



# Danube Transnational Programme **YOUMIG**

National policy recommendations for  
improved cooperation on youth migration

## National policy recommendations

WP6  
Activity 6.2

June 2019

**SLOVAKIA**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The mobility of young people throughout the world has increased and taken diverse forms in recent decades. In the new millennium, Slovakia's accession to the European Union, as well as its integration into the Schengen Area, influenced the development of migration in the country.

This document is the outcome of YOUMIG's efforts to facilitate cooperation between different levels of governance, and to provide a testing field for knowledge exchange mechanisms. The activity tested the modalities of cooperation between national administrative bodies, statistical offices, research institutions and local municipalities to improve the measurement, evaluation and management of youth migration in terms of its causes and patterns, resulting in improved multi-level governance cooperation. The proposed relationships and the division of competencies of the different institutions at the horizontal and vertical level are only examples of a broader framework. While considering particular situations, it is important to realise that recommendations such as these can be applied to the entire set of schemes and cooperation mechanisms in different areas of public policy. In Slovakia's case, three indicators and two policies for MLG schemes were selected for analysis.

### 1) Workforce in elderly care

Population ageing represents one of the biggest societal challenges for Slovakia and all individual municipalities. To mitigate the societal impacts of this phenomenon, a comprehensive and long-term stable system of measures is needed. Young migrants could (potentially) represent a large proportion of workers in social care. Several regions and dozens of municipalities with aging populations could and should be the destinations for young migrants from demographically younger regions (with regard to the push-pull effect) as potential workers in the elderly care sector.

The lack of places for seniors in care facilities, the lack of qualified personnel and poorly developed home care services are the main problems regarding this issue. While data for the smallest administrative units are available in the population census, since the census takes place every ten years, limitations are apparent with respect to frequency. To mitigate the societal impacts of population ageing a comprehensive and long-term stable system of measures will be needed, in addition to multi-level governance cooperation in terms of design and implementation.

In building an MLG scheme, all levels are of importance. At the highest national level, there is the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic (SOSR) and the Social Insurance Agency of the SR (SIA). The SIA gathers data on social allowances disbursed to family members within the

social care system while the SOSR keeps track of the number of social care workers for seniors. Cooperation at the lowest level is also very important. Municipalities and institutions working with the elderly should also provide information on an annual basis with regard to the number of senior citizens (and the potential increase in this number) alongside corresponding changes in staffing needs to ensure appropriate care for this group. Therefore, in addition to the national institutions in which the Statistical Office acts as a data processor and publisher, and the Social Insurance Agency of the SR collects the necessary data from individual entities at the local and regional level, the need for the active participation of local social care providers arises. The Association of Towns and Municipalities of Slovakia can also play an important role as a medium for disseminating information to competent national institutions. Responsibility for processing and evaluating the monitored indicators would belong to the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family. Subsequently, through the Ministry or the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic, this information could be directly accessible to individual local decision makers and stakeholders.

## **2) Unmet demand by young people (locals and immigrants) for social housing**

The indicator 'Unmet demand by young people (locals and immigrants) for social housing' represents a suitable tool for implementing social policy. Housing is an important factor in young people's lives, and unaffordable housing can serve as a push factor for migration. For young people, lower housing costs can be an important factor for young people, influencing their decision to emigrate from the country.

An important indicator for assessing the quality of social housing as an example in several related policy fields is 'Unmet demand by young people (local and immigrants) for social housing'. However, access to this indicator is limited. Data for the smallest administrative units (local level) are available and can be obtained from the internal databases of the Department of Social Services (in individual municipalities). At the national and regional level (NUTS1 - LAU1) the indicator is unavailable.

The Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic (SOSR), and the Association of Towns and Municipalities of the Slovak Republic (ATM SR) are effectively the main institutions involved in the process of MLG related to this indicator. However, cooperation between individual municipalities is also crucial. One possible means of obtaining relevant data on this indicator would be to obtain data on the quantity of social housing from the administration of individual municipalities as well as on the amount of allocated social housing available for target groups in the population. These information inputs would be provided directly by individual municipalities, which possess such cadastral facilities. The authority responsible for collecting this information should be ATM SR in cooperation with the Statistical Office of

the Slovak Republic. This consortium collects, records, completes and provides data at the regional and national level.

### **3) Student outbound mobility**

The number of international students is rising worldwide. There is a great need for this indicator given the relatively high numbers of Slovak students studying abroad (especially in the Czech Republic). Studying abroad therefore poses a potentially increased risk of the outflow of young educated people. Consequently, this situation has a significant negative impact on further development not only at the national, but also at the regional or local level. Accordingly, the monitored indicator represents an important tool for measuring this potential risk of 'brain drain' at the lowest administrative level. The need to build an MLG scheme is based on the lack of relevant data and the limited possibility of obtaining information on the number of Slovaks studying abroad.

