



COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

ON LABOUR MOBILITY SCHEME FOR SLOVAKIA



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Definition of terms¹

When communicating the topic of migration, both the professional and general public commonly confuse the terms migrant, foreigner, labour migration, mobility or integration. In this section, we provide explanations of some of the terms used in the Labour Mobility Scheme and the Communication Strategy.²

Migration: movement of a person or a group of persons across an international border (international migration) or within a state (internal migration), regardless of the duration, nature and causes thereof. In the European context, migration is understood to mean the action by which a person establishes their habitual residence in the territory of an EU Member State for a period longer than 12 months. Short-term migration is the action of a person who changes their habitual residence for more than 3 months but less than 12 months, except in cases where the movement is for purposes of visits to relatives, holiday or medical treatment.

Migrant: a person who moves away from their place of habitual residence, whether within a region or in the international context, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons. However, in Slovak law, the term foreigner is used in the context of international migration instead of the term migrant.

Foreigner: in the EU context, a person who is not a national of an EU country. In Slovak law, the term foreigner is used in the sense that a foreigner is anyone who is not a national of the Slovak Republic, i.e. it includes nationals of other EU Member States. For the purposes of this document, the term foreigner is to be understood within the meaning of Slovak law.³ If any part of this text focuses on only a single subgroup of foreigners, this is explicitly specified.

Labour migration: in the context of the Labour Mobility Scheme, it is legal migration, which means the movement of nationals from non-EU countries, the EEA and Switzerland to another country for employment purposes.

Labour mobility: occupational labour mobility (movement along the occupational ladder). The term “labour mobility” has the same meaning as “labour migration”. It reflects the dynamic and multi-directional nature of modern migration, indicating that those who move for employment purposes may do so more than once, may move across different countries of destination and that their employment abroad may not necessarily result in settlement in another country, keeping their prime place of residence in their country of origin. Term used in the Slovak context to mean labour migration (defined in the Strategy for Labour Mobility of Foreigners in Slovakia until 2020, with an outlook to the year 2030).⁴ Both the Labour Mobility Scheme for Slovakia and the Communication Strategy use the term labour mobility as an equivalent of labour migration.

Foreign worker from an EU country: for the purposes of this document, this is a person whose country of origin is a Member State of the European Union, the European Economic Area or Switzerland and who intends to be, is or was employed or posted to the territory of the Slovak Republic for employment purposes.

Foreign worker from a non-EU country: for the purposes of this document, this is a person whose country of origin is not a Member State of the European Union, the European Economic Area or Switzerland and who intends to be, is or was employed or posted to the territory of the Slovak Republic for employment purposes.

Integration: the two-way process of mutual adaptation between migrants and the societies in which they live, whereby migrants are incorporated into the social, economic, cultural and political life of the receiving community. It entails a set of joint responsibilities for migrants and communities, and incorporates other related notions such as social inclusion and social cohesion.

¹ IOM Glossary, available at: https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/iml_34_glossary.pdf (consulted on 1/4/2021)

² Further basic terms of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in the field of migration and integration of foreigners are available on the IOM website: <https://www.iom.sk/sk/pre-media/zakladne-pojmy-o-migracii.html> (consulted on 1/4/2021). See also the European Migration Network (EMN) Glossary – Asylum and Migration: a comparative glossary of terms in different EU languages available at https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/glossary_en (consulted on 1/4/2021)

³ Nevertheless, the measures under the Labour Mobility Scheme itself are aimed exclusively at nationals of non-EU countries, the EEA and Switzerland.

⁴ According to European terminology, this concerns exclusively the transfer of workers between EU and EEA Member States and Switzerland on the basis of the instruments created for this purpose under European legislation (short-term mobility, long-term mobility, intra-company transfers).

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

COLSAF	Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family
EEA	European Economic Area
EMN	European Migration Network
EUROSTAT	Statistical Office of the European Union
EU	European Union
GDP	gross domestic product
ICE	interministerial consultation exercise
IOM	International Organization for Migration
ISTP	labour market information system
IT	information technology
KPIs	key performance indicators
MEc SR	Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic
MESRS SR	Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic
MIC IOM	Migration Information Centre of the International Organization for Migration
MF SR	Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic
MFEA SR	Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic
MH SR	Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic
MI SR	Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic
MLSAF SR	Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, and Family of the Slovak Republic
NGOs	non-governmental organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
SARIO	Slovak Agency for the Development of Investment and Trade
SIEA	Slovak Innovation and Energy Agency
SR	Slovak Republic

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INTRODUCTION

The labour market is facing challenges – a declining working-age population and the need for additional skilled workforce.

Labour mobility is one of the key common measures that can be resorted to in order to address labour market needs. In order to be successful in the competition for talent with other countries, Slovakia needs to have an effective labour mobility policy. It will help it better address foreign workers in occupations that contribute to the dynamics of economic growth and, in the long term, to raising the standard of living in the country.

When the Slovak Government adopted its Strategy for Labour Mobility of Foreigners in Slovakia in 2018, it presented measures to simplify the procedures relating to the employment and residence of foreign workers from non-EU countries, especially in shortage occupations. The new comprehensive proposal of the **Labour Mobility Scheme for Slovakia** hereinafter the ‘Scheme’, also stems from the Strategy.

The Scheme has been developed under the framework of the project Technical Support for the Development of a Labour Mobility Scheme for the Slovak Republic⁵. The general objective of the project is to contribute to institutional, administrative and growth-sustaining structure reforms in Slovakia. In light of this, the project supported the design and development of a Labour Mobility Scheme tailored to Slovakia’s needs.

The Scheme is a system of proposed measures that facilitate and accelerate the recruitment of foreign workers to the Slovak labour market. It aims to contribute to an effective labour mobility policy, increase the attractiveness of Slovakia for foreign workers through a set of incentive measures and, at the same time, assist them in their integration into society.

The Scheme makes it possible to set up and launch a transparent, managed and safe process that will attract workers in shortage occupations.

The purpose of this document – Communication Strategy – is to contribute to the understanding of the Labour Mobility Scheme for Slovakia by the

professional and general public, to explain in a substantive and factual manner the need for and the benefits of recruiting foreign workers coming from non-EU countries and help put the various proposed measures under the Scheme into practice.

The Communication Strategy together with other project outputs (Research Reports Compendium and Proposal for legislative changes complements the proposal of the Labour Mobility Scheme for Slovakia, aims to facilitate its implementation and provides additional information for labour migration policy makers and other relevant stakeholders implementing the labour mobility policies.

Members of the Advisory Board for the preparation of the Labour Mobility Scheme participated in the preparation of the Communication Strategy and provided valuable input and expertise.

The document is intended for government officials who are responsible for the relevant legislative changes and for other agencies and partners involved in drafting the legislation. The document can provide readers with arguments that can help them prepare for various communication situations.

The Communication Strategy is also **intended for other communicators who will be promoting labour mobility or be affected by the changes** – government organisations and agencies, local government officials, and representatives of employers or trade unions.

The individual parts of the Strategy explain the rationale for the Scheme and for adopting it as a tool for managing labour mobility. They contain specific **arguments, communication principles and messages** that can be quickly put into communication practice.

The document provides all actors involved in the development of the new Labour Mobility Scheme with a summary of supporting information and facts that can help them promote the measures proposed under the Scheme, not only during the potential legislative process, but also in the course of their possible implementation phase.

The document is divided into 6 chapters.

⁵ This project is funded by the European Union through the Structural Reform Support Programme and implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in cooperation with the European Commission’s Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support (DG REFORM).

The first chapter “Baseline situation” presents the main challenges of the Slovak Republic in the field of labour mobility and focuses on the potential of foreign workers to contribute to the restart of the Slovak economy affected by the pandemic.

The second chapter, ‘Public attitude towards migration’, is the most extensive. It describes the attitude of the Slovak public towards migration with regard to labour mobility. It presents the most common hoaxes and myths that people associate with migration, as well as instructions on how to deal with them and how to argue based on facts and concrete examples. The chapter also addresses the creation of new narratives through human stories that can effectively influence the views and change thinking and behaviour of individuals.

The communication objectives that were identified based on stakeholders’ priorities are divided into two communication phases (before and after the adoption of the Labour Mobility Scheme), together with the guidance on how to achieve these objectives through well-set communication, are subject to Chapter 3.

Chapter 4 presents communicators and natural ambassadors of the Scheme, as well as topics of labour mobility in general, and also focuses on target groups.

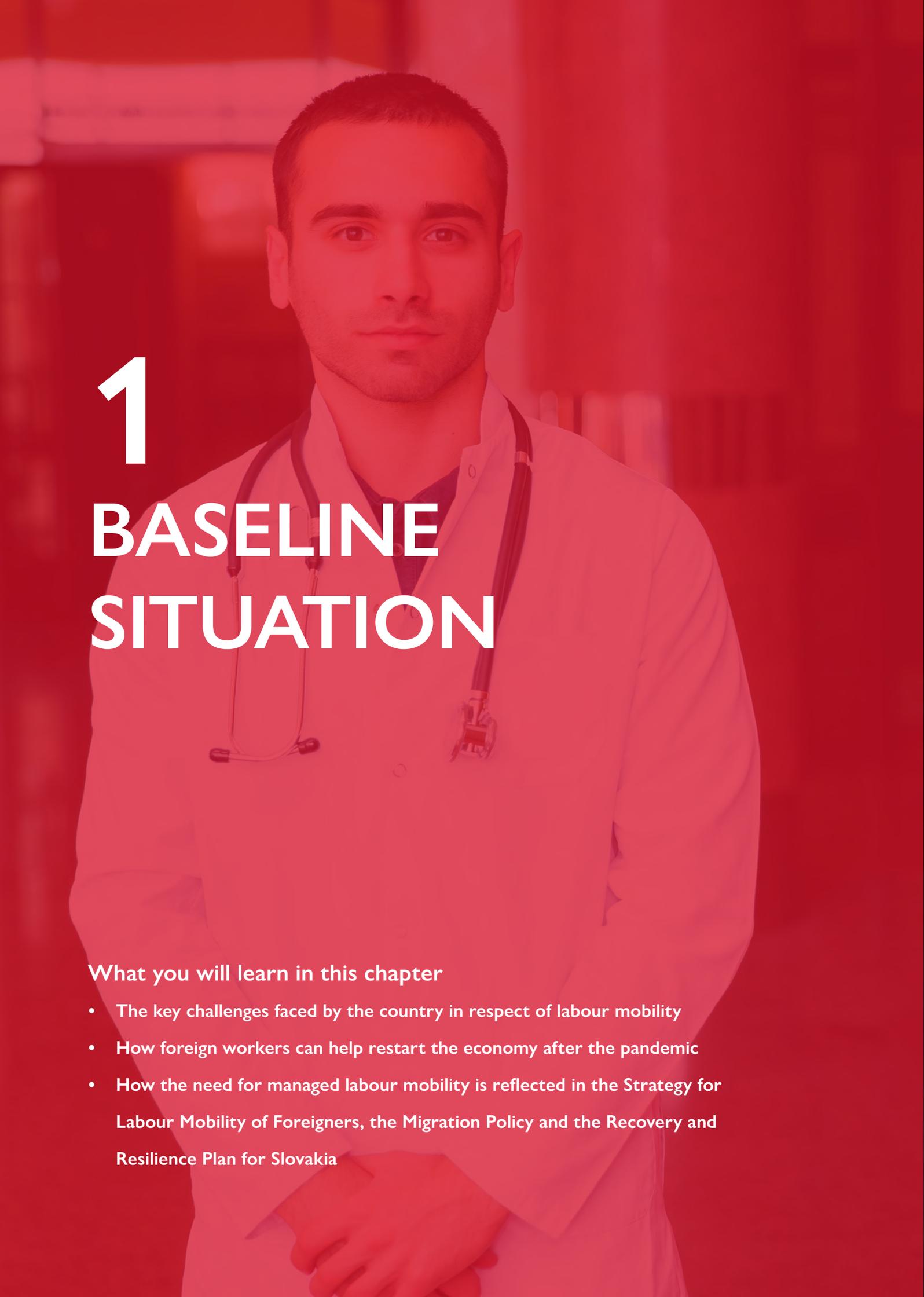
Chapter 5 provides guidance on how to create strategic narratives and supporting communication messages.

Chapter 6 presents a proactive and reactive approach to communication and the challenges faced by communicators in both communication approaches. Simultaneously, the chapter includes proposals for tools, tactics and opportunities for communication.

At its end, the Communication Strategy document offers useful sources of information, where the reader finds links to important legislative documents, analyses, surveys and other sources.

The document is annexed by proposals for communication tools and channels, as well as the tools for measuring the impact of communication and an indicative budget of the recommended tools to support the communication of the Labour Mobility Scheme in the form of a campaign.





1 BASELINE SITUATION

What you will learn in this chapter

- The key challenges faced by the country in respect of labour mobility
- How foreign workers can help restart the economy after the pandemic
- How the need for managed labour mobility is reflected in the Strategy for Labour Mobility of Foreigners, the Migration Policy and the Recovery and Resilience Plan for Slovakia

1.1. Key challenges in respect of labour mobility

The Slovak labour market has been changing significantly in recent years. There is a shortage of workers in many sectors and the demographic trends suggest that the problem – a shortage of workforce – is going to aggravate further.

According to analysts and surveys of recruitment agencies, Slovakia can expect changes in the structure of industry and services and an occupational revolution. They anticipate a massive boom in digital and social marketing, renewable resources, or cyber and data security.⁶ One scenario assumes that the Slovak economy will need an additional workforce of around 335 thousand people by 2025.⁷

The unexpected arrival of the coronavirus pandemic has changed people's lives in many respects, especially in relation to work. It has accelerated digitalisation and revealed opportunities and shortcomings in various sectors. Science and research have come to the forefront, innovations in healthcare, information technology and teleworking have become commonplace.

Slovakia is facing several challenges:

The population is ageing

According to most recent Eurostat data, Slovakia will be the second fastest-ageing economy in the EU by 2070 (after Poland).⁸ The population may decline by more than 800 000 (from 5.5 to 4.7 million) in the next fifty

years, while some Slovaks will continue to study and work abroad.⁹

The high proportion of seniors in the Slovak population will necessitate the financing of higher public expenditure associated with population ageing. Healthcare and the social services and insurance system will need to adapt. Ageing also has an impact on the structure of the workforce, a shortage of which can already be seen in certain occupations today (medical doctors, nurses, carers, teachers or craftsmen).

