

National Sustainable Development Strategy of the Slovak Republic Summary

Bratislava, November 2000

1. General Data on The Slovak Republic

Legal Name

Slovenská republika (Slovensko)

Slovak Republic (Slovakia)

Surface Area as of December 31, 1999, (km²) – 49 035

Population in total as of December 31, 1999 – 5 399 000

Population density per 1 km² - 110.1

Length of the border (km) on

Czech Republic	251.8
Hungary	668.6
Poland	547.1
Austria	106.0
Ukraine	98.5

Language

Slovak

Nationality	%
Slovak	85,60
Hungarian	10,50
Gipsy	1,69
Czech, Moravian, Silesian	1,10
German	0,10
Polish	0,05
Other and not declared	0,30

Religiosity	%
Roman – Catholic	60.4
Slovak Evangelic Lutheran	6.2
Greek – Catholic	3.4

Calvinist	1.6
Orthodox	0.7
Others	0.5
Without denomination	9.8
Not specified	17.4

Capital

Bratislava (population 448 292)

Regional Centers

Košice	(241 874)
Prešov	(93 977)
Nitra	(87 591)
Žilina	(86 818)
Banská Bystrica	(84 272)
Trnava	(69 802)
Trenčín	(59 174)

Currency

1 Slovak Crown SKK = 100 Haliers

1 Slovenská koruna Sk = 100 halierov

Rate of exchange (as of November 2000)

43 SKK to 1 UER

50 SKK to 1 USD

2. Sustainable development concept

The sustainable development is rooted in the legal system of the Slovak Republic as development that for both the present and future generations maintains possibility to meet their basic human needs without reducing diversity of the nature while protecting natural function of eco-systems (Article 6 of the Act 17/1992 on the environment).

The term “sustainability” and “sustainable development” began to be used at the beginning of 1970s, mainly in connection to knowledge that uncontrolled growth of any type (population, production, consumption, pollution, etc.) is not sustainable in the environment with limited existing resources. Milestones is general, introduction and elaboration of a conception of sustainable development were constituted by the report “Our Common Future” (Brundtland et al., 19870) and by the UN Conference on the Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro (1992). The most important document of this conference, AGENDA 21 is considered to be a basic starting point for preparation of strategies of sustainable development on all levels. Year 2002 was recommended for the member states of the United Nation as a horizon of elaboration of the national sustainable development strategies.

Based on results of the National Sustainable Development Strategy, sustainable development can be defined as a targeted, long-term (continual), comprehensive and synergetic process affecting all aspects of life (spiritual, social, economic, environmental and institutional) that takes place on more levels (local, regional, global) and that leads through application of practical tools and institutions to such a model of running of a society (community, country, international community) that qualitatively meets material, spiritual and social needs and interest of people, while respecting values of the nature and carrying capacity of the landscape and its resources. In application of the concept of sustainable development it is very important to act in accordance with principles and criteria of sustainable development and to use indicators of sustainable development for evaluation of the state and development.

3. National Sustainable Development Strategy of the Slovak Republic – document preparation

The document “National Sustainable Development Strategy of the Slovak Republic” (hereafter “NSDS”) was prepared in the framework of the project “Capacity Building for Sustainable Development in the Slovak Republic” which is realised in the period of 1999-2000 with financial support provided by the United Nations Development Programme. The project is guaranteed by the Ministry of the Environment of the Slovak Republic and implemented by the Regional Environmental Center Slovakia.

The starting document “Vision of Sustainable Development of Slovakia” was prepared in March 1999. In June 1999 a framework structure of the strategy was proposed that was subsequently approved by the minister of the environment and by the Steering Committee for preparation of the NSDS. Analysis was being worked out since October 1999 till April 2000, synthesis since May 2000 till July 2000 and in August 2000 the first draft of the document was compiled.

Preparation of the NSDS was being carried out while applying principles, of participation, transparency and “bottom-up” approach. Representatives of all major groups of the society according to AGENDA 21 participated in its preparation and in this way the Resolution of the Government of the Slovak Republic 655/1997 on application of agenda 21 in the Slovak Republic has been implemented. Individual sectors and their organisations, research institutes, business and industrial stakeholders, representatives of municipalities, non-governmental organisations and civic associations were also involved in preparation and creation of the document. More than 100 authors and many other experts – consultants participated in preparation of the analytical part of the NSDS. The accumulated analysis (ca 1,800 pages) was finished to a form of synthesis (ca 500 pages) and finally to the 350-page first draft of the NSDS. This document was in accordance with the project work plan submitted to public consultation and to the process of strategic environmental assessment (SEA) in September and October 2000.