Proposed solutions include a model scenario of cooperation between the National Ministry of Education (MoE) and the most frequent destination countries (and their respective ministries) of Slovakian students. This would necessitate opening bilateral negotiations with individual target countries and creating international agreements to exchange information on foreign students between the MoE and foreign ministries.

In this scenario, the MoE would provide data on students in Slovakia and request corresponding data from the ministries of those countries that constitute the destination countries most frequented by Slovakian students in tertiary education. This data would be made available to the SOSR, which would calculate and publish the indicator at the national, regional and local level.

### **4) Communicating OSS services to citizens and institutions**

The case of Bratislava – Rača shows that the promotion of new OSS operations and services is essential for their success. The reason for selecting this particular policy issue (identified as a common challenge in relation to improving multi-level governance cooperation) lies in the nature of a problem that requires concentrated resources and a long-term coordinated effort to build a strategically well designed branding concept; in turn, allowing local communities to cope with future migrants in a more sophisticated way. Local OSS services lack the power and resources to take these complex actions independently.

It is proposed that the local OSS regularly update the migration situation and inform the relevant bodies within the hierarchies of the multi-level governance framework of changing conditions and perceptions. The overarching purpose of these actions is to help national level government ministries and regional institutions to identify and contact the potentially most significant overseas target groups – before their arrival in the local environment – to ensure the best possible match between spatially disparate local labour market

opportunities and human capital resources. The transfer of this knowledge to other regions in the country could be facilitated, for instance, through the Association of Towns and Communities in Slovakia.

The role of ensuring a unified presentation of Slovakia abroad belongs to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Affairs. The aim of this ministry (in cooperation with other ministries) is to establish a brand by means of proposing coherent government policies that translate the individual messages of the new brand into practical measures in individual areas of domestic and foreign policy. Here, the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic is the coordinating institute, making the final decision on any particular policy issue. This ministry coordinates its promotional strategy with both the capital of Slovakia – Bratislava, and the Bratislava Self-Governing Region, seeking opportunities to promote local opportunities to its audience abroad. The city of Bratislava and Bratislava Self-Governing Region discuss their efforts with other regional partners across Slovakia – namely other major cities and their metropolitan regions – to provide prospective migrants with possibilities in other regions of country. The networks of various overseas formal and informal institutions should be used to build an effective promotional service that specifically targets communities of interest in Slovakia and the region. This should include the coverage of international promotion campaigns in line with national branding.

## **5) Facilitating and developing future human resources**

The investment of municipal resources in the OSS is very limited and will remain so given that each local government branch or agency maintains its own funding, including that of human resources. The reason for selecting this particular policy issue is exemplified by the commonly identified challenge of improving multi-level governance cooperation by means of limited competitiveness in public sector employment. Moreover, there is a clear need for constant learning and the adjustment of skills, if government services aspire to remain relevant and practicable in communities deeply transformed by the ongoing – and presumably increasing – mobility of their citizens.

We recommend a scenario of wider cooperation based on the facilitation and development of future human resources. The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic monitors the situation in the labour market, and subsequently coordinates training specifically directed at the pool of unemployed citizens supported by public programmes. At the same time, the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic coordinates education and training for prospective graduates from secondary schools and further education (and research) institutes, aimed at inclusion processes within the service sector. The same ministry creates specific capacity-generating tools, facilitating the (temporary or permanent) timely acquirement of skills pertinent to graduates and trainees. The Bratislava Self-Governing Region develops educational/training possibilities in accord with actual needs using the facilities and teaching capacities of the region's secondary schools for the training of minority mediators or local coordinating staff. The municipality regularly informs the city of Bratislava and Bratislava Self-Governing Region about the local

situation with regard to the staffing of local line agencies, local businesses and nonprofit institutions, as well as its own administrative staff and their training requirements.

The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic regularly consults with the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic on best options and possible next steps. The Bratislava Self-Governing Region monitors labour market and secondary school-graduation trends across the metropolitan area, actively searching ad-hoc possibilities to share learning or training programmes with the other seven regional governments.

The institution that coordinates and makes the final decision on a particular policy issue is the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic.

