time as its other former communist neighbours. However, Slovakia managed to complete negotiations on EU membership two years faster than several of the other member states that were undergoing the accession process at the same time. In May 2003, in a national referendum, an overwhelming majority of 93.7% of the Slovakian population voted in favour of EU membership - the only referendum in the history of Slovakia not to have failed due to insufficient turnout.

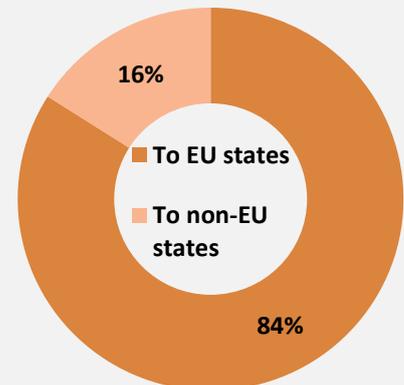
Massive reforms took place under the government of Prime Minister Mikuláš Dzurinda from 1998-2006 which rapidly improved Slovakia's economic and social progress. A law passed in March 2010, furthermore, aimed to crack down on income from crime and corruption. In addition, the Slovakian government has allowed many major industries to be **privatised** and has encouraged foreign investment. A particularly significant reform in Slovakia was the introduction of a flat rate of tax of 19%. As a result of these reforms, many western European businesses, especially car manufacturers, have been encouraged to set up in Slovakia.

Since joining the EU, the Slovak government has shown broad support for European integration. In 2007, it became part of the Schengen Convention allowing visa-free movement across national borders, and Slovakia adopted the Euro as its currency on 1 January 2009. The country is set to hold its first EU Council Presidency between July and December 2016.

Slovak imports (2014)



Slovak exports (2014)



Facts and figures

- ❖ Slovakia has a highly industrialised economy. Its major exports include automotives and electrical goods
- ❖ Slovakia's ethnic Hungarian community constitutes approximately one tenth of the total population

Technical Terms

- ❖ **Coalition:** a formal agreement between political parties to share power in government
- ❖ **Privatisation:** the transfer of companies from state ownership to private control
- ❖ **Proportional representation:** electoral system where the overall number of votes determines the distribution of seats
- ❖ **PPS:** GDP per head is expressed in Purchasing Power Standards (PPS) to eliminate the differences in price levels between countries allowing meaningful volume comparisons of GDP between countries

Links

- ❖ <http://www.government.gov.sk/government-office-of-the-slovak-republic/>
- ❖ http://europa.eu/about-eu/countries/member-countries/czechrepublic/index_en.htm
- ❖ http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/country_profiles/1047864.stm#facts
- ❖ <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat>
- ❖ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2145.html>