According to one forecast, the Slovak economy will need an additional workforce of approximately 335 000 persons by 2025. Replacements for retiring employees will account for approximately 75 % of these additional jobs.¹⁰

Other EU Member States are facing a similar situation. Several of them have already introduced various programmes to attract foreign workers, namely in the form of various bilateral cooperation projects or stabilisation loans.

Automation, digitalisation, robotisation

Both automation and digitalisation can be looked at as opportunities. According to the 2019 OECD Economic Outlook, Slovakia is the country most affected by automation. This is mainly due to its orientation on the automotive and electrical engineering industries, combined with a shortage of IT professionals. Up to one third

⁶ Grafton, Čaká nás profesijná revolúcia?, Spracované výsledky prieskumu a analýzy trhu práce [Can We Expect an Occupational Revolution? Results of a Labour Market Survey and Analysis], 2020, available at: <https://www.grafton.sk/sk/o-nas/medialna-zona/tlacove-spravy/caka-nas-profesijna-revolucia> (consulted on 1/4/2021)

⁷ Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, Trexima, Národný projekt Prognózy vývoja na trhu práce v SR II, 2020, Potreby trhu práce na Slovensku do roku 2025 [National Project – Projections for the Labour Market in Slovakia II, 2020, Needs of the Labour Market in Slovakia by 2025], 2019, available at: <https://www.trendyprace.sk/sk/trendy-trhu-prace/sk-trendy/slovensko>, (consulted on 1/4/2021) Note: the projection for additional workforce needs in the 2021-2025 period was updated as of 05/2021. The additional workforce needs express the additional workforce demand that will not be accommodated by the current workforce. They do not express the number of vacant jobs or the number of jobs created. The projection of additional needs is a combination of quantitative business panel models, soft qualitative data coming from employers and regional sectoral experts, as well as macroeconomic models and official macroeconomic forecasts of the Ministry of Finance. It is a complex system based on various data, such as quarterly data on the employment structure by occupations, sectors of economic activities, district of residence and workplace, age of employees, gender and other variables, but also data from the MESRS SR, MF SR, MLSAF SR, COLSAF, the Slovak Statistical Office, or EUROSTAT. The projections also incorporate data from a field survey among employers on future changes in employment structures expected by them.

⁸ Ageing Report, Eurostat (2021), https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/2021-ageing-report-underlying-assumptions-and-projection-methodologies_en, (consulted on 1/4/2021).

⁹ The document Recovery and Resilience Plan for Slovakia, Component 10 – Attracting Talent, 2021, available at: https://www.planobnovy.sk/files/dokumenty/kompletny-plan_obnovy.pdf (consulted on 1/6/2021).

¹⁰ Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, Trexima, Národný projekt Prognózy vývoja na trhu práce v SR II, 2020, Potreby trhu práce na Slovensku do roku 2025 [National Project – Projections for the Labour Market in Slovakia II, 2020, Needs of the Labour Market in Slovakia by 2025], 2019, available at: <https://www.trendyprace.sk/sk/trendy-trhu-prace/sk-trendy/slovensko>, note: the projection for additional workforce needs in the 2021-2025 period was updated as of 05/2021.

of jobs are at risk, the highest number among developed countries.¹¹ In order for a country to be able to innovate and diversify its industry, it needs to focus more on science and research, education and the development of skills that the labour market demands. Labour mobility can help Slovakia meet its need for highly qualified workforce, that can innovate the country's industry and create the jobs where different competences will be needed.

According to a study by the consulting firm McKinsey¹², if Slovakia's level of digitalisation came close to that of Western and Northern European countries, this would bring the country an additional 16 billion euros in GDP annually by 2025. The advent of the fourth industrial revolution is often associated with the robotisation of manufacturing. Yet, there are fields in the service sector, such as sales, finance, banking, administration, or health-care, where digitalisation changes the demand for new competences of employees even faster. The pressure to up-skill current and future employees will grow, as will the need to cover the shortage of them, especially in some regions.

Attracting and retaining talent

The competition for talent and workers in shortage occupations will intensify. Much like Slovakia, other European countries also recognise the need for an effective labour mobility system. One way to do this is to attract and retain foreign workers by means of incentive measures in Slovakia.

Despite the temporary increase in unemployment due to the pandemic, it can be expected that unemployment will no longer be the most acute problem of the Slovak labour market in the long term. Specialists are still in demand on the market - not only in IT, but also in the fields of accounting and financial control. This also applies to nurses or technicians. As regards less skilled occupations, there is a demand for truck and bus drivers, shop assistants, and manufacturing or logistics workers.¹³

When addressing the shortage of workforce, Slovakia focuses its attention mainly on domestic workers and the return of Slovaks working abroad.

This is the key reason why there is currently no labour mobility programme in place to govern comprehensively the conditions for entry, residence and employment of foreign workers from non-EU countries. More activity in

reaching out to foreign workers can be seen in particular on the part of employers.

Slovakia lacks functional tools that could help accommodate the demand for both high- and low-skilled workforce. Appropriate incentive tools for attracting young people from abroad to study at universities and for retaining this group of highly qualified foreigners in our labour market are also absent.

The current system is convoluted, with many exemptions for specific groups of foreign workers from non-EU countries. Those already working in Slovakia stress that the system lacks transparency and is administratively complex, which often discourages them from staying in Slovakia for the long term.

The working holidays programmes for young people from six non-EU countries, the system of seasonal work and the possibility for certain categories of foreigners to work without residence and employment permits for the first 90 days after their arrival in Slovakia are not widely used. **The EU Blue Card** in the form in which it was introduced into the Slovak legislation has proved ineffective; only a few foreigners apply for it annually.

The most frequently used instrument is the single permit for residence and employment, which is based on a European directive and used by most non-EU workers.

There has been a long-standing absence of information in foreign languages on job vacancies, recognition of education and professional qualifications.

The lack of transparency of the system, with its many exemptions, increases the demand for the services of relocation and recruitment agencies, which are not subsequently controlled or regulated

Simplification of the process of obtaining work permits and residence for people from non-EU countries could not only create new jobs, but also ensure that the existing ones are retained.

The ambition of the Labour Mobility Scheme is to address the shortcomings of the current system.

¹¹ OECD (2019), OECD Economic Surveys: Slovak Republic 2019, OECD Publishing, Paris.

¹² McKinsey (2018), "The Rise of Digital Challengers – Perspective on Slovakia"

¹³ Grafton, Čaká nás profesijná revolúcia?, Spracované výsledky prieskumu a analýzy trhu práce [Can We Expect an Occupational Revolution? Results of a Labour Market Survey and Analysis], 2020, available at: <https://www.grafton.sk/sk/o-nas/medialna-zona/tlacove-spravy/caka-nas-profesijna-revolucia>, (consulted on 1/4/2021)

Labour mobility could be the fastest solution for Slovakia to meet the needs of the labour market and to face demographic challenges effectively. Foreign workers can fill gaps in the labour market almost immediately, if they come at working age and with the necessary qualifications. This requires a targeted labour mobility policy, which addresses the country's needs comprehensively, and an attractive mix of transparent measures that not only attract, but also help retain and integrate workers from abroad.

1.2 Impacts of the pandemic on the labour market

According to data from the Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, in February 2021, **the number of Slovaks who lost their jobs due to the pandemic was equal to the number of working foreigners.** However, since the outbreak of the pandemic, more than 9 000 foreigners, especially from Serbia and Ukraine, have left the Slovak labour market. There is now a shortage of workers in positions such as manufacturing operators and machine and equipment assemblers.¹⁴ In the industrial manufacturing system, it is impossible to replace the departing foreign workers immediately with Slovak unemployed workers. Companies struggling with workforce shortages are unable to meet foreign orders and other commitments. **Simultaneously, a smaller number of orders restricts the ability of employers to raise their employees' wages.**

The pandemic has also shown the extent of the shortage of health workers and carers in Slovakia.

One of the reasons foreign health workers and carers are not interested in Slovakia is the complexity of the processes involved in recognising qualifications. The process of recognition of professional qualifications may take several months, up to a year. There is also a lack of opportunities, in particular for medical doctors and nurses, to engage in skilled activities during the process of recognition of their professional qualifications.

1.3. Labour mobility as part of reforms

As mentioned in the introduction to this document, the Scheme is based on the 2018 strategic document

Strategy for Labour Mobility of Foreigners in the Slovak Republic.¹⁵ The short-term measures until 2020 and the long-term measures with an outlook to 2030 were aimed at streamlining, accelerating and making the system governing the entry and residence of foreign workers from non-EU countries more flexible, especially in shortage occupations.

The current **Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic** from 2011 contains a commitment, according to which “economic migration in the forthcoming years must be based on active and flexible management of the recruitment of foreigners who decide to come to Slovakia.”. According to the Policy, Slovakia will adopt policies to support foreign workers from third countries actively, in line with labour market needs, with an emphasis on the recruitment and employment of highly skilled workers, scientific workers and other workers in shortage occupations.

The most recent document that partly deals with labour mobility is the **Recovery and Resilience Plan for the Slovak Republic.**¹⁴ It focuses on a number of priorities and reform needs, for example in the fields of the green economy, education, science, research and digitalisation. It also pays attention to the risks associated with population ageing or automation. The document advocates the arrival of foreign experts and the creation of a fast-track scheme for highly skilled workers from non-EU countries, including attracting and retaining talent. It proposes reducing the paperwork involved in arranging the residence permit for foreign workers and their family members, as well as facilitating their integration.

¹⁴ B.TOMA, Trend: Bez cudzincov ťažko rozbehneme ekonomický rast. Pred problémami po skončení pandémie varuje NBS [We Can Hardly Kick-start Economic Growth without Foreigners. The NBS Warns of Post-pandemic Problems], 2021, available at: <https://www.trend.sk/ekonomika/bez-cudzincov-tazko-rozbehneme-ekonomicky-rast-pred-problemami-skonceni-pandemie-varuje-nbs> (consulted on 1/4/2021)

¹⁵ Component 10 – Attracting Talent. In: Recovery and Resilience Plan for Slovakia. Roadmap to a better Slovakia. Ministry of Finance of the SR, 2021, available at: https://www.planobnovy.sk/files/dokumenty/kompletny-plan_obnovy.pdf (consulted on 1/6/2021)

2

PUBLIC ATTITUDES TOWARDS MIGRATION

What you will learn in this chapter

- What the public attitudes towards labour migration are according to surveys
- What the public and political discourse looks like
- What the most common hoaxes and myths that people associate with migration are and how they can be dispelled using facts, arguments and human stories

2.1. Fear of the unknown

Migration has been a natural part of the evolution and development of humanity since its inception. It is inevitable, necessary and, in the context of the aforementioned labour market challenges, even desirable.

Migration needs to be discussed openly, calmly and without emotion and based on evidence. It has been and will continue to be a part of our lives. **When communicating the Scheme, it is important to know the public's attitudes** towards this topic. This will help us better understand the questions and possible concerns of those to whom we are explaining it. We can prepare our arguments for the conversation and further apply the formulated messages.

Slovakia is not a traditional destination country for migrants. To a large extent, it is still a country from which people for various reasons leave rather than come to.¹⁶ Migration affects everyone, more than they realise. **Almost everyone has someone in their family who has left for another country in search of a job, education and better conditions.**

In September 2020, the Centre for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture carried out a research that mapped, among other things, the attitudes of the population towards the topic of migration.¹⁷ One of the findings was that **Slovaks are afraid of the unknown.**¹⁸ Concepts such as immigration, labour migration or integration tend to evoke feelings of insecurity or threat. Yet, the fact is that **many Slovaks do not know or have not met any foreigners working in Slovakia.** The survey also confirmed the fact that **people who come into contact with foreigners (at work or in the neighbourhood) have a better relationship to them than those who only see them indirectly, in the media.**

According to a pan-European opinion poll published in 2018, **there is a significant relationship between the size of migrant population in a community and the perception of migration as a problem**¹⁹. In countries with a small proportion of foreigners, including Slovakia, Hungary or Bulgaria, people tend to perceive migration as a problem. In countries with a relatively high proportion of migrants (Denmark, Sweden or Luxembourg), the population tends to perceive migration as a benefit rather than a problem.

More than half of Europeans feel comfortable around migrants and around 6 out of 10 respondents communicate with migrants on a weekly basis. In Spain, Sweden and Ireland, these figures are 83 %, 83 % and 80 % respectively.²⁰

In Slovakia, only 11 % of Slovaks interact with a foreigner on a daily basis and a further 20 % meet them once a week. Only Hungarians, Lithuanians, Romanians and Bulgarians communicate with foreigners less frequently than Slovaks.²¹

Nevertheless, interpersonal relationships are more complex than percentages and residents in different parts of Slovakia do not have the same chances to come into contact with a foreigner, whether because of the language barrier or because there are no foreigners at their work or in their neighbourhood. A Focus agency survey from June 2020 also confirmed that almost half of the respondents (47.3 %) do not personally know any foreigner living in Slovakia. Just over a third (34.5 %) know no more than five foreigners.²²

In Slovakia, many people have the impression that there are much more foreigners living here with us than there actually is. According to data from the

¹⁶ Facts and Figures on Migration, International Organization for Migration (IOM), <https://www.iom.sk/en/migration/migration-in-slovakia.html> (consulted on 1.4.2021). An analysis by the Institute for Financial Policy (IFP) based on health insurance registers showed that 300 000 persons left Slovakia between 2000 and 2015.

¹⁷ Centre for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture, Cudzí nechceme, svoje si nedáme. Postoje majoritnej populácie k migrácii a cudzincom na Slovensku [We Reject the Foreign, We Protect Our Own. Attitudes of the Majority Population Towards Migration and Foreigners in Slovakia], 2021

¹⁸ Fear of the unknown is a natural human instinct. We all have fear of something. Especially if it is something we have not experienced before, something we do not know. At the same time, fear protects us by making us more cautious or saving us from a situation. Fear is not associated only with the subject of foreigners.