### **YOUMIG at a glance**

**Full name:** YOUMIG – Improving institutional capacities and fostering cooperation to tackle the impacts of transnational youth migration

A project of the **Danube Transnational Programme**

**Start date:** 01-01-2017

**End date:** 30-06-2019

**Budget:** 2,718,853 EUR (ERDF Contribution: 2,055,179 EUR, IPA Contribution: 255,846 EUR)

**Call number:** Call 1

**Priority:** 4. (Well-governed Danube region)

**Specific objective:** 4.1. (Improve institutional capacities to tackle major societal challenges)

**Project partners:**

**Lead partner:** Hungarian Central Statistical Office (HU)

**Work package leaders:** University of Vienna (AT), Leibniz Institute for East and Southeast European Studies (DE), Maribor Development Agency (SI), INFOSTAT - Institute of Informatics and Statistics (SK)

**ERDF partners:** Municipality of Szeged (HU), City of Graz (AT), Institute for Economic Research (SI), Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities (RO), Municipality of Sfântu Gheorghe (RO), National Statistical Institute of the Republic of Bulgaria (BG), Burgas Municipality (BG), Municipality of the City district of Bratislava- Rača (SK)

**IPA partners:** Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (RS), Institute of Social Sciences (RS), Municipality of Kanjiža (RS)

**Associated Strategic Partners:** Statistics Austria (AT), City of Karlsruhe (DE), Federal Institute for Population Research (DE)

YOUMIG, in which 19 partners from 8 countries work together, wishes to support local governments in capitalising on the developmental potential of youth migration, leading to a better governed and more competitive Danube region. The project aims to boost their institutional capacities through enhancing the scarce local evidence on youth migration, contributing to improved policymaking with a focus on human capital. Statistical offices and academic organisations are teaming up with local governments in a complex and customised multi-level transnational cooperation to create local developmental strategies based on improved youth-migration impact indicators and introduce transnationally tested tools for managing local challenges. As a result, institutions and stakeholders can obtain increased capacities through intensified cooperation.

YOUMIG's work is structured in six work packages (WPs). Besides management (WP1) and communication (WP2) issues, the thematic work is distributed as follows. In line with the present document, the Conceptual Framework, all partners contribute to the development of improved evidence on youth migration and its developmental impacts at the EU, national and local level by elaborating local status quo analyses for the local partners (WP3). Through a comprehensive evaluation of the locally available youth migration indicators, the project identifies the shortfalls in measuring local challenges, and elaborates and tests new or improved youth migration indicators (WP4). At the local level, the project improves capacities to manage related processes by jointly testing and introducing good practices and institutional units, tailored to local needs (WP5). The project concludes with the provision of transnationally tested tools for all governance levels contributing to improved strategies, policies and services related to the issue of youth migration (WP6).

YOUMIG's outputs can be viewed at <http://www.interreg-danube.eu/youmig/outputs>



## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Short introduction to youth migration

The mobility of young people throughout the world has increased and taken diverse forms in recent decades. Countries in the Danube region are no exceptions in this regard, facing both outflow and inflow challenges related to youth migration. Apart from the traditional causes of this phenomenon, new drivers have emerged that make migration patterns more complex. The emigration of young people may cause a severe loss of labour and human capital, coupled with untraced incoming transfers (such as social and financial remittances), while immigration, if not properly managed, may result in the marginalisation and underuse of human resources. Youth migration and its consequences require improved governance at all levels of administration to make its management easier at the local level, and to harness its full potential for local development.



## 1.2. Short introduction to youth migration in Slovakia

The development of migration in Slovakia in the new millennium was influenced by its accession to the European Union, in addition to its integration into the Schengen Area. These events facilitated the movement of persons across the borders of the Slovak Republic. This resulted in a rise in the number of immigrants and increased population growth due to international immigration into the Slovak Republic.

The number of immigrants reached a peak in the years 2007 and 2008 when 8,600 and 8,800 people (respectively) moved to Slovakia. Before the accession of the Slovak Republic to the EU (between 1993 and 2004) Slovak citizens represented the greater part of immigrants from abroad, however, between 2005 and 2012 foreigners prevailed. Since 2013 (except for 2015), Slovak citizens have been the majority among immigrants. This turnover is related to an improving economic situation in the Slovak Republic as well as to the lack of labour, which encourages return. The Czech Republic remains the most important source of international immigration.

According to international data and expert estimations, there are approximately 340,000 people living abroad who were born in Slovakia. Most of them live in the Czech Republic, the United Kingdom and Germany. Young and highly educated people are prevalent among emigrants from Slovakia.

The population of Rača city district has grown over the few last decades, in particular owing to migration. During the 1990s, population development fluctuated, with alternating increases and falls in migration, though since 1999 (except for the year 2007), Rača has recorded migration gains. The level of net migration is influenced in particular by internal migration.