After public consultation and strategic environmental assessment the document will be completed in co-operation with the Ministry of the Environment of the Slovak Republic. After incorporation of comments and after discussion at the operative meeting of the management of the Ministry of the Environment the final version of the NSDS will be submitted to the cross-sectoral consultation process, Government of the Slovak Republic and to the National Council of the Slovak Republic. After adoption of the NSDS and implementation of principles of sustainable development into comprehensive sectoral strategies (social, economic, information, environmental), preparation of the National Action Plan of Sustainable Development and its application as a binding, cross-sectoral implementing document for sustainable development in the Slovak Republic is expected.

4. Where we are – Starting situation of sustainable development

Before formulating the sustainable development strategy it is necessary to evaluate the previous development and present state of the Slovak society from the point of view of preconditions for implementation of sustainable development. Cross-sectoral perspective is supported by detailed analysis of cultural, historical, social, economic, environmental and institutional aspects.

During the pre-socialist era Slovakia was developing in continuity of the society and landscape, based mainly on principles of co-existence of a man and his environment. Typical ways of land use were agriculture and forestry, only with local environmental impact caused by industrial production and extraction of mineral resources. The traditional values and ways of land use are gradually changing and the gaps between sustainable and real developments are growing, which was fully manifested in particular during the socialist era. Harmful effects of communist ideology led to deformation of human values, excessive use of natural resources, degradation of historical monuments, traditions and to total deformation and degradation of cultural and historical awareness. All elements of democracy were practically destroyed and replaced by totalitarian political and social system. Although demographic development and the basic social and health indicators were relatively favourable (social situation of inhabitants has been seemingly globally improved), the crucial internal factors conditioning the human development have been, however, suppressed in practical life and after 40 years of “building the socialism” the Slovak society is in a state of serious crisis. The economy used to work under principles of closed circle and central management, the business environment has been practically liquidated. Adverse changes in the environment were related mainly to enormous industrialisation of the of the country (inappropriate structure and localisation of industrial facilities), large-scale intensive agriculture, concentration and centralisation of management. All these factors contributed during revolutionary changes in 1989 to very unfavourable starting situation for sustainable development of the society.

The 1990s constitute a very important “threshold” in development of the of the society from dictatorship towards building democracy. The political (institutional) and economic systems are changing together with change in social, spiritual (cultural and historical) and environmental spheres. Typical features are, however, internal contradictions of last development of the Slovak society, which are accompanied both by strengths and opportunities for sustainable development along with weaknesses and threats.

Important present strengths and opportunities supporting sustainable development of Slovakia include:

- development of a modern parliamentary democracy, relating reform of institutions and amendments to legal instruments (acts, strategic and policy documents, the Constitution of the Slovak Republic),
- starting the process of fundamental reforms of the society – in particular reform of public administration, reform of education, social reform,
- gradual “up to down” transfer of competence – from the state to self-governments, closer to citizens,
- development of the third sector (in particular non-governmental organisation) – establishment and development of many interest organisations, ,networks established by citizens, business sector and municipalities,
- gradual change of collective way of thinking and acting (typical for socialist era) towards individual – a citizen and his knowledge and skills are still more important,

- building a market economy – a complex liberalisation of economic environment accompanied by extensive privatisation of state property and development of private businesses (at present the private sector produces more than 80 percent of GDP),
- relatively satisfactory development in the area of inflation and monetary policy – after a sharp fall of real incomes of inhabitants in period of 1990 – 1993 there was a gradual stabilisation and in period of 1998 – 1999 real salaries exceeded the values achieved before 1990,
- prevailing positive development of quality of natural resources and landscape – improving situation in the area of air quality, reduction of burden caused by exploitation of natural resources, agriculture and forestry,
- the European Union pre-accession process of the Slovak Republic and relating changes, in particular in institutional area,
- invitation of the Slovak Republic to the OECD that is a confirmation of improving international position of the Slovak Republic and should be a precondition for positive development of the economy and whole society,