¹⁹ Special Eurobarometer 469, 2018, available at: https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/news/results-special-eurobarometer-integration-immigrants-european-union_en (consulted on 1/4/2021)

²⁰ Ibidem

²¹ Ibidem

²² RAPOS BOŽIČ, I.: Cudzinci žijúci na Slovensku- do akej miery sa od nich dištancujeme? [Foreigners living in Slovakia – to what extent do we distance ourselves from them?], 2020, available at: <https://www.fjuzn.sk/spolocnost/cudzinci-zijuci-na-slovensku-do-akej-miery-sa-od-nich-distancujeme> (consulted on 1/4/2021)

International Organization for Migration (IOM), Slovakia has the third lowest proportion of foreigners among EU countries (2.75 % of foreigners to total population).²³ The migrant population in neighbouring countries is much greater: 5.49 % in the Czech Republic and 16.55 % in Austria. However, according to Eurobarometer 88.2 data from 2017, more than half of the respondents felt that foreigners accounted for 16 % of the population in Slovakia.²⁴ **In December 2020, there were more than 150 thousand foreigners living in Slovakia.** Of these, nationals of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Austria and Ukraine made up, traditionally, the largest group (48.4 %). Nationals of Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia and Russia accounted for one fifth (20.5 %) of all foreigners.²⁵ **Most Slovaks do not personally know any foreigners and lack personal experience with migration. They easily succumb to the fear of the**

unknown. Concrete examples, however, change the ‘unknown into the known’, reduce fears and enable them to perceive the circumstances of labour mobility in a factual and open manner. After all, foreigners employed in Slovakia find themselves in a situation similar to that of the thousands of Slovaks working abroad.

2.2 Public versus political discourse

The current perception of the term ‘migrant’ or ‘foreigner’ in Slovakia is largely influenced by the society’s response to the migration situation in Europe in 2015 and 2016.

Increased numbers of people from the Middle East (especially Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq) and North Africa

²³ Eurostat, Population by Citizenship and Residence – Foreigners (data as at 1.1.2020), available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tps00001/default/table?lang=en>, <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tps00157/default/table?lang=en> and <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tps00178/default/table?lang=en>. (consulted on 1/4/2021)

²⁴ Eurobarometer 88.2 (2017): Integration of immigrants in the European Union and Corruption. TNS opinion, Brussels [producer]. GESIS Data Archive, Cologne. ZA6927 Data file Version 1.0.0, European Commission, Brussels, 2018, available at: <https://doi.org/10.4232/1.13005> (consulted on 1/4/2021)

²⁵ International Organization for Migration (IOM), Facts and Figures on Migration in Slovakia, December 2020, available at: <https://www.iom.sk/en/migration/migration-in-slovakia.html> (consulted on 1/4/2021)



International Organization for Migration (IOM)/Photograph by Francesco Malavolta



*BioNTech co-founders Dr. Ugur Sahin and Dr. Ozlem Tureci in its headquarters in Germany on Jan. 3. Photograph by Dina Litovsky- Redux for TIME.

When the pharmaceutical company Pfizer published a report in November 2020 that its coronavirus vaccine, which it had worked on with the German firm BioNTech, was safe and effective according to tests on tens of thousands of volunteers, it raised a wave of enthusiasm. It soon turned out that the couple behind the development of the vaccine was Uğur Şahin and Özlem Türeci – Turkish immigrants who have an interesting life story.

came to the European Union, especially through Greece and Italy. Even though refugees and migrants became part of everyday news and debates, few were familiar with the terminology, migration flows or immigration policy rules. The media and politicians across countries and political spectra started to label the situation as a ‘migration crisis’. Biased, negative reporting and the presentation of the situation as a dangerous “invasion” was framing the news.

Several expert authorities, representatives of international and European institutions, non-governmental

organisations, analysts and even some politicians attempted to balance the sometimes emotionally charged communication.

Public opinion was also affected by the political discourse on the topic of the asylum policy or the acceptance of exclusively Christian refugees.

In a context of increasingly polarized discussions on migration in Europe, anti-migrant sentiment pushed by far-right groups has been increasing and is predicted to worsen and shape discussions for the next decade as the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 are felt through a likely recession and deterioration of social cohesion.

Labour migration is a popular topic for the disinformation scene, the creators and propagators of various xenophobic and radical sentiments. Some politicians also wrongly label migrants or foreigners as ‘problematic and unadaptable’. These messages have a negative impact on the perception of other foreign workers and the topic of labour migration as such.

The fact is that labour migration evokes emotions. **However, it should not be something we avoid or fear in communication.** On the contrary – we recommend **talking about migration in a neutral, truthful and comprehensive manner.**

It is the communicators of the Labour Mobility Scheme who know the facts and the arguments and who can bring a factual, conciliatory tone to the discussion and clearly explain the benefits of the measures to both the professional and the general public. For a start, they will use the term ‘foreign worker’ rather than the terms ‘migrant’ or ‘foreigner’.

2.3. Hoaxes and myths associated with migrants

The attitude of Slovaks towards the topic of labour migration does not change much over time. The views that foreigners take jobs away from Slovaks or are a burden on the health and social system continue to resonate even today.

Studies indicate that the salience of migration is the key factor. The salience of migration issues, and the misinformation and disinformation on social media that accompanies it will also increase after the COVID-19 pandemic as the socio-economic impacts of pandemic will be felt and as the debate on the EU Migration and Asylum Pact continues to focus on the predicted long term increase of

migration to Europe due to the need for labour force to maintain Europe's economic competitiveness.

The arguments and facts presented in this section of the document can be used by the Labour Mobility Scheme communicators to formulate their messages to promote the adoption of individual measures.

While the facts can shift attitudes in some cases, myth-busting should factor in both facts and emotion and should be combined with more sophisticated efforts to engage with an individual's worldview through stories and individual connections.²⁶

What are the most common hoaxes and myths? How to approach them and argue on the basis of facts and concrete examples? Below we present some examples of the myths together with possible questions and responses.

Myth 1: Too many migrants live in Slovakia

The reality is different:

- Slovakia has the **third lowest proportion of foreigners in the EU**.²⁷
- **Only 11 % of Slovaks come into contact with a foreigner on a daily basis.**
- In 2020, 150 thousand foreigners (2.75% of the total population) lived in Slovakia; for comparison, more than 634 thousand foreigners lived in Czechia.²⁸
- Many people do not even know or have not met a foreigner.

Why should we support the arrival of more migrants from third countries? There are already too many of them in our country.

Response: We understand your concerns, but these are unfounded. There were 150 thousand foreigners living in Slovakia at the end of 2020, the third lowest proportion in the European Union. We come across the myth that

there are too many foreigners living in Slovakia quite often. In reality, only 11 % of Slovaks come into contact with a foreigner on a daily basis, especially at work. Most Slovaks either do not know or have not met any foreigner. For comparison, there are 634 thousand foreigners living in the Czech Republic.

„ If they come with their families, how do we provide them with jobs and housing?

Response: Foreign workers will only come with their families if they can take care of them. In order to be granted permanent residence, they must be able to demonstrate that they can provide for their family members not only financially, but also in terms of family housing. The Scheme comprises integration measures to help foreign workers and their family members integrate as smoothly as possible into everyday life in the municipality/city. The Scheme envisages that the foreign worker's spouse will be allowed to enter the labour market immediately after obtaining temporary residence for the purpose of family reunification. However, by adopting the Labour Mobility Scheme, we will not 'recklessly open the door wide to all'. Quite the contrary – migration will be effectively managed and controlled. The Scheme also pays attention to improving the availability of housing to foreign workers by creating a list of ethical landlords or by supporting local governments in dealing with this issue in cooperation with employers.²⁹

Myth 2: Migrants take away our jobs

48 % of Slovaks believe that foreigners 'take away our jobs'³⁰, but few know that:

- **thousands of professionals are already in short supply in a number of occupations;** trends suggest increasing demand for specialists in accounting, IT, nursing or education;
- **there are many positions that employers have been unable to fill by Slovaks for a long time –**

²⁶ H. DEMPSTER, A. LEACH, K. HARGRAVE, Public attitudes towards immigration and immigrants What people think, why, and how to influence them. https://cdn.odi.org/media/documents/Public_attitudes_towards_immigration_and_immigrants_what_people_think_why_and_how.pdf (consulted on 1/4/2021)

²⁷ International Organization for Migration (IOM), Facts and figures on migration in Slovakia, 2020, The proportion of foreigners in Slovakia to the total population is 2.75 %, available at: <https://www.iom.sk/sk/migracia/migracia-na-slovensku.html>, (consulted on 1/4/2021), According to the statistics of the Border and Aliens Police Office (ÚHCP), in December 2020 there were 150 012 foreigners living in Slovakia, of whom 59 206 were EU nationals and 90 806 were persons from non-EU countries.

²⁸ Ministry of the Interior of the Czech Republic, Quarterly Report on Migration – 4th Quarter of 2020, available at: <https://www.mvcr.cz/migrace/clanek/ctvrtletni-zprava-o-migraci-za-4-ctvrtleti-2020.aspx> (consulted on 1/4/2021)

²⁹ For further examples, see the Labour Mobility Scheme, Incentive measures to attract foreign workers from non-EU/EEA countries to Slovakia

³⁰ Centre for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture, Cudzie nechceme, svoje si nedáme. Postoje majoritnej populácie k migrácii a cudzincom na Slovensku [We Reject the Foreigner, We Protect Our Own. Attitudes of the Majority Population Towards Migration and Foreigners in Slovakia], 2021

when employers find a suitable foreign worker with relevant skills/qualifications, **this may even help them retain the jobs for the Slovaks who work with the foreign worker;**

- employers who want to offer a job to a foreign worker from a non-EU country will get permission to employ them only **if the job cannot be filled by a Slovak** or a foreigner from an EU country;
- in 2020, **69 012 foreigners were employed** in Slovakia. This means that there is currently **one foreign worker per 35 Slovak workers;**³¹
- **36 % of foreigners** – one in three foreigners – run a business in Slovakia and can potentially create new jobs;
- **unfilled job positions slow the economy down.**

” Why should we prefer foreigners when many Slovaks do not have jobs?

Response: Foreign workers are not preferred at the expense of Slovak employees. They do not replace but complement Slovaks in those jobs. There are shortages in many positions that employers have been unable to fill by Slovaks for a long time. Slovaks either do not have the necessary qualifications or are not interested in those jobs. When employers find a suitable foreign worker, this may even help them retain the jobs for the Slovaks who work with the foreign worker. Moreover, Slovakia is ageing and the size of the working age population will inevitably decline. The arrival of foreign workers, who are mostly younger, reduces the impact of ageing of the Slovak workforce on the labour market.

Every quarter, the Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family publishes a list of occupations with a shortage of workforce. It contains not only jobs for high-skilled professionals and experts, but also jobs requiring secondary vocational training or crafts.

Myth 3: Migrant workers only drive wages down and distort the labour market

62 % of Slovaks claim that foreigners ‘drive wages down’³², but

- **wage growth is affected by the added value of labour** and the policies and conditions created by the government, not by the employment of foreigners;

- Slovakia has a statutory **minimum wage that applies to all workers, including foreigners;**
- **even though more foreigners live in the neighbouring countries, their average wage is higher** than in Slovakia, and it continues to grow along with new job offers;
- wages may be distorted by unprofessional employers or recruitment agencies that **circumvent legislation and do not operate ethically.** A transparent system of managed labour mobility can change this;
- foreigners not only work and do business in our country, they also shop and spend money. They rent apartments and use services;
- employers who need a worker with certain qualifications and experience for a particular position cannot wait for a change in the education system or retraining. If they do not find a readily available worker in Slovakia, they try to find one in EU countries because the process of hiring EU citizens is almost identical to that applicable to hiring Slovaks. Recruiting a worker from a non-EU country is the last resort, followed only by termination of the position or potentially moving the business to another country.

” Foreigners are willing to work for lower wages in our country, why should we support this situation?

Response: In general, this statement is not true. Wage growth is affected mostly by the added value of labour and the policies and conditions created by the government. Slovakia has a statutory minimum wage that applies equally to Slovaks and foreigners. However, foreigners also work in jobs that Slovaks are no longer interested in or do not have the necessary qualifications for. Employers offer jobs to foreigners in particular in low-skilled occupations because they cannot fill them with Slovaks. Every job position has its added value. Employers’ experience shows that thanks to employing foreign workers in shortage occupations, they are able to compete with others and even create additional jobs.

Myth 4: Migrants abuse our welfare system

We also come across the opinion that foreigners are a threat to the welfare system. In the case of foreign

³¹ Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, Zamestnávanie cudzincov na území Slovenskej republiky za rok 2020 [Employment of Foreigners in the Slovak Republic in 2020], available at: https://www.upsvr.gov.sk/statistiky/zamestnavanie-cudzincov-statistiky.html?page_id=10803 (consulted on 1/4/2021)

³² Centre for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture, Cudzí nechceme, svoje si nedáme. Postoje majoritnej populácie k migrácii a cudzincom na Slovensku [We Reject the Foreign, We Protect Our Own. Attitudes of the Majority Population Towards Migration and Foreigners in Slovakia], 2021

workers from non-EU countries, the reality is that their access to benefits is very limited.

- **They are often net contributors** to the social insurance scheme.³³
- **They pay social and health insurance contributions in the same amount as Slovaks.**
- **They cannot receive unemployment benefits until they have resided in Slovakia for five years.**
- They only rarely meet the **requirements to receive an old-age or disability pension.**
- If they want to obtain a temporary residence permit, they cannot apply for **minimum subsistence benefits. Otherwise, they will lose their permit.**

“ *Foreigners only want to take advantage of our welfare system, which is more generous than that in the countries they are coming from. I do not agree with this, they have no right to do this!* ”

Response: We understand your concerns, but you are wrong. Let us present a few facts: The majority of migrants in Slovakia are foreign workers from non-EU countries who come to the country at working age. They pay social and health insurance contributions in the same amount as Slovaks. They only rarely meet the requirements to receive an old-age pension. Similarly, they cannot receive unemployment benefits until they have resided in Slovakia for five years. The government does not need to support them during their childhood or studies. On the contrary, because they are working, they are often net contributors to our welfare system.

Myth 5: Migrants are a burden on our public budget

- According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), “migrants contribute to the public budget more in taxes and social contributions than they receive individually in OECD countries”.³⁴
- **Most foreigners work and pay taxes and contributions.**
- The majority of foreigners are of working age, which means they are not a burden on healthcare or the welfare system.

- Reduced waiting time for a residence permit (in the case of foreign workers from non-EU countries) may also have a positive impact on the public budget. On average, the government could collect EUR 257 per person per month in net taxes.³⁵

“ *Foreigners pay lower taxes and they cost the government money.* ”

Response: Your information is inaccurate. The migrants in Slovakia are mostly young people who place almost no burden on the welfare system or the public budget. They pay taxes and insurance contributions in the same amount as Slovaks. At the same time, they do their shopping, rent housing or use services in our country. 36 % of them have their own business and create additional jobs. The economic benefits that come along with labour mobility thus include increased employment and consumption; collection of taxes and insurance contributions, increased production. A more effective labour mobility system will help reduce the impact of the ageing of Slovaks and keep many employers competitive.