The number of immigrants in the district shows a growing tendency, with the last decade witnessing the most intense growth: a peak of 973 immigrants in 2016. This development is closely linked to intensive housing construction. People moving to Rača tend to looking for attractive homes, particularly in terms of the environment (the district still possesses a semi-rural atmosphere). Half of the immigrants arriving in Rača come from the capital city and its surroundings.

In spite of these benefits, the number of Rača citizens emigrating within the Slovak Republic is relatively high (ca. 400-500 people yearly). In fact, internal net migration has only reached higher values in last few years (100-200 people), with a maximum of 447 people in 2016.

International net migration of the whole period under review represents one fourth of net migration in Rača, although annual net migration is only around five score (up to 96 people in 2008). As the number of emigrants abroad is not high – in certain years no emigrants are recorded at all, net migration is almost equal to the number

of immigrants. The city district of Rača has no data on emigrant stock, and neither does the Slovak Republic. The numbers in Rača would probably be very low.

### 1.3. Short introduction on the MLG concept

Multi-level governance (MLG), as defined by the EU Committee of the Regions, refers to coordinated action by the EU, its Member States and local and sub-national governments, based on partnership and involving operational and institutional cooperation in all phases of the policy cycle, from drafting to implementing policies. These actions require the coordination and distribution of competencies from the national to sub-national levels, with priority given to the EU transnational level, especially in view of the growing importance of MLG in migration and integration policy. Therefore, MLG refers to the dispersion of central government authority, both vertically to actors located at different territorial and administrative levels, and horizontally, to actors and domains at the same level of government.

Regional (NUTS2) competencies on migration policies are not broad. However, local governments have competence in providing public services for migrants. Therefore, the basis for MLG cooperation should be further strengthened, and localities should be considered partners in the national-level policy dialogues on migration and integration objectives and indicators.

### 1.4. Short introduction to activity 6.2 Building multi-level governance cooperation schemes

This document is the outcome of YOUMIG's efforts to facilitate cooperation between different levels of governance, and to provide a testing ground for knowledge exchange mechanisms. The activities tested the modalities of cooperation between national administrative bodies, statistical offices, research institutions and local municipalities in terms of the improved measurement, evaluation and management of the causes, patterns and impacts of youth migration, resulting in improved multi-level governance cooperation. Based on previous project outcomes (Local Status Quo Analyses, Set of new or improved indicators and One-stop-shops), several channels of institutional cooperation at different government levels were used.

The recommendations listed here are derived from these project activities, as well as from a series of workshops held on the subject in the project countries. In 2018-2019, two types of workshops were organised at the national level in each country. The Ambition Setting Workshop served to map existing knowledge and competences, to evaluate the current cooperation practices and define the needs

and possibilities for improved multi-level governance cooperation based on the MLG concept. The Vision Development Workshop served as a means of discussing the national level policy recommendations for improved institutional cooperation regarding youth migration, which present the main activity output.

## NATIONAL POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MLG COOPERATION

### 2.1 Workforce in elderly care

Population ageing represents one of the biggest societal challenges for Slovakia and all individual municipalities. In Slovakia, the ageing process will be very intensive and irreversible in the coming decades. The share of seniors in the population of Slovakia will increase from the current 16% to more than 30% in 2060. Therefore, the societal impact of population ageing will be very serious. It will affect all spheres of societal life and the entire social climate will change. Most affected will be those areas directly related to the number and structure of the population, i.e. the labour market, social insurance (mainly pension funding), health care and social services (including care for seniors).

To mitigate the societal impacts of population ageing a comprehensive and long-term stable system of measures will be needed; and in its design and implementation, multi-level governance cooperation will be necessary.

As regards senior care, the current situation in Slovakia is less than satisfactory. The main problems are the lack of places in facilities for seniors, the lack of qualified personnel in these facilities, and poorly developed home care services. Another problem is the way in which elderly care is funded by the state. In the first place, the interconnection of the indicator with youth migration as a whole is quite poor. Young migrants, however, do represent a large proportion of potential workers in social care. Several ageing regions and dozens of ageing municipalities could and should be the destinations for young migrants from demographically younger regions (with regard to the push-pull effect) as potential workers in the elderly care sector.

An important assumption for the establishment of a system of measures is that it provides a solid characterisation of the 'on-the-ground' situation in individual areas. An important indicator to assess the quality of care for seniors is the size of the workforce in elderly care.

Data for the smallest administrative units are available in the population census. Since the census takes place every ten years, there are clearly limitations with respect to the frequency. Other obstacles in connection to this indicator concern methods of selection of the work force in elderly care, knowledge on relevant variables that define economic activity and occupations related to elderly care, and access to the Population and Housing Census. In addition, the non-response rate with regard to questions about economic activity and the sectors of economic activity could be a further problem.