Important present weaknesses and threats relating to sustainable development of Slovakia include:

- unfavourable situation within the society – low level of moral and legal awareness (persisting deformations from the totalitarian era),
- wrong hierarchy of values and priorities – expansion of consumer way of life and preferring material values over spiritual ones,
- unpreparedness and in particular lack of citizens willingness to carry out fundamental change – increased uncertainty accompanied by increased requirements to share responsibility for personal life and fate and for the fate of the whole society is perceived negatively by large part of the Slovak inhabitants,
- insufficient transparency of decision-making in public administration, persisting corruption and clientism,
- persisting perception of public administration as a tool of power and not as a tool serving the citizens,
- persisting sectoral approach and short-term planning of development without respecting the long-term, permanent priorities of the society,
- overall slowness and low efficiency of reform which are not perceived positively by citizens and society (sceptical and negative attitudes to development and results achieved during last decade are persisting),
- deterioration of quality of life of several citizen groups – in particular with small children, long-term unemployed, incomplete families, pensioners,
- overall low efficiency and inappropriate structure of economy typical for industrial society,
- major emphasis focused on development and modernisation of industry (while prioritising traditional industries: metallurgy, nuclear energy, machinery, chemical industry, etc.),
- attempts to save ineffective large enterprises, conservation of traditional agriculture, prioritising banking and financial sectors,
- insufficient resources for funding and development of other “non – productive” sectors (social sector, culture, education and science, health service, environment),

- insufficient representation of perspective sectors based on up-to-date technologies and effective use of labour and resources, insufficient support to development of information society structures,
- high energy consumption of the economy and low utilisation of renewable energy resources,
- persisting groundwater pollution, soil and substratum contamination, adverse health state of forests,
- The starting situation for sustainable development in the Slovak Republic is then ambiguous and contradictory. Based also on the above mentioned facts it is apparent that after ten years of modern development of the Slovak Republic a comprehensive strategic vision of development of the society is still missing. The National Sustainable Development Strategy of the Slovak Republic should constitute a document of this kind.

5. Where we go – scenarios of further development of the society

Previous development and present starting situation of the Slovak Republic were a basis for formulating two possible development scenarios of the society – the zero scenario and the integration scenario.

The zero scenario is understood as a development of the Slovak society, which would be based on prevailing present negative trends bringing about risks from the point of view of sustainable development. Application of the zero scenario would mean insufficient development of civic society, persisting problems connected to ineffective public administration, deepening of economic and social problems and discrepancies. The Slovak economy would lag behind caused by inertial way of development, insufficient growth of performance, competitiveness, labour productivity, real incomes and living standard and by increase of technological obsolescence. Absence of a long-term vision of development strategy of economy and the society would persist. From the long-term perspective the unemployment rate could not be reduced, regional differences would grow and critically under-developed, marginal regions would appear. Education, health service, culture and the environment would suffer from the lack of resources (including human) and their importance would be undervalued. Adverse social phenomena would continue to develop (serious criminal activities, corruption, drug addiction, xenophobia, racism and other socially pathological phenomena). Economic imbalance, social and political tension would grow, social conflicts would multiply. Development in the environment would be ambiguous, depending on persistence of more negative phenomena and trends. Legal awareness would stagnate or even decrease.

Future direction of the Slovak Republic according to the zero scenario would unambiguously be negative. Integration ambitions and overall credibility would be questioned, the Slovak society would remain in vacuum and chaos of values, moral principles and principles of sustainable development would be ignored. As a whole, such a development of Slovakia can be defined as undesirable and unacceptable.

The integration scenario is understood as probable development of the Slovak society in the case of successful integration of the country to the European Union. This scenario represents establishment of reliable basis of a legal state, civic society, effective and competitive economy, as well as quality education, health service and the environment and support of science and culture. Development of the society would be built in particularly on positive values and moral principles. Accession of the Slovak Republic to the European Union would strengthen international position and prestige, it would be a contribution to economy, increase of living standard and legal system. On one hand, the basic values accepted by the European Union, would be implemented also in the Slovak Republic,

including the ensuring of stable peace, unified approach to and solution of problems, equity of citizens and the member states, guarantee of fundamental freedoms, principles of solidarity and subsidiarity, ensuring the basic economic and social needs of citizens.