Myth 6: Most migrant workers are unqualified

According to statistical data, the opposite is true:

- **The typical foreign worker coming to Slovakia has a secondary education. He or she is of working age and works mainly in manufacturing as an operator or mechanic/machinist.**
- In 2019, almost 43 % of non-EU foreigners working in Slovakia had a secondary vocational education.³⁶ They are currently the largest group in terms of education;
- Employers lack both manufacturing workers and highly skilled workers, specialists in information technology, healthcare or construction. These are the professions in which foreigners find employment in Slovakia.
- The Labour Mobility Scheme provides a guarantee of a properly managed process that will attract foreign workers to Slovakia to fill shortage occupations. This includes highly qualified scientists, experts in strategic sectors and services, as well as skilled, less skilled and seasonal workers to meet the needs in individual sectors as they arise.

³³ Foreign workers pay insurance contributions and often have no realistic possibility of receiving social benefits. Foreigners who come to Slovakia for a period shorter than 5 years never become entitled to unemployment benefits.

³⁴ Migration Policy Debates, OECD, Is migration good for the economy?, 2014, available at: <https://www.oecd.org/migration/OECD%20Migration%20Policy%20Debates%20Numero%202.pdf> (consulted on 1/4/2021)

³⁵ For further examples, see the Labour Mobility Scheme Research Reports Compendium, Fiscal Effects of Migration in Slovakia

³⁶ R. HRICOVÁ, R. MADZINOVÁ: Pohľad na zamestnávanie cudzincov z krajín mimo EÚ na Slovensku, Verejná správa a spoločnosť : [vedecký časopis]. Roč. 21, č. 1 (2020), s. 53-73. - Košice : Fakulta verejnej správy Univerzity Pavla Jozefa Šafárika, 2020. ISSN 1335-7182, available at: http://www.vsas.fvs.upjs.sk/files/PDFsam_Hricova-Madzinova_VEREJN--SPR-VA_1_2020_akt.pdf (consulted on 1/4/2021)

” Why do we attract unqualified foreigners with no education instead of the highly skilled ones?

Response: The opposite is true – the typical foreign worker coming to Slovakia has a secondary education. He or she is of working age and finds employment especially in manufacturing as an operator or mechanic/machinist. Shortage occupations include medical doctors, nurses, software specialists, drivers, construction workers, mechanics, operators or bakers.³⁷

Foreigners flexibly take up jobs that Slovaks are not interested in or qualified for. The measures under the Labour Mobility Scheme will help motivate and retain the necessary foreign workers, who will find employment in our country with different levels of education and experience.

Myth 7: There is not enough work even for Slovaks

Slovaks cannot meet the labour market demands without the assistance of foreign workers:

- **By 2025, the Slovak economy will need an additional 335 thousand persons. Approximately 75 % of these workers will replace people who retire, 25 % of vacant jobs will be created as a result of economic expansion, while graduates entering the labour market will cover approximately ¾ of the labour market demand for workforce.**³⁸
- **According to this forecast, the IT sector will need to employ an additional 13 thousand persons by 2025.**
- The Ministry of Health has estimated that there will be a shortage of more than 3 000 medical doctors and almost 10 000 nurses by 2030.³³ **According to statistics from the National Health Information Centre, as many as a quarter of medical doctors and one in three dentists in Slovakia are over 60 years old.** Due to the impact of the pandemic, the numbers may increase even further.³⁹
- According to a survey conducted by the Business Alliance of Slovakia and the INEKO institute (2018),

38 % of the companies surveyed were forced to refuse contracts due to a lack of workforce. At the same time, every second company considered the employment of foreign workers as a possible solution.⁴⁰

The measures under the Labour Mobility Scheme will also contribute to enabling foreign workers to complement their Slovak colleagues and help in sectors where it is needed.

” Why should our companies employ migrants? The government should support the creation of jobs for Slovaks. Pay for training courses and retraining programmes in companies.

Response: Slovakia needs to attract workers from abroad to selected sectors and positions in order to increase the economy’s competitiveness. Every quarter, the Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Employment publishes a list of the occupations that employers have been unable to fill by Slovaks. If vacant jobs remain unfilled, employers’ prospects get worse. If they cannot guarantee a workforce of the required size and structure, they cannot compete for new contracts or maintain their production. Employing foreigners also helps retain jobs for their Slovak colleagues. The employment of foreign workers is not the only solution to labour market needs and unfavourable demographic trends. In the long term, it is important, among other things, to build an education system that provides training in occupations and sectors needed on the labour market.

Myth 8: We do not need migrants, the Slovaks who left will come back

The return of Slovaks is one of the preferred forms of labour mobility in Slovakia. The Recovery and Resilience Plan for Slovakia also contains measures for the return of talented and qualified Slovaks who are working abroad.

- **By 2025, the Slovak economy will need a further 335 thousand persons.**

³⁷ Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family. Nedostatkové profesie v 1. štvrtroku 2021 [Shortage Occupations in the 1st Quarter of 2021], available at: https://www.upsvr.gov.sk/sluzby-zamestnanosti/zamestnavanie-cudzincov/zoznam-zamestnani-s-nedostatkom-pracovnej-sily.html?page_id=806803 (consulted on 1/4/2021)

³⁸ Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, Trexima, Národný projekt Prognózy vývoja na trhu práce v SR II, 2020, Potreby trhu práce na Slovensku do roku 2025 [National Project – Projections for the Labour Market in Slovakia II, 2020, Needs of the Labour Market in Slovakia by 2025], 2019, available at: <https://www.trendyprace.sk/sk/trendy-trhu-prace/sk-trendy/slovensko>, (consulted on 1/4/2021) note: the projection for additional workforce needs in the 2021-2025 period is updated to 05/2021.

³⁹ National Health Information Centre, Pracovníci v zdravotníctve v roku 2019 [Healthcare Workers in 2019], available at: <http://www.nczisk.sk/Aktuality/Pages/Pracovnici-v-zdravotnictve-Slovenskej-republiky-v-roku-2019.aspx> (consulted on 1/4/2021)

⁴⁰ Nedostatok zamestnancov riešia podnikatelia aj zamestnávaním cudzincov v SR. Podnikateľská aliancia Slovenska, 2018 [Lack of employees is solved by the entrepreneurs in Slovakia also with the employment of foreigners] available at: <https://www.alianciapas.sk/2018/04/27/prieskum-pas-a-ineko-o-zamestnavani-cudzincov-v-sr/> (consulted on 1/4/2021)

- For comparison, **more than 300 000 Slovaks left Slovakia** between 2000 and 2015. Even though, at that time, many of them were under 30 years of age and had a university education, we lack information and data on what their jobs are abroad and whether and under what circumstances they are considering returning to Slovakia.⁴¹
- The measures under the Plan are focused primarily on **Slovaks abroad**. Due to the lack of information, it is not possible to estimate the potential for or the size of such returns. It is therefore necessary to develop effective and transparent measures to attract **foreign workers of the required structure and qualifications**.

” If highly qualified Slovaks return home from abroad, will we no longer need to employ foreigners?

Response: That is very difficult to predict. Accurate data on Slovaks working abroad is hard to come by. We know that more than 300 000 Slovaks left Slovakia between 2000 and 2015 and the numbers may be even higher today. It is certainly important to reach out to our compatriots and inform them about interesting job opportunities and conditions under which they could start their own business or startup, or get involved in a scientific research project. However, highly qualified workers from abroad must be the second target group so that Slovakia can cope with the competition for talent and rely on a sufficient number of workforce in the required structure in the short term.

Myth 9: Migrants increase crime

Research and available data actually suggest the opposite. **The increasing number of foreigners has not had a significant impact on the overall crime rate in the country.**

- According to the statistics of the Ministry of the Interior, the **proportion of crime committed by foreigners was low in 2020 and is decreasing year-on-year**. Out of the total of 36 306 criminal offences closed in 2020, only 3 % (1 111) were committed by foreigners, most of whom were from the Czech Republic and Ukraine. These were mostly property and

economic offences. The overall crime rate for foreigners decreased by 0.48 % year-on-year.⁴²

- **Foreigners are also victims of crime.** However, they are less likely to report crime than the native population. This may be due to a lack of knowledge of the legal system, poor command of the Slovak language, or a lack of trust in or fear.

” People often associate immigration, especially ‘illegal’ immigration, with an increase in crime and a loss of a sense of security in their own country. Are there measures in the Scheme that can prevent this?

Response: Based on research and publicly available data, the concerns about an increase in violent crime or property crime associated with the arrival of foreigners can be considered unfounded. The crime rate for foreigners in Slovakia is decreasing year-on-year. The data clearly show that the crime rate has long been declining overall in Slovakia and is certainly not rising due to foreigners.

Foreigners risk much more than Slovaks by committing a crime. They can lose their work permit or be deported from the country. By adopting the Labour Mobility Scheme, we will not ‘recklessly open the door wide to all’ and allow for an unregulated influx of foreign workers without control. Rather the opposite – through managed migration, which is under control, we can ensure a safe process of the arrival of foreigners and their integration in the regions.

Myth 10: Migrants spread communicable diseases

This myth, which populists like to take advantage of, for example in connection with the spread of the coronavirus pandemic, is not based on truth.

- There has yet to be a case of migrants causing the spread of a disease in Slovakia.
- In most cases, **foreign worker from a non-EU country have to submit a medical opinion within 30 days of receiving their residence document** stating that they do not suffer from a disease posing a risk to public health.

⁴¹ Odliv mozgov po slovensky, Analýza odchodov Slovákov do zahraničia od roku 2000, Inštitút finančnej politiky Ministerstva financií SR, 2017 [Brain drain in Slovakia: Analysis of Slovak emigration since 2000] available at: <https://www.mfsr.sk/sk/media/komentare-ifp-uhp/odliv-mozgov-po-slovensky-januar-2017.html> (consulted on 1/4/2021)

⁴² Štatistika kriminality v Slovenskej republike za rok 2020, Ministry of the Interior, Statistics on crime in the Slovak Republic, available: https://www.minv.sk/?statistika_kriminality_v_slovenskej_republike_za_rok_2020_xml

- If they fail to submit the medical opinion on time, the Aliens Police cancels their residence.
- Even though some accommodation facilities were quarantined during the coronavirus pandemic, these were precautionary measures to prevent the spread of the virus, just as in any other confined space where larger numbers of people are present. Those accommodation facilities are not only used by foreigners, but also Slovaks.

Example of a question and answer (city official/employer representative):

” *We have information that measures to prevent the spread of the coronavirus are not being followed in a facility which also accommodates foreigners. Can you confirm that health officials have recommended that that part of the facility be quarantined?*

Response: Let us set the record straight. In our accommodation facility, we require that all sanitary regulations are followed, not only by the guests, but also by the staff. A person who tests positive is immediately isolated. We act in coordination with both the local government and the regional office of the Public Health Authority. Negatively tested close contacts remain in quarantine in the facility and are repeatedly tested. We have set aside one section of the facility just for these purposes.

2.4. Creating new narratives through human stories

Myth-busting alone is not so effective in influencing views and changing thinking and behaviour. Substantial evidence indicates that creating new narratives around social cohesion and community stability and common issues and interests of all community members, including migrants, is more effective than reacting to the far right in debates on toxic narratives.

There is abundant evidence that the most effective way to communicate with governments and the public in the current political context is not through the delivery of facts alone, but using the insights of motivated reasoning and behavioural science where information takes into account target audience’s existing views, values and concerns relating to culture, socio-economic and security issues in ways that resonate with them.

This can be done through emotive human stories that people see themselves in and relate to and where government policies are needed to reach mutually beneficial outcomes. There is an unprecedented window of opportunity with the visibility of migrants contributions as essential workers in European societies during the COVID-19 lockdowns.

This way the “movable middle” population community can be specifically targeted. Most people are neither pro- nor anti-immigration but fall somewhere in between, termed the “anxious,” “conflicted,” or “movable” middle. Such people tend not to have strong ideological preferences but are united by common values and beliefs. They are usually relatively open to changing their views about immigration – hence they are ‘movable’ – but they also have genuine concerns.

The stories can be designed based on the research, identifying the concerns of Slovakia’s “moveable middle” and the type of communication that is most effective with them. An inspiration for the stories can be the ‘It Takes a Community’ (ITAC) platform⁴³ designed to increase public awareness of migrants’ contributions to society by mobilizing, supporting, amplifying and facilitating initiatives and organizational and individual efforts to support community engagement and communications and to provide a positive, media-friendly and forward-looking framework for diverse and key actors. It fosters a more balanced public discourse about migration, through showcasing individuals’ stories of social inclusion and building on sentiments of community and solidarity. It also fosters positive relations between migrants and host communities by providing important information about contributions, activities and actions, good practice to support communities in COVID-19 response and recovery.



⁴³ For more information see: <https://www.ittakesacomunity.org/all-stories> (consulted on 1/6/2021)

3

COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVES

What you will learn in this chapter

- How to explain the topic of labour mobility and the benefits of the Labour Mobility Scheme
- How to achieve acceptance of the Scheme through arguments and messages
- How we reach out to foreign workers – the beneficiaries of the new Scheme

The communication objectives are based on the priorities set jointly by the representatives of the relevant agencies and organisations when drafting the Labour Mobility Scheme. They take into account the needs of the social partners, local government and the professional and, ultimately, general public, to whom the topic of labour mobility is addressed.

The Labour Mobility Scheme pursues five basic objectives:

- reducing the administrative burden on government authorities, foreign workers and employers,
- speeding up processes and faster entry of foreign workers to the labour market,
- systematic, transparent and predictable decision-making by government authorities,
- simplifying the system and bringing all the procedures together into a harmonious whole,
- active participation by social partners.

At the same time, the communication objectives have to correspond to the needs of the two key communication phases:

 **PRIOR TO THE APPROVAL OF THE LABOUR MOBILITY SCHEME**

It coincides with the period when we will promote the need for adopting the Labour Mobility Scheme and the measures proposed under the Scheme as an effective and functional system to manage labour mobility at the level of the government and the ministries concerned, during the interministerial consultation exercise and the process of approval of the Scheme in the National Council.