However, data on the number of senior social care workers could provide a way out of this impasse. Such information is evidenced by the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic: every service provider is obliged to send regular reports to the Statistical Office, in which, among other things, the number of employees (social workers) is included.

Besides public and non-public units providing social care for seniors, private carers – mostly family members – make up an important component of elderly social care. Data on social allowances disbursed to families caring for elderly relatives is available from the Social Insurance Agency of the Slovak Republic.

Also very important in this area is direct information from municipalities and institutions working directly with the elderly at the local level (e.g. in private homes for social services). A combination of data on the number of seniors, the potential development of seniors in the future at the local and regional level and the prospect of care provision for them creates a prerequisite for a genuine needs assessment and identification of risk areas associated with this issue. Therefore, in addition to the national institutions in which the Statistical Office acts as a data processor and publisher, with the Social Insurance Agency of the SR collecting the necessary data from individual entities at the local and regional level, the need for the active participation of local social care providers would arise. The Association of Towns and Municipalities of Slovakia could also play an important role as a medium for disseminating information to competent national institutions. Responsibility for processing and evaluating the monitored indicators would belong to the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family. Subsequently, through the Ministry or the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic, this information could be directly accessible to individual local decision makers and stakeholders.

## **2.2 Unmet demand by young People (local and immigrants) for social housing**

The indicator ‘Unmet demand by young people (locals and immigrants) for social housing’ represents a suitable tool for implementing social policy. Housing is an important factor in young people's lives, and unaffordable housing can serve as a push factor for migration. For young people, lower housing costs can be an important factor for young people, influencing their decision to emigrate.

There is no unified EU legislation capable of regulating social housing as effectively as the social housing policies of EU member states. Further, there is no unified classification of social housing valid for all EU member states.

Within the framework of Slovak legislation, social housing is defined as housing acquired through public funds, intended as adequate and dignified housing for

persons unable to afford it by their own means; and conditional on their compliance with the legal conditions stated in the Act (Act nr. 443/2010 Coll. on subsidies for housing development and social housing as amended). In general, social housing is one of the tools required to improve the social situations of disadvantaged groups of citizens whose difficult economic situation (temporary or permanent) is associated with certain phases of life, family circumstances or health issues. Social housing provision has a bearing on young families with small children, retired people and those living with health problems and disabilities. Moreover, assistance of this kind focuses on special groups of inhabitants such as immigrants.

For young people, housing costs are an important factor potentially influencing their emigration decisions. This issue is all the more important when we realise that housing costs, especially for young people, are one of the largest items in the family budget. Suffice to say, one important way of saving the capital necessary to buy/rent a house/flat is emigration (albeit as a temporary measure).

The basic strategic document in the area of social housing in the Slovak Republic is the Concept of State Housing Policy until 2020, prepared by the Ministry of Transport and Construction of the Slovak Republic. The aim of the strategy is to increase accessibility to housing with regard to 'reasonable costs', especially in terms of development in the rental sector.

Social housing in Slovakia (of an adequate quality) is designed to meet the needs of households who have been unable to get a foot on the housing ladder. Social housing is subsidised and available at 'below market prices'; and administrative processes ensure distribution among the population. Citizens' social housing needs in the Slovak republic are assigned to the competence of towns and municipalities. The allocation of social housing itself is not determined by legislation; rather it is defined by municipalities as the 'generally binding recommendation' (Všeobecné záväzné nariadenie). In future, a well-established system for rental housing may become a means of supporting skilled workforce mobility, thereby addressing the ongoing housing shortage problem.

An important indicator for assessing the quality of social housing (as an example serving several related policy fields) is 'Unmet demand by young people (locals and immigrants) for social housing'. The importance of this indicator and, in particular, the establishment of the MLG scheme is mainly connected with the need to determine unmet demand for social housing not only at the local but also at the regional level in order to manage and plan investments in the development of social housing. Demand for social housing is often driven by relatively high housing prices (purchase and rent) compared to incomes. Both unaffordable housing and poor

living standards can serve as push factors influencing a young person's out/emigration decision. A growing unmet demand for social housing can signalise one or a combination of the following phenomena: low (youth) income levels, high housing prices (purchase or rental), and a lack of municipality housing. The higher the unmet demand, the higher is the expected outflow of youth from a municipality. Access to the mentioned indicator is limited. Data for the smallest administrative units (local level) are available and can be obtained from the internal databases of the Department of Social Services (in individual municipalities). This indicator is unavailable at the national and regional level (NUTS1 - LAU1).

The Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic (SOSR), and the Association of Towns and Municipalities of the Slovak Republic (ATM SR) should be the main institutions involved in the process of MLG related to the indicator 'Unmet demand by young people for social housing': SOSR collects and provides data on the number of flats rented by the municipality according to the population census. However, it has no data on the amount of social housing allocated to applicants seeking social housing. ATM SR collects and provides data for all municipalities in the Slovak Republic. Complete data on the allocation and provision of social housing at the national level are not currently available. One possible means of obtaining relevant data on this indicator would be to obtain data on the quantity of social housing from the administration of individual municipalities as well as data on the amount of allocated social housing available for target groups in the population. These information inputs would be provided directly by individual municipalities, which possess such cadastral facilities. The authority responsible for collecting this information would be ATM SR in cooperation with SOSR. This consortium collects, records, completes and provides data at the regional and national level.

### **2.3 Student outbound mobility**

The number of international students is rising worldwide. According to Fassman et al. (2018: 29) study abroad may lead to a promising international career or be the start of a longer period spent away from home; or it may represent a young person's strategy to improve his/her job opportunities back home. Education-orientated migrants are not easy to identify and follow statistically, since there are different subtypes and statistical data sources are often insufficient (Fassman et al. 2018). Defining an international student can be difficult and most students do not consider themselves migrants and neglect registering in their host country (Fassman et al. 2018). Studying abroad thus poses a potentially higher risk in terms of the outflow of young educated people. These aspects of youth mobility consequently have a

significant negative impact on further development not only at the national level, but also at the regional or local level. Therefore, this indicator is an important tool for measuring the potential risk of 'brain drain' at the lowest administrative level.

The numbers of students enrolled on courses of study outside Slovakia can be obtained from the population and housing census. In order to construct the indicator, knowledge of the methodology and relevant columns is necessary. Other challenges relate to gaining access to the population and housing census, the willingness of SOSR to provide data on request, or payment for the processing of non-standard outputs from the SOSR database. Since the census takes place every ten years, there are clear limitations with regard to frequency.

There is a great need for this indicator given the relatively high numbers of Slovak students studying abroad (especially in the Czech Republic). The changing dynamics of education and the need for more up-to-date data makes data collection every 10 years seem inadequate. The need for an MLG scheme is a consequence of the lack of relevant data and limited options with regard to obtaining information about the number of Slovaks studying abroad.

Proposed solutions include a model scenario of cooperation between the National Ministry of Education (MoE) and the most frequent destination countries (and their respective ministries) of Slovakian students.<sup>1</sup> This would necessitate opening bilateral negotiations with individual target countries and creating international agreements to exchange information on foreign students between the MoE and foreign ministries. However, these negotiations should also include a uniform methodology and scope with regard to the variables obtained (data types, age, gender, place of residence in Slovakia, etc.), based on which information could be obtained on an annual basis.

---

<sup>1</sup>In connection with this scheme, it is important to draw attention to the existence of various short-term study visits and internships abroad (e.g. Erasmus, etc.). These persons do not belong to the interest group since they are actually registered to study in Slovakia. The target group consists of students studying at a foreign university for the whole study programme.



## 2.4 Communicating OSS services to citizens and institutions

The Bratislava – Rača case shows that the promotion of new OSS operations and services is essential to their success. The OSS Bratislava – Rača is primarily a physical space, easily accessible and located in the same building as the municipality offices. It is well known for providing government services of various kinds for the public. Here, citizens can obtain information on administrative issues connected with migration, in addition to a wide variety of information on support available from the local government and informal community networks. The OSS in Rača also provides a webpage, linked to the central government, providing useful information and links to related agencies and service providers in the English language. The OSS contributes to improved integration in Bratislava – Rača by providing direct and timely support to migrants seeking to obtain assistance in family-related issues (e.g. marriage, the birth of a child); increasing migrant employment through the provision of assistance in relation to requests on the availability of local business opportunities; and assisting in future immigration related to information requests from senior relatives in Bratislava – Rača .

Without proper publicity, many foreigners and local citizens (whose ambition, ultimately, is integration into the local community) remain practically ignorant of the OSS long after its launch, thereby undermining its usefulness in attracting and maintaining municipality investment. The OSS launch included OSS and local government-instigated media coverage (social media, newspapers, leaflets), underscoring the importance of these channels of communication, but media impact can be limited by the size and saturation of the local service market and by the transitory nature of news – such events are typically reported only once. The reason for selecting this particular policy issue (identified as a common challenge in relation to improving multi-level governance cooperation) lies in the nature of a problem that requires concentrated resources and a long-term coordinated effort to build a strategically well designed branding concept, which in turn, allows local communities to cope with future migrants in a more sophisticated way. Actively searching for solutions that satisfy labour market pressures in a growing national economy, and that allow the development of synergies within the social and cultural dimensions of local communities cannot succeed without fully exploiting communication services in an age of social media and the increasing virtual engagement of citizens.