On the other hand application of the integration scenario can threaten some of the objectives of sustainable development in the Slovak Republic, concretely in the economic area (overall unpreparedness of the economy – more economic sectors can become after accession of the Slovak Republic to the European Union less competitive, we can expect high costs of restructuring of the Slovak economy, lack of qualified managerial personnel), social area (insufficient information and preparedness of citizens for changes, linguistic and mental barriers, outflow of qualified people abroad, orientation to consumer patterns of behaviour, higher material consumption, growing individualism and greater openness toward socially pathological phenomena), environmental area (intensification and specialisation of agriculture can lead to reduction of biodiversity, projects damaging the environment can be possibly supported, etc.).

Despite some arguments against accession to the European Union and relating risks it is necessary to state that integration of the Slovak Republic creates appropriate conditions for direction towards sustainable society.

Probable further development of the Slovak society is in the case of continuation of present trends a combination of the zero and integration scenarios, despite clear declaration of accession of the Slovak Republic to the European Union and pre-accession process.

The largest real possibilities for future positive development of the society are connected to the pre-accession process of the Slovak Republic, in the framework of which many institutional changes are being implemented, in particular in the form of adoption of new up-to-date legislation and the building of democratic institutions. The most important documents reflecting the expected accession of the Slovak Republic to the European Union and supporting the future application of principles of sustainable development include, first of all, the Conception of Decentralisation and Modernisation of Public Administration (2000), the Integrated Plan of Regional and Social Development of the Slovak Republic for Realisation of the PHARE Programme 2000, part 1 – the National Development Strategy, the Plan of Rural Development in the Slovak Republic for implementation of SAPARD Programme (1999), the National Plan of Regional Development (2000), the Conception of Territorial Development of Slovakia 2001 (2001). Several sectoral development documents, in particular those prepared during last two years, have included orientation towards sustainable development.

The largest threats for positive development of the society are connected to persisting negative phenomena in the area of practical work of institutions, application of legal instruments and behaviour of not only public representatives, but general public as well. These are demonstrated in the current low level of legal awareness and breach of acts, declarative nature of adopted documents and absence of monitoring mechanism. In this relation it is apparent that implementation of the integration scenario is endangered in the case of absence of rigid compliance with legal instruments, application and monitoring of application of progressive documents.

6. Where we want to go – sustainable scenario, orientation, priorities and objectives of sustainable development in the Slovak Republic

The central idea of the sustainable development scenario is transformation of Slovak to a country based on principles and criteria of sustainable development and their practical application. This scenario supposes implementation of this overall change of the society, rules of economy and in particular aware compliance with democratically accepted rules. Pre-condition of fulfilment of this scenario is understanding sustainable development as a comprehensive cross-sectoral issue relating to the whole society. The development will be

based on active involvement of individual sectors and other social stakeholders. The man will become a priority of development – overall social and cultural development in harmonic relation to the environment.

The scenario is determined by a pre-condition of conservation of nature, natural resources and their diversity, leading to nature-friendly economy based on principles of effective use of and fair distribution of resources and direction to healthy, meaningful society meeting the social, spiritual and material needs. Institutional and legal standards, which serve an individual and subsequently the whole society to increase quality of life and develop human resources, are an important condition of realisation of the sustainable development scenario. Conditions for implementation of quality legal standards and quality and participation of civil servants and representatives of other sphere of life will improve. Effects of corruption will be eliminated and legal awareness of citizens and the whole society will be fundamentally improved. Slovakia will become a country positively affecting the international efforts towards sustainability and will accept its share of responsibility for international actions. In the framework of regional and local development the priority will be elimination of interregional disparities, de-marginalisation and optimisation of land use. Development will be influenced by regional and local Agendas 21. Fundamental changes of production and consumption patterns towards eco-effective productions, which are environmentally friendly and do not require a lot of energy and resources, will be implemented. At the same time, rationality and awareness of producers and consumers will be considerably increased (reduction of ineffective productions, excessive consumption, etc.) Indicators of the state of the environment (load and threats) will be permanently improving. Value orientation of population will be gradually changed, consumer life style will become economically and morally disadvantaged. The overall conception of economic, social and environmental development of the Slovak Republic will be strictly determined by principles of sustainable development, to which also the sectoral policies will adapt.

From the point of view of the NSDS this scenario is desired. It determines the basic orientation, priorities and main objectives of sustainable development in the Slovak Republic.

The basic orientation of the Slovak Republic should be a long-term, intentional and comprehensive direction to creation of a society based on principles of sustainable development and their practical application. To achieve this orientation it is necessary in all areas to respect principles of sustainable development and to orient at meeting the following priorities (integrated objectives) of sustainable development of the Slovak Republic:

- supporting and conserving the cultural and historical continuity and values of a country and society – rehabilitation and maintenance of historical structures, settlement identity and forms of settlement in accordance with the natural environment, achieving and conserving the high quality of working conditions, conditions for living and recreation, supporting and developing culture and education,
- achieving higher quality of human and social resources – building a healthy and meaningful society (state, region, municipality, community, family, citizen), meeting the social, cultural and spiritual needs, ensuring the growing quality of life for both the current and future generations (high living standard achieved in accordance with cultural, historical and natural environment),
- building a new model of economy (long-term operating, open, effective and fair) based on integrated utilisation of potential of the society and country and principles of an information society which creates a sufficient employment, develops human potential, saves the nature and natural resources,
- achieving a long-term high quality of the nature and landscape, protection of vitality, diversity and autoregulatory capacities of the landscape and all its components, effective use of natural resources, conservation of healthy and beautiful

environment, while meeting the social and economic needs of a man and the whole society,

- creation of proper institutional conditions (planning, legal instruments and standards, economic and other tools), ensuring and controlling their application in order to increase quality of life of a man, development of the society, economy and maintenance of quality of the environment,
- forming the Slovak Republic as a country positively affecting the international direction towards sustainability that will be prepared to adequately share global responsibility for development of the world community,
- achievement of a balanced regional development of the Slovak Republic based on application of decentralisation of public administration and institute of interregional solidarity (preferred development of backward regions).

The main objectives of individual aspects of sustainable development of the Slovak Republic are as follows:

Cultural and historical area

- achievement of sustainable regional, settlement and community development – increase of quality of settlements and integrity of the environment,
- achievement of sustainable historical environment and historical structures of the landscape, including their protection,
- long-term fostering of traditions, support of national identity and culture,
- achievement of quality education and edification of citizens, development of their knowledge and skills,
- achievement of a comprehensive development of the society, including internal and external safety.

Social area

- achievement of sustainable demographic indicators and trends,
- achievement of quality health and social care, improvement of indicators of health state – improvement of social capital,
- elimination of poverty and unemployment (through implementation of proper programmes and social policy),
- elimination of socially pathological phenomena,
- achievement of quality development of all major groups of population (orientation to risk groups),
- achievement of sustainable value orientation of inhabitants, change of consumption patterns.

Economic area

- integration of principles and criteria of sustainable development in the framework of overall transformation of economy and its structural changes,
- overcoming the traditional model of economy and development of the new sustainable economy,

- application of environmentally friendly economy which minimises use of resources, reduces energy and mineral resources consumption of the economy,
- achievement of reasonable economic regional development, development of interregional economic relations.

Environmental area

- ensuring the environmentally sound, long-term utilisation of natural resources (conservation or regeneration of natural resources),
- practical elimination of consequences of global climate change (through economic measures),
- achievement of high level of environmental quality of the Slovak landscape and components of the environment,
- promotion of application of a comprehensive integrated planning and environmental management in legislation and in practical operation of public administration,
- achievement of sufficient funding the environmental public administration and effective use of resources,
- achievement of sufficient level of environmental education and awareness of citizens.

Institutional area

- building a system of institutional tools for practical implementation of sustainable development conception,
- improvement of public administration performance (effectiveness, competence, transparency, integrated approach),
- improvement of application of legislation, legislative power, judicial and administrative procedures, increase of responsibility and public control,
- achievement of reasonable level of participation of citizens and the third sector in management and development of the society,
- effective application of non-legal tools (in particular education, science, research and access to information),
- institutional ensuring of application of sustainable development on regional level,
- achievement of reasonable level of planning, co-ordination and co-operation of all segments of the society.

International relations area

- completion of integration of the Slovak Republic into development world structures (in particular the European Union),
- compliance with international commitments, active work in international organisations,
- involvement of the Slovak Republic into foreign assistance provided to developing countries,
- development of international co-operation (transboundary co-operation, programmes and projects of sustainable development of regions).

7. How to reach the objective – way to sustainable development

No matter how comprehensively and in detail the sustainable development conception will be worked out and its strategy, it will become important only when implemented. Successful application of sustainable development, in the Slovak Republic requires a fundamental change of present way of life of citizens and the society. For implementation of this fundamental change, it is necessary, as a starting pre-condition, to carry out transition of the society towards building an aware, civic, educated (learning), information and environmentally friendly society.

Realisation of the NSDS will be very difficult and long process that should result in transition of the society on the route leading to sustainable development. This task complicates a fact that, though, at present there are several tens of national sustainable development strategies, it is clear that implementation of principles and criteria of sustainable development is affected by national specifications – each national strategy is unique, sets specific objectives and routes to sustainable development and it is not possible to apply it under other conditions.

From the point of view of priorities and integrated objectives of sustainable development in the Slovak Republic it necessary to carry out set strategic, middle-term and short-term objectives of sustainable development in individual aspects. The basis precondition is building and permanent improvement of legal tools and institutions, including effective controlling mechanism serving the citizens and the whole society, which would help to achieve the set objectives. They can help to gradually improve performance of the public administration and other organisations and institutions (key role is played by educational institutions) that would in reverse influence the long-term changes in value orientation and behaviour of inhabitants of the Slovak Republic towards meeting the objectives of sustainable development of the Slovak Republic.

A. Transformation of the Slovak Republic to sustainable development could be in principle carried out by two relatively independent ways:

- through application of current pre-conditions – in particular support processes and trends, which are being currently implemented in the Slovak Republic and which are in accordance with the objectives of the NSDS (although determined by different starting pre-conditions), first of all:
- strict application of principles of sustainable development in the EU pre-accession process,
- relating positive change in the area of legislation, judicial and administrative procedures, increase of responsibility and public control,
- strengthening the role of the third sector and increase of public participation,
- expected development of education and publicity, effective application of science and research, improving the access to information.

B. through realisation of task of the NSDS and its supporting activities, which directly result from the NSDS objectives and their direct output should be fulfilment of NSDS objectives in individual aspects in short-term, middle-term horizon and gradual achievement of priorities and integrated objectives of sustainable development of the Slovak Republic They include:

- continuous assessment of compliance of fundamental development documents in force and under preparation and legal instruments with the

sustainable development concept (principles and criteria of sustainable development) and their mutual harmonisation,

- preparation of key strategies and conceptions of development of the society and economy }Strategy of Social Development of the Slovak Republic, Strategy of New Economy of the Slovak Republic, Strategy of Information Society of the Slovak Republic) as well as updating of the Strategy of the State Environmental Policy of the Slovak Republic),
- specification of strategies in form of action plans,
- preparation of the National Sustainable Development Action Plan of the Slovak Republic – an implementing document that will directly elaborate the NSDS into the form of concrete measures for the state administration (in particular central authorities, first of all sectoral), but for other groups of the society as well
- preparation of methodological guidelines for elaboration of Regional Agendas 21, Local Agendas 21 and their action plans for sustainable development documentation of regions, municipalities and their associations,
- strengthening the position of the Council of the Government for Sustainable Development (its establishment as a key advisory body of the Government in issues of development of the society), ensuring the functionality of regional councils of sustainable development,
- establishment of trans-sectoral professional and methodological workplace – the National Centre for Sustainable Development and Strategic Planning (e.g. by the Office of the Government)
- development of since a research in the area of sustainable development, application of new knowledge in individual spheres of the society (mainly economy, social and natural sciences),support of education in the area of sustainable development (inclusion of sustainable development issues in the curriculum syllabus of school of all levels, education in the spirit of sustainable development),
- permanent publicity of sustainable development concept in public media, publishing and broad distribution of support projects of sustainable development in the Slovak Republic.