 **AFTER THE APPROVAL OF THE LABOUR MOBILITY SCHEME**

The Scheme as a whole or its individual measures will be adopted and gradually put into practice. In this phase, there are two parallel communications: communication that takes place in Slovakia and communication that is abroad. Since one of the target groups are potential foreign workers who have no previous experience with the Slovak labour market or the country, a targeted communication campaign designed according to the set criteria (selected countries, occupations or sectors) is also justified at this stage.

 **PRIOR TO THE APPROVAL OF THE LABOUR MOBILITY SCHEME**

Therefore, the objectives of the first communication phase ‘Prior to the approval of the Labour’ should be as follows:

1. COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVE

Explain the benefits of labour mobility and the Labour Mobility Scheme itself in a clear and factual manner

WHAT WE NEED TO COMMUNICATE TO MEET THE OBJECTIVE

- **Foreign labour mobility is practically the fastest and most effective way** to meet labour market needs in the event of a shortage of available workforce, whether in general or in specific occupations.
- **It is supported by all European Union countries and Slovakia is no exception.**
- **Slovakia is an open and safe country**, where the measures and rules under the Scheme make it **easier** for foreign workers **to navigate through** the available positions, their rights and obligations, and opportunities for employment.
- The **Labour Mobility Scheme is based on the measures adopted under the Strategy for Labour Mobility of Foreigners** in Slovakia from 2018. The document supports simplification of the arrival and integration of high- and low-skilled workers from non-EU countries in Slovakia, especially for the purpose of employment.
- The **Labour Mobility Scheme is Slovakia’s response to the need to attract and retain top performing talents in strategic sectors** and shortage occupations, with an emphasis on the fields of healthcare, science and research, IT and social services.
- **The Scheme is a systemic solution for managed labour mobility. It is set up in a functional, transparent and clear way**, thus responding not only to the current needs of the labour market, but also to the

need for transformation of certain sectors and services in the future. At the same time, it will allow for better configuration of the related systems for retraining the unemployed, education, acquisition of new skills and career growth.

- When preparing the Labour Mobility Scheme, **the structural changes needed in the long term were**

not ignored. These include reforming education and linking it to the needs of the labour market and supporting innovation and competence centres, excellent science, applied research, start-ups and others.

- In the long term, the measures proposed in the Scheme may contribute to **mitigating the impacts of the negative demographic trends.**

2. COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVE

Emphasise the rationale for adopting the Labour Mobility Scheme as an effective and predictable system of measures that addresses the common needs of government authorities, employers and the beneficiaries themselves – i.e. foreign workers – related to managed labour mobility.

WHAT WE NEED TO COMMUNICATE TO MEET THE OBJECTIVE

The Labour Mobility Scheme:

- **introduces no new measures in Slovakia** that would be at the expense of the common rules on labour mobility applicable in the EU,
- **discusses standard types of measures** relating to the granting of residency permits, work permits and visas that are in line with European rules,
- **it will explain the measures accelerating labour market entry for both shortage and high-skilled occupations, technical measures and incentive measures to attract foreign workers to Slovakia, which form part of the Scheme,**
- **reduce administrative burden for all levels involved** – government authorities, employers and foreign workers,
- **improve the transparency and attractiveness of the system for both foreign workers and employers,**
- **help Slovakia improve the factors that currently disqualify it from the competition for talent and prevent the country from being more competitive** in attracting projects and investments with higher added value,
- **help Slovakia in addressing shortage, expert and highly specialised occupations,** which we have long not been able to fill using domestic human resources,
- **also responds to the fact that Slovaks** continue to have low motivation to move for work between more distant regions, which the measures that have been taken to increase domestic mobility have not changed,
- **guarantees that the criteria for recognising qualifications or professional competence will not be made less strict** – the process will only be made faster and more transparent so that Slovakia does not lose the people it needs,
- **will improve the integration of foreign workers and their families into the labour market and Slovak society,**
- **communicates the roles and involvement of the various partners at the level of government, local government, trade unions, and employers’ unions and associations,**
- **through motivational measures and proposals for bilateral cooperation in the field of labour mobility,** it will make it possible **to attract the necessary foreign workers** to come to Slovakia.

3. COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVE

Manage the concerns of the professional and general public, especially about the arrival of foreign workers, their integration and issues that this topic will bring up in the public discourse

WHAT WE NEED TO COMMUNICATE TO MEET THE OBJECTIVE

- **By adopting the Labour Mobility Scheme, ‘the door will not be recklessly open wide to all,’** Rather the opposite. This is a **managed, controlled and safe process** of admission and integration of foreigners (cooperation between the government and local governments),

- The aim is to **attract foreign workers who will stay longer in the country** and help raise its standard of living,
- **It will be easier to deal with the impacts of the pandemic thanks to the Scheme's transparent**

system – workers will be reached out to according to the needs of individual sectors and services and the required skills.



AFTER THE APPROVAL OF THE LABOUR MOBILITY SCHEME

The objectives of the second communication phase 'After the approval of the Scheme' should be as follows:

COMMUNICATION IN SLOVAKIA

1. COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVE

Summary of benefits that the Scheme will bring to the labour market and prospectively to Slovakia

WHAT WE NEED TO COMMUNICATE TO MEET THE OBJECTIVE

- Thanks to implementing the individual measures, the new Scheme will provide the labour market environment with a system that **will be motivating, predictable, transparent and less administratively complex than at present.**
- **Transparent motivational measures proposed in the Scheme for foreign workers from non-EU countries**, which can be communicated by the individual communicators at the level of the responsible government departments, agencies, employers and local government officials (supported by a functional communication platform and appropriate communication channels, backed up by a communication campaign).
- In respect of **integration**, the Labour Mobility Scheme **presents measures that are concrete and feasible** and are based on the needs, existing initiatives and activities of actors who can also put them into practice.
- **Real-life stories of companies** that have benefited from the Scheme's measures. They have recruited foreign workers, completed their teams, maintained their business operations or been able to advance new projects.

2. COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVE

Impacts of individual measures

WHAT WE NEED TO COMMUNICATE TO MEET THE OBJECTIVE

Five specific aspects that will be improved thanks to the measures adopted:

- **shortened time limits for granting temporary residence and work permits** from 3 to 6 months to a few weeks (thanks to changes in the system of cooperation between government authorities)
- **simplification of how proof of qualifications is provided**
- **the introduction of a uniform identifier for foreigners** (thus preventing re-registration of the same person in the register of natural persons under different identification numbers)
- **allowing family members with temporary residence to work** for the purpose of family reunification, without additional permits as an incentive for foreign workers to move to SK
- **simplification of the process of reporting foreign workers** by employers and elimination of the administrative burden on other actors involved in the approval system

COMMUNICATION ABROAD

The competition for talent and workers in shortage occupations is intensifying. Like other European countries, Slovakia is aware of the need to reach out selectively to a sufficient number of foreign workers with the necessary qualifications to complement the domestic workforce suitably. Effective labour mobility systems are used for this purpose, which are presented, inter alia, in the form of comprehensive communication campaigns.

This document does not replace the process of drafting, preparing or implementing the campaign itself. It only lists the key points that should be included in the campaign.

The beneficiaries of the Scheme are foreign workers who are considering new job opportunities in another country than their own. We need them to learn about Slovakia as a country that can appeal to and attract them. At the same time, we need them to learn as much as possible about the adopted measures, which can help them in making their decision.

If Slovakia **wants to attract a sufficient number of experts and talents in a suitable structure, it has to prepare an attractive offer for the selected target group** in countries with sufficient skilled workforce in the structure that the Slovak labour market needs.

Slovakia was the country of first choice for only 41 % of the foreign workers currently living in Slovakia, who were interviewed in the survey conducted by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in the context of preparing the Scheme. As many as 85.4 % of them considered Slovakia attractive in terms of job opportunities and everyday life, and wanted to stay here.⁴⁴

1. COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVE

Country branding

WHAT WE NEED TO COMMUNICATE TO MEET THE OBJECTIVE

- **Selected attributes of the country** – why Slovakia
- **Reasons to come to work in Slovakia** (e.g.)
 - A safe euro area country
 - Upcoming reforms in digitalisation in various sectors
 - Regional leader in the number of industrial robots installed per employee in the industry (International Federation of Robotics), but also in the ability of the workforce to adopt and adapt to new technologies (World Economic Forum)
 - A dynamic sector of start-ups, innovative solutions and pilot projects

2. COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVE

Arousing interest in working and living in Slovakia

WHAT WE NEED TO COMMUNICATE TO MEET THE OBJECTIVE

- **Incentive measures and integration stimuli**
- **Occupations sought and an overview of job offers**
- **Examples of successful companies** that are prospering and growing thanks to the employment of foreigners

⁴⁴ Data from the 2020 IOM survey on a sample of 352 respondents, foreign workers from non-EU countries who have worked in the last two years or are still working in Slovakia. For more information see the Labour Mobility Scheme Research Reports Compendium.

It is a good idea to raise the following questions when preparing the communication campaign:

- Which countries can be expected to have available workforce in a structure that corresponds not only to the current, but also to the future needs of the Slovak labour market?⁴⁵
- What are Slovakia’s plans in respect of bilateral cooperation aimed at labour mobility? What instruments does it intend to use (e.g. Skills Mobility Partnerships)?⁴⁶
- What do other Member States offer to reach out to workers in key shortage occupations? How does Slovakia intend to differentiate itself from others?
- Is the Slovak offer sufficiently targeted? Can it appeal to both talents and workers in shortage occupations?
- Which of the Labour Mobility Scheme measures do we need to emphasise?
- How do we formulate the relocation and other incentive measures?
- How will we measure the success of the campaign? The number of people reached versus the number of CVs sent/interviews completed and, in the long term, the number of foreign workers holding a job and integrated in Slovakia?

The Labour Mobility Scheme (or some of its measures) is an ideal opportunity for **creating an effective job search web portal for foreigners**⁴⁷ in several languages and for presenting Slovakia as a country that seeks and attracts foreign workers in shortage occupations and high-skilled experts by means of incentive measures.

3.1. Communication principles

As stated in the introductory sections, migration is a natural part of human existence. **It is an opportunity, not a threat.** It is important for the receiving country to recognise and make the most of the potential of the people arriving in it.

It is important to talk about managed mobility and the ‘Scheme’ in a **factual and pragmatic manner. We should be able to back up our messages with easy-to-understand facts and arguments.**

It needs to be emphasised that labour migration is managed so that the arrival of foreign workers is

mutually beneficial for the country, which wants to focus more on a knowledge-based economy and be able to look after its ageing population, **and for the workers** who want to stay in Slovakia because they have found job opportunities and a supportive environment in it.

The communication must be:

- **consistent** so that the main actors involved in expert discussions communicate with partners, the media and the general public in a coherent manner;
- **concrete** so that the main actors can convincingly explain the impacts and benefits of labour mobility.

If the discussion takes a manipulative turn or becomes emotional, effort should be made to take it back to a neutral, pragmatic and factual tone as quickly as possible. Principles of formal debate to moderate constructive conversations between people with totally opposing views could be helpful.

Hypothetical situation:

At a roundtable discussion, the IOM representative presented one of the Scheme measures – regional support centres for the integration of foreigners, which help with the adaptation of foreign workers in a new country.

A participant joined the discussion with an **emotionally tinged argument:** *“You are just wasting money, they’re all just unadaptable migrants who don’t even work properly!”*

The discussion needs to be brought back to a factual tone. We will choose a factual response using the following argument:

” *“ Let me share with you the reasons that brought us to set up these centers. There are almost 70 000 foreigners working in Slovakia who pay taxes and insurance contributions to the national budget.*

⁴⁵ See more detailed recommendations in Chapter 2 of the document The Labor Mobility Scheme for Slovakia.

⁴⁶ Definition of “Skills Mobility Partnerships” Skills mobility Partnership (SMPs), used in the Recommendations for bilateral agreements in the field of labor mobility in Chapter 2 Labor Mobility Scheme for Slovakia: Skills mobility partnerships are considered agreements between states that bring countries closer together in the thematic area, in the field of work, employment, education and mobility / migration through intensive multi-stakeholder cooperation, including national governments, employers, trade unions and civil society, in order to develop skills and benefit from human capital migration while maintaining the highest protection of workers’ rights.

⁴⁷ Examples of reference websites are provided in the Annex.

At the same time, many of them work in professions in which there is a shortage of workers in Slovakia because they leave abroad or retire. Helping someone who has come to work in a new country is nothing extraordinary. It is an investment which will pay off over time in the form of well-integrated foreign workers and a well-functioning and prosperous society. Other developed countries are doing the same because we are all trying to attract workers to jobs for which we have no domestic applicants. And as for the term migrant: I am convinced that almost all of us sitting here know someone who left abroad in the past and is now living and working there. I am sure none of us would want their colleagues and neighbours to call them unadaptable migrants because they have for example difficulties speaking the Slovak language."

- The Scheme **does not jeopardise jobs, it suitably fills positions that are vacant**
- At the same time, the Scheme measures will enable the **government and public administrations to adopt harmonised and evidence-based, data-driven measures.**

The **Labour Mobility Scheme is an opportunity** to present to Slovakia that the recruitment of foreign workers **does not have to be driven only by the current labour market demand**, but it can also be an active tool for attracting high-skilled and talented foreign professionals of whom there will be a shortage within the period of several years.

The Scheme itself is an **important policy instrument to promote labour mobility in order for Slovakia to participate more successfully in 'brain circulation'.**

- **The objective of the measures under the Scheme is to meet the needs of the Slovak labour market flexibly by workers in the desired structure and with the desired qualifications and competences.**



4

COMMUNICATORS AND TARGET GROUPS

What you will learn in this chapter

- Who formulates and communicates the messages
- What the target groups within the political, professional and general public are and how we address them

4.1. Communicators of the Labour Mobility Scheme

Many experts from government authorities, local government, employers' associations and trade unions with many years of experience in preparing legislative frameworks governing labour mobility, employment of foreign workers or their integration contributed their expertise to the drafting of the individual measures under the Scheme.

Who are the communicators of the topic of labour mobility and the Scheme itself?

- Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family
- Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs
- Government and public authorities and agencies
- Employers' associations and unions
- Trade unions and professional organisations
- Local government representatives
- International Organization for Migration (IOM) and its Migration Information Centre (MIC IOM)

- Non-governmental organisations
- Communities of foreigners living in Slovakia

Natural ambassadors of the topic of labour mobility, who are able to articulate the impact of individual measures and their practicability through concrete examples, can also support the communicators. Hence, they can support the key communicators in their efforts to promote the Scheme.

These include:

- Employers (by sector/region)
- Local government officials (with real-life examples of good practice)
- Regional and local authorities and their associations
- Schools and universities
- Analysts and expert authorities
- Hospital directors
- Representatives of social service facilities



4.2. Target groups

We divide the target groups according to the communication phase of the Scheme that we are in.

PRIOR TO APPROVAL OF THE SCHEME

The phase ‘**Prior to approval of the Scheme**’ is key for discussing the Strategy for promoting the Labour Mobility Scheme and generating support for the adoption of the Scheme from individual stakeholders. The main target groups in this phase include:

- **The relevant departments of the Ministry of Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family**
A special position is held by the authority responsible for drafting the Scheme – the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, which will present the Scheme and its measures to the cabinet, but which also has a coordinating function in communicating the plan to implement the Scheme and the individual measures to the professional public and social partners
- **The relevant departments of the ministries involved**, which are directly involved in the presentation of the Scheme to foreign workers and its implementation in practice Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs.
- **The parliamentary committees**, to which the Scheme and the explanatory memorandum will be submitted.
- **Representatives of government and public authorities** together with other entities invited to comment on the drafts, which have not been actively involved in the preparation of the Scheme but will comment on it in the context of the legislative process.
- **Analysts and expert authorities** who will comment on the Scheme and analyse its impact, at least from the moment the document is submitted to the cabinet.
- **The media** will cover the topic and invite key communicators to discussions. During this period, the topic may be misinterpreted and disseminated in social media and, depending on the situation, it will be necessary to evaluate what to respond to and what not to respond to.

At this communication phase, the communicators should ideally work together to complement each other’s arguments, to address their audiences in a convincing and credible manner, and take advantage of the communication opportunities. At the same time, ambassadors will join in and support communicators with their real-life examples.

AFTER APPROVAL OF THE SCHEME

In the phase ‘**After approval of the Scheme**’

When communicating the Scheme in Slovakia, the following actors need to learn about it:

- **Foreign workers** from non-EU countries who are **already working in Slovakia** and **potential workers who need to be reached out to through active marketing.**
They can also be reached out to by employers or communities of foreigners living in Slovakia. Those who are abroad can be informed about the Scheme through job fairs, the network of embassies, chambers of commerce, websites, etc.
- **Non-governmental organisations** that support foreign workers in their integration into the everyday life of the community, city or municipality. They have an active role precisely in the communication of new integration measures.
- **Professional institutions, employer associations and trade unions, which** are frequently approached by the media asking them what they think about and how satisfied they are with the final form of the Scheme.
- **Analysts, expert authorities and the media,**
- that will comment on the final form of the Scheme and the impacts of the individual measures.

The attractive offering of measures will be disseminated abroad with the help from:

- **Slovak embassies** in selected countries through their trade and economics counsellors
- **Representatives of companies** at business fora, job fairs and corporate events
- **Scientists and scientific workers** (who have experience with working in international teams)
- **Chambers of commerce, SARIO and SIEA**
- **Universities** and educational institutions
- **Foreign media** and portals promoting interesting job offers abroad
- **Local partners** – non-governmental organisations, office of international organization, a communication agency in the target country

One important goal is to ensure that the information about the measures gets to the beneficiaries – foreign workers who will then want to learn more about the job opportunities and the way of life in Slovakia.

5

STRATEGIC NARRATIVE AND COMMUNICATION MESSAGES

What you will learn in this chapter

- How to create a strategic narrative and supporting communication messages
- What not to forget when creating the messages
- Why it is necessary to choose the right means of expression

A strategic narrative is actually a story that defines the key facts, values and messages that your institution stands behind or promotes through the Labour Mobility Scheme.

The **narrative** that emerged from a **workshop** with several communicators of the Labour Mobility Scheme organised during the preparatory phase of the Communication Strategy is formulated as follows:

There are long-term vacancies on the Slovak labour market that cannot be filled by those who are currently unemployed, by retrained people or by students. This is due to a lack of workers with the required qualifications and skills.

In order to help the economy recover from the pandemic, kick-start its growth and keep key sectors, including healthcare and social services, functioning, it is essential to promote managed labour mobility.

Managed labour mobility and an efficient process of granting residence and work permits will bring a qualified workforce in the necessary structure to Slovakia.

These people will fill the vacant positions in strategic manufacturing and service sectors and help in the provision of care to us and our loved ones in hospitals or social service facilities. They will help Slovakia in research and development, and the advancement of information technologies, help increase its competitiveness, GDP growth and standard of living, and mitigate the impacts of unfavourable economic developments.

Each of the communicators has their own internal motivation and need to support the Labour Mobility Scheme. Hence, they can add a communication message to the strategic narrative that is relevant from their particular perspective (or nature of their ministry or institution).

Example of a sub-narrative and message:

” *In order to develop the economy and raise the standard of living of the population, we need measures that will help us also develop new sectors with a higher added value, science, research and innovations. To be able to do this, we need a more flexible system of managed labour mobility so that we do not fall behind in the global competition for talent.*

Thanks to the Labour Mobility Scheme, we can swiftly and effectively address workforce shortages with workers in the structure and with the qualifications we need. At the same time, it gives us an overview of who is coming to our country, whether they meet the set criteria and how they integrate.

Not only the pandemic, but also shortage occupations and ageing professions, such as medical doctors, healthcare staff/nurses and carers – show us that healthcare and the social security system are heavily dependent on the help of professionals and qualified workers from abroad. Managed labour mobility will help Slovakia to be healthier.

Thanks to the Labour Mobility Scheme, we have better data on foreign workers who come to our cities and municipalities. This allows us to better plan capacities and budgets and, overall, respond to their needs as they integrate into society.

Thanks to new measures adopted under the Labour Mobility Scheme, family members of foreign workers can also find employment more flexibly. This keeps together whole families who ultimately support regional trade and services through their consumption to a much greater extent than in the case of individuals.

When preparing opinions or statements, it is important to be aware of the fact that:

- The **strategic narrative** is the central story that we support by additional communication messages depending on who we are addressing and what situation they are in.
- **We create and come up with the story first.** We do not wait for it to come from the outside. That is why it is an essential building block of proactive communication.
- **There must be only one** strategic narrative on a single topic **and all responsible communicators should stick to it in the long term.** Inconsistency compromises credibility.
- **People more easily remember stories and values they can identify with** (caring for family, security, work). Facts and well-constructed arguments may suffice in an internal professional discussion. However, it is also a good idea to develop the narrative into a **strong story that explains more complex concepts and the Labour Mobility Scheme itself.**

- **Parables, analogies or stories of individuals or groups** can be used where appropriate, thereby enhancing the credibility, delivery and **understanding of the information being conveyed**.

Preparation is an important part of successful communication in good times and a key part in crisis management.

It is also useful and necessary to answer the following questions when preparing communication messages:

- **Who am I communicating with?** Have I clearly defined the target groups?
- **What am I communicating?** Am I outlining the background of and providing rationale for the whole Scheme, or am I going to explain a particular measure?
- **What am I using to communicate?** What are the main communication tools and channels in the case of my target group? Where can the target group be most often found? Which media or authorities does it trust?
- **How do I communicate?** Is my communication comprehensible to my target audience?
- **Who are the other communicators?** Have we aligned our narratives with other authorities or agencies that are also publicly commenting on the Labour Mobility Scheme? Are we coordinating our responses?

5.1. Choosing the right means of expression

It is important to use appropriate terms and concepts when communicating the Labour Mobility Scheme. Terms that may sound judgemental need to be avoided and replaced with neutral and positive examples that emphasise togetherness and humanity.

The communicator should ideally prepare a list of terms that are not recommended for use in the context of communicating the Scheme thus avoiding unnecessary misunderstandings and misinterpretations.

For example, the term 'migrant' should not be used in the context of the Scheme's measures as it is often wrongly perceived with a negative connotation; instead, use the terms foreign worker, foreign workforce or working foreigner. Labour migration can be replaced equally with the term labour mobility in the context of the Scheme's measures. Explain the support for labour mobility in the meaning of labour migration.

Open communication and engagement of new communicators on the topic of labour mobility through the Labour Mobility Scheme can help gradually counterbalance some of the negative attitudes that this topic brings with it into the media space.



A man with a beard and glasses, wearing a dark suit and a patterned tie, is looking down at a document he is holding. He is in a meeting room with other people in the background. The entire image has a red overlay.

6 PROACTIVE AND REACTIVE COMMUNICATION

What you will learn in this chapter

- What the proactive and reactive approach in communication is
- Suggested tools, tactics and opportunities for communication

6.1. Proactive approach: because prevention is better than cure

Proactive communication using strategic narratives provides a **first-mover advantage**. Your messages will occupy the minds of your target audiences first. You are not left to merely respond to and explain the manipulations and misinformation created by others. You create your story and come up with it first.

Challenges:

- it is helpful to think ahead and have the situation and the mindset of the target groups well-mapped
- make the right arguments and use the right stories
- it takes determination, capacity and perseverance

Opportunities:

- as a reward, the target groups will be more resistant to negative influences – your ideas are the first to reach them
- you set the narrative, the themes, the key messages – you are not just dragged along in the tow of events and you have more time for preparation

Example of a proactive narrative:

” *In order to help the economy recover from the pandemic, kick-start its growth and ensure that the key sectors, including healthcare and social services, are functioning, we need to promote managed labour mobility the same way our neighbouring EU countries do.*

Slovakia suffers from workforce shortages in certain sectors. Due to the structure of the workforce and the labour market needs, it has proven impossible to meet this demand by the available unemployed, retrained persons or those who are studying. According to one scenario, the Slovak economy will need an additional workforce of around 335 000 persons by 2025.

The measures under the Labour Mobility Scheme will help motivate and retain the necessary foreign workers with different levels of education and experience.

In Section 3.1 Communication Principles, we have also provided recommendations how to support these arguments.

6.2. Reactive approach: correct response can earn you plus points

In this case, you are responding to topics and narratives that have already been established. **Even if you are at a strategic disadvantage, with a well-chosen response you can change people's thinking and win them over to your side.** You are in a worse position in that the topics and communication messages are established (at least initially) by your counterpart, not by you.

Challenges:

- you find yourself in the tow of your counterpart's narratives, to which you are forced to respond, and you are in a position that makes it more difficult to take the initiative
- many institutions underestimate preparation – yet, you can prepare yourself for many scenarios and narratives in advance
- it is harder to keep one's head cool – you are under greater stress and your reaction may be ill-considered or exaggerated
- it is more difficult to evaluate how and whether to react at all;
- in this case, too, you need to convince your superiors and colleagues that your response makes sense and that you have chosen the right course of action.

Opportunities:

- a well-chosen response can mobilise your target group and incite them to change their minds or join your side

Example of a reactive narrative:

” *The concerns about an increase in violent or property crime associated with the arrival of foreigners can be considered unfounded. The crime rate for foreigners in Slovakia is decreasing year-on-year. The data clearly show that the crime rate has long been declining overall in Slovakia and is certainly not rising due to foreigners. Thanks to the Labour Mobility Scheme, we have an overview of who is coming, whether they meet the set criteria and how they integrate into society.*

The argument that migrants distort the labour market and drive down wages does not hold water. Wage growth is more affected by the added value of labour and the policies and conditions created by the government than by the employment of foreigners.

Wages may be distorted by unprofessional employers or recruitment agencies that circumvent legislation and do not operate ethically. A transparent system of managed labour mobility encouraging, among other things, ethical recruitment of foreign workers, can change this.

Examples of responses, along with supporting arguments, were provided in section 2.3 Hoaxes and Myths Associated with Migrants.

6.3. Preparation for responding

The preparation and approval of statements may take some time in a crisis situation. Therefore, **it is advisable**

to have general statements prepared in advance that are available for communicating the Scheme and can be easily adapted to the specific occasion.

When formulating the statements, it is important to consider what information about a particular organisation/institution or topic is circulating and what stories and narratives support that information. This depends on how the particular organisation/institution is perceived by the various target groups.

How does each statement contribute to the messages you want to spread, especially in relation to the various target groups? Statements supported by positive stories and specific impacts of the Scheme may play an important role in building overall resilience to misleading and false information.

6.4. Specific suggestions for proactive and reactive communication

In this section, we will present the suggested communication messages, tactics, tools and opportunities for communication for each of the key communicators and ambassadors of the Labour Mobility Scheme, both prior to and after the adoption of the Scheme. **If several communicators (communicators from multiple government departments, the private sector and ambassadors) become involved, a prerequisite for successful communication is the necessary cooperation, coordination and sharing of information about possible communication opportunities and inquiries from the media.**

A: Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family

Since they are responsible for drafting the Scheme, the key officials of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family will be the first to explain and defend the need to adopt the individual measures under the Labour Mobility Scheme.

A pool of arguments with specific examples will help them communicate the topic in a long-term, consistent manner and gain support from other communicators and ambassadors.

The MLSAF SR has past experience with communicating the Strategy for Labour Mobility of Foreigners, which was adopted in 2018.



COMMUNICATION PRIOR TO APPROVAL OF THE SCHEME

Example of a sub-narrative and message:

” *The Labour Mobility Scheme is not and should not be the ultimate answer to all the challenges and needs of the labour market. Its purpose is to address workforce shortages, swiftly and effectively, with workers in the structure and with the qualifications we need.*

At the same time, it gives us an overview of who is coming, whether they meet the set criteria and how they integrate into society.

Not only the pandemic, but also shortage occupations and ageing professions, such as medical doctors, healthcare staff/ nurses and carers, show us that both healthcare and the social security system are heavily dependent on the help of professionals and qualified workers from abroad. Managed labour mobility will help Slovakia to be healthier.

Proactive communication:

Tools and tactics:

1. Preparation of a pool of arguments⁴⁸ in cooperation with employers' unions and associations. It contains a summary of the most important arguments provided by employers: what obstacles they face when employing foreign workers; which of the shortage occupations reported to the Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family they have been unable to fill on a long-term basis; selected labour market trends and projections with data on jobs unfilled by Slovaks; which measures under the Labour Mobility Scheme they consider to be key and feasible in the short and medium term; employers' examples of good practice in reaching out to foreign workers or experiences from campaigns for selected professions abroad

The **pool of argument** could be published on the Ministry's website in the section dedicated to the Scheme during the approval process, so that it can be accessed by the professional public who will also provide their input, for example, during the ICE. The most important points will be converted into **clear infographics** that the communicators will share on the Ministry's website and official social media profiles, letting others know that they are working with other departments on measures that are driven by data and specific labour market needs. The infographics can be used by the Ministry's communicators in media partnerships and appearances.

2. Answers to the potentially most frequently asked questions and messaging prepared for these questions (also in the context of the preparation of the Scheme and suggestions from social partners)

Preparation for the topics raised by the questions and for answers to possible suggestions from social partners, the professional public or the media.

Q&As will start to be compiled during the preparatory discussions on the draft measures and selected sections may also be shared with other departments and Scheme communicators. During the process of approval of the individual

measures under the Scheme, this internal document will also be used to prepare the Ministry's officials for discussions and expert roundtables.

3. Five main impacts of the adoption of the Scheme on the labour market and the national budget⁴⁹

Why are we promoting these groups of measures?

What impact will the adoption of the measures have on the labour market (support for structural changes, occupation of shortage professions, attracting talents)?

Brief description and quantification of the funding allocated for each group of measures and how the funding is covered in the national budget, the Recovery and Resilience Plan or structural funds.

4. Overview of the benefits of similar schemes in other EU countries

Data to support the argument that competition for talent is global and that Slovakia will be no exception if it adopts the Labour Mobility Scheme.

Experience from selected EU countries that have similar measures in place and have measured their impact. Opinions from renowned international experts.

Opportunities for communication:

- 1. A series of blogs, prepared in advance**, with key officials of ministries who clearly explain the 'five reasons why the Scheme'
- 2. Media appearances** – an interview with a state secretary on the Scheme, accompanied by responses from other communicators involved in the preparation of the Scheme
- 3. A roundtable** with the key stakeholders who are, together with the ministry, preparing the draft Scheme. Communication of the benefits of the scheme in terms of the needs of the Slovak economy, employers, cities and municipalities, and trade unions. Clearly presented arguments in support of the Scheme.
- 4. Joint presentation by MLSAF SR and Ministry of Health officials** with representatives of professional associations of medical doctors, nurses and providers of social services

⁴⁸ When the Labour Mobility Strategy was being adopted in 2018, the Business Alliance of Slovakia and the INEKO Institute gave their support to the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family when they presented the results of a survey in which 38% of companies said that they were forced to refuse contracts due to a lack of workforce. At the same time, every second company wanted to address this problem by employing foreign workers. For more information see: <https://www.alianciapas.sk/2018/04/27/prieskum-pas-a-ineko-o-zamestnavani-cudzincov-v-sr/> (consulted on 1/4/2021)

⁴⁹ See the section on the 'Key challenges in respect of labour mobility' on p. 9, 10 and the 'Five specific aspects that will be improved thanks to the measures adopted', p. 25

(facts on the shortage of healthcare professionals, retirement projections for these professions, the number of foreign workers working in hospitals and social service facilities)

Reactive communication:

Tools and tactics:

1. **Monitoring of the media and social networks**, following the discussions and setting up an ‘alert system’
2. **A general reactive prepared statements on the Scheme, which can be later supplemented**

3. Updated overview of shortage occupations, a check of the information portals of the Central Office of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, ISTP.sk

Opportunities for communication:

1. **MLSAF SR’s Facebook page**, on which it will publish the reactive statement
2. **Response for the media** – a statement prepared in advance, sent out to news agencies and the relevant media

PRIOR TO APPROVAL OF THE SCHEME

Example of a sub-narrative and message:

” Thanks to the new measures adopted under the Labour Mobility Scheme, we have simplified the process of employing healthcare professionals – medical doctors, nurses and carers. We have enabled medical doctors and nurses to perform qualified activities in hospitals while waiting for their professional qualifications to be recognised. We have introduced common standards for examination boards, made information on training seminars clearer and modified the fees for supplementary examination, which are now comparable to those in the neighbouring countries. And thanks to this, we live a healthier and better life today.

Proactive communication:

Tools and tactics:

1. **Infographics on the Scheme’s impacts** on the labour market
2. **Update of the content on the website promoting the Scheme:** stories of companies that have found new employees and started new projects thanks to the Scheme measures
3. **Interviews with representatives of the MLSAF SR** and other agencies about **progress in putting the measures into practice**
4. **Launch of a web portal promoting the Scheme abroad**
A communication portal (named according to the campaign’s creative content), which will be the main information platform for reaching out to potential workers: it integrates all relevant information for foreigners seeking a job in Slovakia and is linked to the MIC IOM website, including the ISTP (search for job vacancies suitable for foreigners, in foreign languages)

The site may include a chatbot for quick Q&As, an element which has proven useful in navigating job seekers

5. **Blog in the Slovak Spectator newspaper**
regular information about the measures adopted under the Scheme and their impacts

Opportunities for communication:

1. **A discussion in the RTVS show ‘5 minutes to 12’** to present the Labour Mobility Scheme
2. **A roundtable with experts** – What changes with the adoption of the Scheme. A media briefing under the auspices of the International Organization for Migration (IOM)
3. **A briefing of a representative of the MLSAF SR** together with the Minister of Economy and a local government official held in front of a specific company – a demonstration of how Slovak and foreign technicians, who, thanks to the scheme, complemented the company’s teams a few months earlier, can cooperate and how their families integrated in the city

- 4. **Meeting with a community** representing foreigners in Slovakia and a short press briefing
- 5. **The Fjužn Festival** – communication of the new Labour Mobility Scheme at the festival of new minorities
- 6. **Recording of podcasts** using existing platforms (IOM, non-governmental organisations – the League for Human Rights, Ambrela, etc.). A short version of the podcasts prepared in selected languages, including for the needs of the website intended for communication with foreigners abroad.

Reactive communication:

Tools and tactics:

- 1. **A review and regular sharing of good practice in relation to the benefits of recruiting foreign workers** who have come thanks to the measures under the Scheme. Supported by statements from their employers, colleagues or business partners.

- 2. **Year-on-year comparisons and data** on foreign workers by countries of origin, structure of employees and qualifications

Opportunities for communication:

- 1. Attractively **designed infographics** commenting on the results of the implemented Scheme
- 2. **A summary press release** – assessment of the first 6 months after the adoption of the measures
- 3. **MLSAF SR’s Facebook page** – communication of the successful milestones of the Scheme and reactions of social partners to individual measures

What this could look like in practice:

 A MLSAF SR state secretary meets a group of cyber security specialists. These are five experts from India and Ethiopia who have come to Slovakia thanks to an information campaign designed to help attract talent. They appreciated the socio-cultural orientation course they had taken before arriving in Slovakia. They work in Košice’s IT Valley where they analyse data flows for regional capitals. They also appreciated that the Scheme’s measures are transparent, understandable and motivating.

B: Employers’ unions and associations

From the outset, employers’ unions and associations have supported the measures to promote the mobility of workforce from non-EU countries. In the past, they urged the cabinet and MPs to approve an amendment to the Employment Services Act, the main objective of which was to streamline the system governing the entry and residence of skilled workers for the purpose of employment, especially in professions where a shortage of workforce was identified. At the same time, they expressed support for other measures defined in the Strategy for Labour Mobility of Foreigners.

 **COMMUNICATION PRIOR TO APPROVAL OF THE SCHEME**

Example of a sub-narrative and message:

” *In the Recovery and Resilience Plan, Slovakia set itself the objective of becoming more knowledge-oriented and dealing with the challenges posed by the phenomenon of digitalisation. It plans to adopt a Labour Mobility Scheme to reach out to and recruit IT specialists from non-EU countries more actively and flexibly.*

Several members of our union have confirmed that the shortage of IT specialists on our labour market is already alarming and, unless this shortage is addressed, they will not be able to bid for interesting technology projects, unlike their competitors in other member states.

Proactive communication:

Tools and tactics:

- Examples of employers whose parent companies decided not to give them new R&D projects because they were not able to guarantee they could fill all positions on their team of IT experts.
- A pool of arguments for employers who report shortage occupations and describe the greatest barriers that the current situation poses
- A joint statement by all employers' unions in support of the approval of the Scheme
- An analysis of market needs confronted with the needs of employers in the sectors that will be most affected by automation and digitalisation

Opportunities for communication:

- A roundtable with the key stakeholders whose arguments will advocate the need to adopt the Scheme
- An interview on labour market projections and the shortage

- of IT specialists and other experts (together with data on how many foreign workers are already working in Slovakia in this field and what the trend is)

Reactive communication:

Tools and tactics:

- An analysis of market needs confronted with the needs of employers in the sectors that will be most affected by automation and digitalisation
- A joint statement by all employers' unions in support of the approval of the Scheme

Opportunities for communication:

- Interviews and articles reflecting the need to respond to labour market needs more flexibly
- Interviews with representatives of companies who will confirm their good experience with know-how transfer and work in 'mixed teams' (with foreign workers)



PRIOR TO APPROVAL OF THE SCHEME

Proactive communication

Tools and tactics:

- Sharing of employers' experiences with the Scheme, including on the website promoting the Scheme
- A newsletter for members, one of section of which will deal only with the practical issues related to the implementation of the Scheme
- Infographics on the results of the Scheme's impacts on the labour market

Opportunities for communication:

- International job fairs – promotion of the individual measures under the Schemes from the perspective of employers
- Meetings with representatives of new communities representing foreigners in Slovakia
- Interviews for the media on the impacts of the Scheme

Reactive communication

Tools and tactics:

- Coordination meetings with representatives of other unions and associations, sharing of experiences and provision of regular feedback to the MLSAF SR
- Complementing of the pool of arguments in support of the Scheme

Opportunities for communication:

- Ad hoc meetings in selected companies that are yet to take advantage of the measures under the Scheme
- Supporting documents and analyses for foreign chambers of commerce on concrete impacts of the Scheme

What this could look like in practice:



A representative of employers could give a statement in support of this topic:

Digital economy and digital transformation are among the key topics in our association. It will be important for employers that a suitable system of support for the transformation is set up at the level of legislation and with regard to the availability of experts, including managed mobility of foreign workers from non-EU countries. They themselves can also help with innovations of services and products, or with the overall digitalisation in sectors.

C: Trade unions

Trade Unions or Works Councils are the voice of employees in almost every sector of the industry and services. They are respected partners in defending, promoting and improving employees' rights and entitlements. In the context of the adoption of the Labour Mobility Scheme, they will also become one of the main communicators formulating messages towards employees and influencing the atmosphere in companies.



COMMUNICATION PRIOR TO APPROVAL OF THE SCHEME

Example of a sub-narrative and message:



The Labour Mobility Scheme would enable us to find suitable colleagues/candidates more quickly and fill a number of long-standing vacancies in our companies. We are now short of the operators and mechanics from Serbia and Ukraine who left Slovakia during the first wave of the pandemic. Until these vacancies are filled, several companies will be unable to bid for new investment projects and contracts. And these would bring stability and interesting jobs to many Slovaks.

The Labour Mobility Scheme is a clear and controllable system for reaching out to the workers we need from other countries and ensuring that they are recruited in an ethical manner.

Proactive communication

Tools and tactics:

- A newsletter to members asking them to give their support for a petition to accelerate the adoption of the Scheme, which will be addressed to the MLSAF SR on behalf of companies
- Preparation of a pool of arguments confirming that foreign workers are supporters and, in some sectors, even members of trade unions
- Clearly formulated impacts of the Scheme – support
- from representatives of companies, management of employees' concerns, explanation that the Scheme will help above all the Slovak economy

Opportunities for communication:

- Comparison of the draft of the forthcoming Scheme with similar measures in neighbouring countries
- Statements sent out to the media, the five most important measures under the Scheme⁵⁰ that will help Slovak companies

Reactive communication

Tools and tactics:

- Reactive statements sent out to the media
- Reactive statements sent out to union members – employees

⁵⁰ See the "Five specific aspects that will be improved as a result of the measures under the Scheme", p. 25

Opportunities for communication:

- Company circulars in which trade unions communicate their opinions about the draft Scheme

- Statements sent out to the media, the five most important⁵¹ measures under the Scheme that will help Slovak companies

 **PRIOR TO APPROVAL OF THE SCHEME**

Proactive communication

Tools and tactics:

- Experience with the Scheme in individual member companies – a pool of arguments, suggestions for modifications of the Scheme, if any, and feedback on the benefits and impacts of individual measures

Opportunities for communication:

- A discussion of trade union representatives – exchange of practical experiences with the new Scheme
- Media briefings held in front of companies where the Scheme has made a positive difference

Reactive communication

Tools and tactics:

- Facts and interesting insights into the impacts of similar schemes abroad – obtained through trade union representatives from abroad with whom our trade unions cooperate

Opportunities for communication:

- Communication on the impact of the Scheme and examples of good practice in the context of internal negotiations between social partners

What this could look like in practice:



A union representative speaking in front of a company:

We welcome the measures included in the new Labour Mobility Scheme, which guarantee the managed recruitment of foreign workers to complement our teams. Thanks to these measures, our member – company X, gained the trust of its parent company only 3 months after the approval of the Scheme and will be producing a new model of electric vehicles over the next 5 years. This will create an additional 300 medium- and high-skilled jobs.

D: Other ministries

The **Ministry of Finance (MF SR)** as the key authority responsible for the Recovery and Resilience Plan, which envisages linking investments with reforms, can significantly contribute to explaining the Labour Mobility Scheme and the need for putting it further into practice.

The **Ministry of Economy (MEc SR)** supports innovations that are important for increasing the competitiveness of the Slovak economy. Through various schemes, it helps startups and innovative projects created in cooperation between small and medium-sized enterprises and science and research centres.

Through its economic diplomacy activities and country marketing opportunities, the **Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs (MFEA SR)** can also be of help with its network of embassies and promote the Scheme in selected target markets. In its reform of the education system, the **Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport (MESRS SR)** also takes into consideration the development of new skills and competences that can be learned through the transfer

⁵¹ See the “Five specific aspects that will be improved as a result of the measures under the Scheme”, p. 25

of know-how thanks to foreign workers. At the same time, it supports competence centres and is responsible for supporting science and research.

COMMUNICATION PRIOR TO APPROVAL OF THE SCHEME

Example of a sub-narrative and message:

” Slovakia is facing major challenges. These include the automation and digitisation of several sectors of the industry and services, the ageing of the population and major changes in education, which has yet to catch up with the rapidly changing needs of the labour market.

In order to start catching up with neighbouring countries and guarantee a good standard of living for the population, we need measures that will help us also develop new sectors with a higher added value, science, research and innovation. To be able to do this, we need a more flexible system of managed labour mobility so that we do not fall behind in the global competition for talent.

According to most recent surveys, we need to find thousands of IT specialists, medical doctors and nurses, carers, mechanics and operators. Before the many Slovaks who are now retraining or studying acquire the necessary skills, we will need help from workers from other countries. That is why we are launching the Labour Mobility Scheme, which we hope will provide more flexible employment opportunities not only for those who are still considering coming to Slovakia, but also those who want to move from Slovakia to another country because of existing barriers in the system. And we believe that by kickstarting meaningful and innovative projects, we will also be able to reach out to many Slovaks who are studying and working abroad.

Proactive communication

Tools and tactics:

- Argument pools, Q&As
- Clearly formulated impacts of the Scheme. Comparisons with other countries actively communicating similar schemes.

Opportunities for communication:

- Roundtables, discussions in the media
- Thematic interviews – outlining the Scheme in the context of the key challenges

Reactive communication

Tools and tactics:

- Reactive statements sent out to the media
- Analyses and impacts of individual reforms

Opportunities for communication:

- Explanation of the forthcoming measures on behalf of ministries in inter-ministerial communication

PRIOR TO APPROVAL OF THE SCHEME

Proactive communication

Tools and tactics:

- Participation in international conferences
- Roundtable discussions
- Explanation of the individual measures by sectors

Opportunities for communication:

- The MEc SR will actively communicate the country's innovation potential during our 6-month participation at EXPO Dubai 2021. The Slovak pavilion is called 'Mobility' (an opportunity for linking it with the Labour Mobility Scheme)

- Media briefings held in front of companies where the Scheme has made a positive difference

Reactive communication

Tools and tactics:

- Facts and interesting insights into the impacts of similar schemes abroad
- Coordination of statements on the Scheme by sectors

Opportunities for communication:

- Reactive statements of ministries sent out to the media
- Conferences with foreign participation
- Fora of chambers of commerce

What this could look like in practice:

 **A state secretary of the MF SR could, in the context of the adopted Recovery and Resilience Plan, comment that:** *One of the objectives of the reform Recovery Plan is a modern state built on innovation, science and research. In order to be able to start catching up again with advanced EU countries in the quality of life and standard of living, we need to remove the barriers to foreign workers who can meet the demand for scarce and high- skilled positions in a range of sectors and services, but also in research.*

A state secretary of the MF SR could, in the context of the adopted Recovery and Resilience Plan, comment that: *One of the objectives of the reform Recovery Plan is a modern state built on innovation, science and research. In order to be able to start catching up again with advanced EU countries in the quality of life and standard of living, we need to remove the barriers to foreign workers who can meet the demand for scarce and high- skilled positions in a range of sectors and services, but also in research.*

E: Local governments

Local government is nearest to the new residents who come to live in Slovakia. Cities and municipalities are the first point of contact for them. In surveys, local governments admitted that they often did not have an overview of how many foreigners live in their territory and which countries they come from. If they do not know about them, they can hardly create conditions for their better integration, provide them with special services or help them overcome language or other barriers.



COMMUNICATION PRIOR TO APPROVAL OF THE SCHEME

” *Thanks to the Labour Mobility Scheme, we have better data on foreign workers who come to our cities and municipalities. Hence, we can better plan capacities, budgets and, overall, respond to their needs as they integrate into society.*

Proactive communication

Tools and tactics:

- A newsletter sent out to members so that they understand the benefits of the Scheme

- Sharing of good practices from cities that already have experience with the integration of foreigners and can share their experiences (BA, TT, NT, KE, BB...)

Opportunities for communication:

- Statements sent out to the media, the five most important measures under the Scheme⁵² that will help Slovak cities and municipalities

Reactive communication

Tools and tactics:

- Reactive statements sent out to the media

Opportunities for communication:

- Statement on the preparation of the Scheme at internal meetings of associations of local governments



PRIOR TO APPROVAL OF THE SCHEME

Proactive communication

Tools and tactics:

- Roundtable discussions – what the Scheme will bring to local governments
- Good practices from selected cities – foreign worker/my neighbour (formats for bringing cultures closer together)
- ‘Foreigners among us’ – a series in the regional media to help eliminate prejudices and a tool for convergence and explanation of the topic of labour mobility from the perspective of the experience of local governments – e.g. in partnership with the first Community Centre for Labour and Knowledge Mobility in Nitra (the First-Contact Point for Foreigners and Residents in the City of Nitra – COMIN)

Opportunities for communication:

- Population census – what we have learned about foreign workers in our cities and municipalities
- Support and promotion of various cultural and experiential (culinary) activities in individual cities (sharing them on FB,

communication in informational emails, newsletters) – sharing of experiences and inspiration

- The use of the formats of multicultural and multi-genre events and festivals – bringing up the topic of coming closer together with foreigners, also supported by the companies concerned.

Reactive communication

Tools and tactics:

- Facts and interesting insights into the impacts of similar schemes abroad – from the perspective of cities

Opportunities for communication:

- Communication on the impact of the Scheme and examples of good practice in the context of internal negotiations between social partners

What this could look like in practice:



A representative of the Union of Towns and Cities of Slovakia or the Association of Towns and Municipalities of Slovakia will call on local governments to ensure that foreigners living in their territory take part in the census. One of the ways to get more funding for their integration is to have as many permanent and temporary residents as possible, who actually live in the territory administered by the local government, take part in the ongoing census.

⁵² See the “Five specific aspects that will be improved as a result of the measures under the Scheme”, p. 25

USEFUL SOURCES OF INFORMATION

In this section, you will find:

- Links to important legislative documents
- Analyses and surveys
- Useful information

LEGISLATION:

Strategy for Labour Mobility of Foreigners in the Slovak Republic (final version) <https://www.employment.gov.sk/files/slovensky/uvod/informacie-cudzinci/strategia.pdf>

Migration Policy of the Slovak Republic with an Outlook to 2025 (draft) <https://www.slov-lex.sk/legislativne-procesy/-/SK/dokumenty/LP-2020-385>

Recovery and Resilience Plan for the Slovak Republic (draft) <https://www.slov-lex.sk/legislativne-procesy/-/SK/LP/2021/112>

Integration Policy of the Slovak Republic (final version) <https://www.employment.gov.sk/files/slovensky/uvod/informacie-cudzinci/integracna-politika.pdf>

integration of foreigners, the availability of integration services and the perception of integration by foreigners and the majority population.

IOM Migration Information Centre – information and statistics from the centre, which has been providing free advice and services to foreigners for over 10 years.

GLOSSARY:

IOM Glossary on Migration, https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/iml_34_glossary.pdf

Basic terms related to migration and integration of foreigners of the International Organization for Migration (in Slovak) <https://www.iom.sk/sk/pre-media/zakladne-pojmy-o-migracii.html>

Asylum and Migration: a comparative glossary of terms of the European Migration Network (EMN) in different EU languages https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/glossary_search_en

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Migration Policy Debates, OECD, Is migration good for the economy?, 2014.

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www.workinlithuania.lt

ANNEX

1. Selection of communication tools and channels

Most media outputs (and, during COVID times, most communication activities) are now concentrated in the online space. Opinion-forming media are gradually moving away from discussions under their articles directly on their websites and the discussions are taking place on social media (mostly on their Facebook profiles)

Today, social media is not only a place where information published in online media is 'shared', but also a place of discussion and a source of official information from government agencies, local governments and politicians.

In the context of communicating the Labour Mobility Scheme or if the individual measures are approved gradually, it will be necessary to create an **effective web platform** that will ideally:

- **present Slovakia** in an attractive way, as a country with interesting job opportunities
- provide **all relevant information about the different types of residence and conditions for taking up employment** (by providing links to the IOM Migration Information Centre website)
- make it possible to **search for vacancies suitable for foreigners** via the ISTEP.sk portal (with navigation in foreign languages)
- allow interested foreign workers to **submit a residence application electronically**, directly via the portal (more complex functionality, but this is supported by the Scheme's sub-objective of reducing the administrative burden, inter alia, by means of digital solutions)

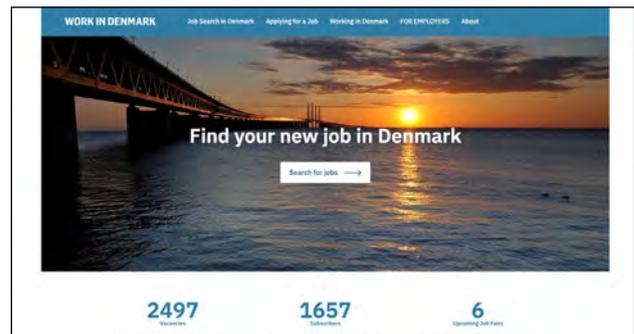
For inspiration, below we provide four creative approaches to the design of a web portal used by EU Member States to attract talent and reach out to candidates in shortage occupations. Most countries have taken an intuitive approach to the website name: Work in + country name.

The web portals have the following integral components:

- the option to search for vacancies
- relocation measures or conditions
- the option to submit or create a CV directly on the site

Information about the country, relevant for everyday life and finding a job, is available as standard and some countries provide the possibility of filing an electronic application for residence (Denmark) or chatbot assistance (Estonia).

Denmark: www.workindenmark.dk



Estonia: www.workinestonia.com



Lithuania: www.workinlithuania.lt



Germany: www.make-it-in-germany.com



2. Measuring the impact of communication

When proposing the tools only on the basis of the recommendations under the Communication Strategy, we can evaluate the following:

1. Who are the key communicators on the topic of labour migration at the beginning of the Labour Mobility Scheme approval process?

For this purposes, monitoring systems are used to analyse the outputs of individual communicators and ambassadors on the topic, the outputs and tonality of social media posts are analysed

Evaluation of the change: What new communicators on the topic of labour mobility have appeared? Did they manage to communicate the topic in a factual and conciliatory manner?

After a year of communicating the Scheme's measures, are any of them perceived as influencers of the topic in public discourse?

2. What are the public attitudes towards labour migration as we enter the public discourse?

We can use the results of the IOM survey for this purpose

At the same time, the attitudes of the professional public can be measured by means of a short survey sent out to the members of the Advisory Board for the preparation of the Labour Mobility Scheme and other selected experts.

3. Survey among foreign workers who have come to Slovakia after the approval of the Scheme. What is their perception of the new measures? Which of

the measures were key to their decision?

Confirmation whether the scheme has helped attract foreign workers to Slovakia

4. Monitoring and analysis of the topic of labour mobility in the media and on social media 12 months after the adoption of the Scheme (comparison with point 1 – the baseline situation)

If we implement a **targeted communication campaign, we can track the campaign's objectives** that may be easier to measure:

- **Brand awareness** of Slovakia as a potential work destination (measured by selected countries/regions before and after the campaign)
- **Promotion of the communication platform** – a web portal where those who are interested can find all the necessary information (evaluation of the results of the online campaign/banner campaign)
- **Number of potential foreign workers contacted** (by profession/country/specialisation) and an evaluation of how many of them have registered on the portal to request further information or to receive the newsletter.
- **Number and structure of new foreign workers who have come** thanks to the new measures under the Scheme (the possibility to answer a simple question when registering or receiving the identifier – how did you learn about Slovakia and the job offer you responded to?)

3. Indicative costs

Itemised indicative budget for some of the recommended tools to support communication of the Labour Mobility Scheme in the form of a campaign.

The items are indicative and can be refined and elaborated further based on the starting points and the assignment. The prices are in EUR, excluding VAT.

COORDINATION WORKSHOP	Roles and responsibilities of the individual stakeholders in the context of the campaign – coordination, priorities for the departments, messaging. Opportunities for communication – prior to/in the course of and after approval of the Scheme	1 800,00
MEDIA TRAINING FOR COMMUNICATORS	Formulation of messages for specific groups of measures/impacts of measures. Difficult questions – preparation (up to 6 persons)	3 000,00

ITEMS		FEES	DIRECT COSTS
CREATIVE CONCEPT AND IDEA FOR THE CAMPAIGN (attracting talent, job opportunities for foreign workers)	A workshop with those responsible for the communication campaign to support the Labour Mobility Scheme – the brief, content of the different parts of the campaign, timetable, technical documentation for the assignment and for the budget	2 500,00	
	Proposal for the main idea and copywriting for the campaign, draft campaign strategy and creation of the communication mix	3 000,00	
	Proposal for the main idea and copywriting for the campaign, draft campaign strategy and creation of the communication mix	3 500,00	500,00
CAMPAIGN VISUALS	Copywriting – creation of texts for the individual campaign channels, approval (web portal, banners, advertorials in selected foreign media)	2 500,00 – 5 000,00	
	Banners – graphic design of banners in various dimensions (EN)	1 000,00	
WEB PORTAL (for illustration e.g. Workinslovakia.com)	Copywriting – creation of texts for the portal and approval (EN), translations	3 000,00 – 6 000,00	400,00 – 600,00
	Graphic design	4 500,00	800,00
	Web development, programming and testing	3 000,00	10 000,00
Portfolio – content, key visuals and profiles on social media	Illustrations/Taking photos of selected communicators and foreign workers	1 500,00	2 000,00 – 3 000,00
Stories/Short videos of foreign workers (selected professions)	Stories/illustrative images (materials from non-governmental organisations can be used)	1 000,00	
	Stories/illustrative images (materials from non-governmental organisations can be used)	2 500,00	400,00
BANNER CAMPAIGN	Research into the relevant web portals and databases (recruitment dashboards) in cooperation with the network of MFEA SR's embassies and selected chambers of commerce (in cooperation with a local partner, a media/online agency depending to the target country)	1 800,00 – 3 000,00	tbc.
	Online campaign budget (tbc.) – depending on scope/duration/target countries	tbc.	tbc.
	Media purchasing (tbc.)/online	tbc.	tbc.
SOCIAL NETWORKS	Preparation of a communication strategy for social network profiles (FB, LinkedIn)		
	Draft strategy, frequency of posts, KPIs, reporting, promo	2 500,00	
	Topics, preparation of 10 posts written by copywriters	2 000,00	
	Draft visual identity to be used use social networks	1 000,00	
	Content and management of social profiles – amount per month	1 500,00	
PROJECT MANAGEMENT	depending on the defined scope and duration of the campaign	tbc.	tbc.



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