Considering a scale larger than that of municipalities is important in the contemporary world as a means of explaining human actions at both the micro and macro level. Advocates of globalisation call for the forces of globalization to take

into account local scale cultural, economic, and environmental conditions. In other words, municipalities must understand their role in an increasingly globalised world. The Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic coordinates its promotional strategy with both the capital of Slovakia, Bratislava, and the Bratislava Self-Governing Region, seeking opportunities to promote local opportunities to its audience abroad. The city of Bratislava and the Bratislava Self-Governing Region discuss their efforts with other regional partners in Slovakia – namely other major cities and their metropolitan regions – to provide prospective migrants with opportunities in other parts of country. The networks of various overseas formal and informal institutions should be used to build an effective promotional service that specifically targets communities of interest in Slovakia and the region. This should include the coverage of international promotion campaigns in line with national branding.

It is proposed that the local OSS regularly update the migration situation and inform the relevant bodies within the hierarchies of the multi-level governance framework of the changing conditions and perceptions. The overarching purpose of these actions is to help national level government ministries and regional institutions to identify and contact the potentially most significant overseas target groups – before their arrival in the local environment (e.g. the community of Bratislava – Rača) – to ensure the best possible match between spatially disparate local labour market opportunities and human capital resources.

Of course, the local OSS will never have enough power and resources to take these complex actions independently. Proper long-term coordination will be necessary, with the basic idea concerning how to start coordination processes being outlined above. We propose active searching in addition to highlighting OSS operations through the international and foreign/local media that receive extensive coverage in those communities (e.g. Ukrainian, Serbian, etc.) with a personal interest in migration trends. Promotion and contact could be established in a coordinated manner with local institutions (the municipality and citywide government of the mayor of Bratislava), the regional government and most importantly, the responsible national government ministry.

The role of ensuring a unified image of Slovakia abroad is given to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Affairs. Creating and implementing ‘brand Slovakia’ is part of this task: “Their branding process is focused on identifying attractive, trusted communicative messages and graphical representations that the home community identifies with – and which, when introduced into presentational practice, help to create a positive image abroad.” The ambition of the ministry (in cooperation with

other ministries) is to establish a brand by proposing coherent government policies that translate the individual messages of the new brand into measures in individual areas of domestic and foreign policy. The institution that coordinates and makes the final decision on the particular policy issue is Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic.

The local government avoids misusing valuable resources and empowers its community to engage in the decision making process from the outset in order to strengthen the OSS public service delivery model across borders. At the regional level, limited non-profit experience exists on how to engage a broader audience, including an international one in the case of the IOM managed Migration Information Centre in Bratislava. The district of Rača's OSS model has yet to become a product of social discourse and common agreement. In this regard, it would require additional comparative data from other agencies and a longer observation period to fully understand the importance of the OSS concerning future practice. From a wider perspective, the example of Rača gives grounds for optimism that reform in one agency could potentially snowball, resulting in reforms in other areas, such as health-care and social security, childcare, care for senior citizens, education, the labour market and entrepreneurship etc. However, further (robust) studies need to be conducted to assess this possibility. The project succeeded in replacing the extractive model of public service delivery with the more inclusive OSS model, providing customers with effective public services. Customers have stated that they are satisfied with the speed, quality and user friendliness of the public service delivery. The service delivery procedures are simple and transparent, though community-level awareness of this service needs to be increased. The use of already existing channels of cooperation between local governments has made transfer between the municipalities much easier. Within the Bratislava area itself, local governments cooperate in their actions, and offer a direct platform to share these experiences within the framework of citywide government. Moreover, a similar platform is in place within the regional government. Transfer to other regions in the country might be carried out, e.g. through the Association of Towns and Communities in Slovakia. This organisation acts on behalf of towns, municipalities and municipal boroughs throughout Slovakia. It is actively involved in all public administration reform processes, supporting the needs and interests of its members within an international forum. It is currently a source of information, experience and best practice for local administrations.

Public sector services are typically complex, layered and hybridised, rather than based on dominance or substitution. Concerning the implementation of our local

project, a major finding is that the fragmented public service delivery system is no longer in line with best practices. The emergence of new trends points to the vertical reintegration of devolved and outsourced service delivery functions into new centrally controlled service agencies. Decisions on devolving a certain amount of power and decision-making will be needed to be taken for the OSS as a newly created legal entity, although central authorities will certainly maintain control in terms of direct financial and operational policies. The future model of public service delivery depends in large part on its further evolution and sustainability. In Slovakia, for now, it is firmly dominated by the state agencies.

## **2.5 Facilitating and developing future human resources**

The investment of municipal resources in the OSS is very limited and will remain so given that each local government branch or agency maintains its own funding, including that of human resources. From an overall and long-term perspective, local government services will improve their cost efficiency because of their enhanced ability to provide clear and definitive responses to service users with the benefit of the assistance of mediators. From the perspective of municipal human resources, it is clear that cost-saving and efficiency are connected based on the example of a truly functional migration-related service in the area. The reason for selecting this particular policy issue is exemplified by the commonly identified challenge of improving multi-level governance cooperation by means of limited competitiveness in public sector employment. Moreover, there is a clear need for constant learning and skills adjustment, if government services aspire to remain relevant and practicable in communities deeply transformed by the ongoing – and presumably increasing – mobility of their citizens. The important social function of government services should be recognised and heralded and its employees well remunerated, in view of employment opportunities in the private sector.

We recommend a future scenario of wider cooperation based on the facilitation and development of future human resources. The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic monitors the situation in the labour market, and subsequently coordinates training specifically directed at the pool of unemployed citizens supported by public programmes. At the same time, the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic coordinates education and training for prospective graduates from secondary schools and further education (and research) institutes, aimed at inclusion processes within the service sector. The same ministry creates specific capacity-generating tools, facilitating the (temporary or permanent) timely acquirement of skills pertinent to graduates and trainees. The Bratislava Self-Governing Region develops educational/training

possibilities in accordance with actual needs using the facilities and teaching capacities of the region's secondary schools for the training of minority mediators or local coordinating staff. The municipality regularly informs the city of Bratislava and Bratislava Self-Governing Region about the local situation with regard to the staffing of local branch agencies, local businesses and nonprofit institutions, as well as its own administrative staff and their training requirements.

It is important to involve national government ministries because specific parts of this scheme must allow the smooth flow of information and resources, secured by purpose-driven decision making (with regard to specific tools, calls for projects or grants etc.), and this is only possible from a single coordinated point. The fragmentation of the activity can be helpful concerning specific elements of the problem, but it will not bring about a systematic solution.

Our scenario has further implications with regard to what course the government should take – and how it should take it. The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic regularly consults with the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic on best options and possible next steps. The Bratislava Self-Governing Region monitors labour market and secondary school-graduation trends across the metropolitan area, actively searching ad-hoc possibilities to share learning or training programmes with the other seven regional governments.

Since regional instability can easily cross regional borders, Bratislava – Rača municipality and the capital city of Slovakia – Bratislava – share information on the local staffing situation and monitor changing opportunities with regard to the local labour market, all the while coordinating their next steps. The international component of the plan of both the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic, and the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic is being closely followed. It involves the updating of policy initiatives in the international environment – especially at the European government level and for public and non-government institutions, allowing the use of specific policy-making or implementation support tools to be promoted and effectively employed at the national level, as well as sharing initiatives on the national environment and the transnational institutions themselves.

We propose a coordinated and effective means of securing sufficient staff capacities while keeping costs proportionate to training mediators and funding. It appears to be most effective to recruit capacities through a public bid where private or non-profit institutions can compete to win the service. Financial budgets should be shared and participation can take the form of fundraising in the community or that

of socially responsible private companies, which often hire the majority of their staff internationally. It is in their best interests to help to build a more inclusive local society. However, the majority of resources enabling true sustainability must come from the state and EU level funding. We propose cooperation between government agencies and specific minority associations to facilitate specifically targeted complex employment in addition to an educational framework for mediators developed by their own local members. The number of mediators employed would depend on the extension of the required services, according to changing international needs. Potential savings for the government at all levels could be made by bridging the information gap (namely language barriers), and by building on the existing experience of various government and non-profit service providers. Training will be needed for both mediators and local municipality staff to provide an effective and competent sustainable service. The future implementation of processes should involve training costs for locally based staff or those from branch government agencies (national and regional). In addition, there will be ongoing training to keep staff up-to-date on legislation, procedures, and new services to be provided, according to changes in the migratory environment. Such training can be facilitated by systematic life-long education, offered primarily to existing administrative personnel, and could be mandatory if the specific role requires direct contact between the official and foreign persons. The institution that coordinates and makes the final decision on this particular policy issue is the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic.