

# Bulletin <sup>2</sup> | 2018

The **Netherlands** Chamber of Commerce in the Slovak Republic

## Focus on:

- **25th Anniversary of Bilateral Relations**
- **Slovensko Tulip in Bloom**
- **Shaping Up for the New Digital Economy**

## Events:

- **Tax Seminar**
- **King's Day Celebration 2018**
- **Regional Conference on Challenging Talents**



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## Bulletin info

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25th Anniversary of Bilateral Relations: H.E. Henk Cor van der Kwast and President Andrej Kiska

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# The President Speaks



**Jan Lamber Voortman**  
President of the Netherlands Chamber of Commerce

Dear Patron-Members, Members and Friends,

This year is the anniversary of Netherlands - Slovak cooperation, so special attention is organized by the embassy regarding this major milestone. In a number of events the chamber was invited to participate. We remember the baptizing of the new Tulip, specially grown for this event. If members are interested, I learned from the ambassador that they can be ordered later this year. Also on behalf of the embassy a great film was produced, many members participated and sponsored this initiative. We celebrate the cooperation between Slovakia and the Netherlands and the Chamber will continue her efforts to make this cooperation between members as beneficial as possible. The Netherlands is the biggest investor in Slovakia, and we hope this will continue over the next 25 years. The Chamber's ambition is increase the membership and continue to organize high quality events to facilitate your business.

One of the highlights was our King's Day celebration organized with the Embassy in the Primate's palace (Primaciálny palác). It was a amazing mixture of formal celebration and informal party. The weather treated us nice and the party went on long into the night in the inner courtyards with diplomats and members. When the band started singing Tublatanka songs, the dancefloor was too small.

We had a great number of events with a lot of positive feedback from the attendees. We visited Žilina during our Regional Networking Event. During this event we visited KIA factory to be inspired in how clean and efficient they build cars. In the castle Gbelany we had a small seminar about Talent development with a great panel discussion. The next regional event is planned for next year in the Košice region, and ideas are welcome.

Mr. Barto, former Deputy Governor of the National Bank of Slovakia, was guest of honour at the patron's dinner and there was an in-depth discussion on the economy and healthcare reforms.

VGD and Wall it organized a very successful event on digital currencies, which was sold out. We are planning more innovative topics for events in 2019 and, as usual, ideas are welcome.

You will find more coverage about our other events in this issue of the magazine on various topics.

We always appreciate any ideas you would like to share with us which will help to improve the Chamber. Please contact Mirka and we can schedule an appointment for a discussion. For business-related matters, contact me on: jlvoortman@me.com.

We hope you enjoy reading this issue of the Bulletin and I look forward to speaking to you soon at the Chamber events.

Jan-Lamber

# List of Members

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# Welcome New Members!



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**Daniel Paracka**  
Country Manager

## Aon Central and Eastern Europe

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Pontrain is in Slovakia as it believes in the power of the present (post-communist) generation.

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## Welcome New Board Member



■ **Kamila Pudišová**  
Director Client Services and  
Managing Director

TMF Group is a multinational professional services company, providing mainly accounting, tax, HR and payroll and corporate secretarial services to businesses operating on an international scale.

Kamila's successful career in TMF started in 2001 after graduating from the Faculty of Economics, Management and Marketing at Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica. As an accountant, Kamila started to build her career together with the growth of the company. She grew professionally through various positions where she worked with clients from several business areas such as IT, telecommunication, pharmacy, retail and construction, production, etc.

At present, Kamila is responsible for local service delivery, upholds service quality, drives operational office efficiency, builds strong client relationships, identifies and converts new business opportunities.



Global reach  
Local knowledge

Kamila's work and life has been always affected by her professional basketball career (she took part at the World Women's basketball Championships in 1994 in Sydney). Also thanks to sport, she gained extensive experience on steering her team to achieve the desired goals, to strive for success and to overcome all the obstacles.

Whether it is related to her family, her two amazing daughters or her ordinary working day in TMF, Kamila tries to put an extra effort to everything she does to see the results afterwards. She believes to follow the same approach as a member of the Board of the Netherlands Chamber of Commerce.

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# Slovakia After 25 Years: the country in figures

2018 will be a year of a number of important milestones and anniversaries in Slovakia. This year marks 25 years of the independence of Slovakia. It also marks the 100th anniversary of the creation of an independent Czechoslovakia, the 50th anniversary of the Soviet invasion in 1968 and the 30th anniversary of the Candle Demonstrations in 1988, which was the first important step towards the end of the communist regime in Czechoslovakia.

The Dutch have played an active role in developing business activities in Slovakia and it was 20 years ago that the Netherlands Chamber of Commerce printed their first bulletin. The magazine continues to flourish and membership continues to grow and the NCC continues to be an important platform supporting, promoting and developing Dutch enterprises in Slovakia.

The Bulletin undertook some research and found where the country and its capital Bratislava now stand from an economical and competitive perspective. Look at the stats and judge for yourself, but we have to conclude that for such a young player, in such a dynamic European environment, it's doing really well!



## Macroeconomic Figures

More than fifteen years ago, Slovakia embarked on an ambitious plan of deep structural reforms with a vision to become one of the best business locations in the EU. Today, Slovakia is a full member of the EU, NATO, OECD, Eurozone and Schengen Area. Slovakia adopted the euro on January 1, 2009 and thus became the 16th member state of the Eurozone. This was thanks to the country's sustainable development and good inflation forecasts. The official exchange rate was SKK 30.1260 to the euro. Slovakia's economy expanded further in 2016, driven mainly by strong net exports and accelerating household consumption. Economic activity is expected to continue growing at a solid pace over the forecast horizon, providing further support to the labour market through sustained job creation. According to EUROSTAT, inflation is set to turn positive in 2017 after three years of declining consumer prices. An increase in food and services prices is set to become the main driver of the overall price increases, causing CPI inflation to rise to 0.9 % in 2017.

## GDP Growth Forecast

Booming investment in the automotive and machinery industry and an expected increase in public investment spending, including large infrastructure projects such as the Bratislava ring road, strengthen the outlook.

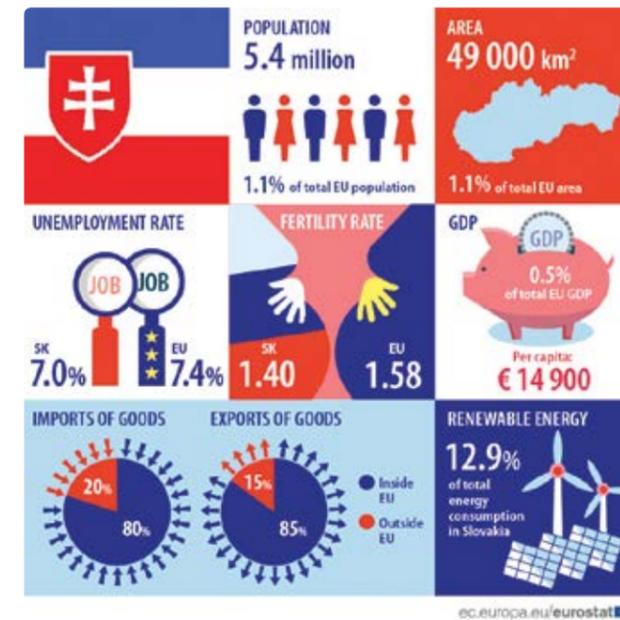
## Country Credit Ratings

Slovakia is generally recognized as an open market economy, with a good credit rating. The following table shows the various credit ratings for CEE countries. Slovakia has maintained its positive momentum, which is a great advantage for foreign investors, as it means that Slovakia, its banks and companies are creditworthy and in a strong financial position.

## Wages in Slovakia

The average monthly wage in Slovakia continues to be low compared to Western Europe. According to data from the Slovak Statistical Office, the average gross monthly wage in 2016 was EUR 912. The official minimum monthly wage as of January 1, 2017 is EUR 435, and the minimum hourly wage is EUR 2.50. The minimum monthly wage is expected to be increased to EUR 460 in 2018.

Wages can also vary significantly depending on the region and industry. For example, a machine operator in manufacturing receives an average gross monthly wage of EUR 633, but a service engineer in the same industry earns on average EUR 1,440. Professionals earn substantially more, for example, the average monthly wage of an IT consultant was EUR 1,837 in 2016. Members of top management receive even more and the average wage of a HR Manager is currently in Slovakia EUR 2,697



## CEE Country Credit Ratings Comparison

Country	Standard & Poor's	Moody's	Fitch
Slovakia	A+ Stable	A2 Stable A+	Stable
Hungary	BBB- Stable	Baa3 Stable	BBB- Stable
Poland	BBB+ Stable	A2 Negative	A- Stable
Czech Repub.	AA- Stable	A1 Stable	A+ Stable

Source: Trading Economics ([www.tradingeconomics.com](http://www.tradingeconomics.com)), Moody's ([www.moodys.com](http://www.moodys.com)), Fitch ([www.fitchratings.com](http://www.fitchratings.com)), National Bank of Slovakia ([www.nbs.sk](http://www.nbs.sk)), 2017

## Ease of Doing Business

Slovakia ranks regularly among the top 35 countries worldwide in the Doing Business Report by the World Bank Group. The Ease of Doing Business ranking from 1 to 189 is an index ranking the effect of a country's regulatory environment on the ease of operating a business.

## The 2017 ranking includes ten areas of business life:

- starting a business;
- dealing with construction permits;
- getting electricity;
- registering property;
- getting credit;
- protecting minority investors;
- paying taxes;
- trading across borders;
- enforcing contracts and resolving insolvency.

## FACTS AND FIGURES

<b>Official name:</b>	Slovak Republic (SR)
<b>State formation date:</b>	1 January 1993
<b>State system:</b>	Republic
<b>Political system:</b>	Parliamentary democracy (150 members of Parliament elected for 4 years)
<b>President:</b>	Andrej Kiska (since 15.6.2014), elected for 5 years
<b>Currency:</b>	Euro (from 1/1/2009)
<b>Capital city:</b>	Bratislava (population 420,000, and 600,000 in the greater Bratislava area)
<b>Population:</b>	5.4 mil.
<b>Population density:</b>	110/km2
<b>Official language:</b>	Slovak
<b>State symbols:</b>	national coat of arms/emblem, national flag, state seal and national anthem "Nad Tatrou sa blýska"
<b>Membership in international organizations:</b>	EU (since 1 May 2004), NATO, UN, UNESCO, OECD, OBSE, CERN, WHO, INTERPOL, etc.
<b>International codes:</b>	SK, SVK, bar code 858
<b>Area:</b>	49 035 km2
<b>Bordering countries:</b>	Hungary (654.8 km), Poland (541.1 km), the Czech Republic (251.8 km), Austria (106.7 km), Ukraine (97.8 km)
<b>Administrative divisions:</b>	8 self-governing regions (Bratislava, Trnava, Trenčín, Nitra, Žilina, Banská Bystrica, Prešov, Košice region), 79 districts, 138 towns, 2,891 municipalities (including towns)
<b>Nationalities / ethnic groups:</b>	Slovak (80.7 %), Hungarian (8.5 %), Roma (2 %), Czech (0.6 %), Ruthenian (0.6 %), Ukrainian (0.1 %), German (0.1 %), Polish (0.1 %) and other (7.3 %)
<b>Religion:</b>	Believers approximately 86.6 % of which: Roman Catholic (62 %) Evangelical (5.9 %) Greek-Catholic (3.8 %) Reformed Christians (1.8 %) Orthodox (0.9 %) Other (1.6 %) Unspecified (10.6 %) Without confession about (3.4 %)



**Bratislava:**  
*Slovak City Celebrates 25 Years as Capital*



No longer in the shadow of Vienna, Budapest and Prague, the Slovak capital is shaking off its dour Communist-era reputation and rediscovering its position in the heart of Central Europe. 25 years ago, Bratislava found itself thrust into a new role as capital of a newly independent Slovakia. Since then it has carved its own niche in Central Europe, refusing to copy or be overshadowed by its neighbours, and shaking off its dour Communist-era reputation to rediscover a wealth of historic architecture and its enviable location on the Danube.

The engine of Slovakia's fast-growing economy, the city is now home to many tech and media companies, while increasing numbers of tourists come to enjoy its baroque palaces, fairy-tale cobbled

streets and affordable bars. The exoticism may be gone, but so is the sense of the city's position at the edge – Bratislava is at the heart of Central Europe.

**On the move**

Ask Bratislavans what their major beef is and one invariably receives the same answer – transport. Despite being a modest-sized city, its position on two sides of the broad Danube, together with the way it fans out into a range of scattered villages, makes connectivity difficult. Added to this is the historic lack of investment and patchy execution of infrastructure plans. A metro was planned in the communist period, but the impractical project was mothballed after the Velvet Revolution. Popular opposition means Bratislava is reputedly the only EU capital without a citywide parking policy.

Things are changing, albeit slowly. July 2016 saw the return of trams to Petržalka, but critics point

out the system doesn't extend far beyond the river. Bike-sharing is to be introduced in 2018, and an electric car-sharing scheme is planned. Further into the future, there is much local excitement about Hyperloop, a transportation concept developed from an idea by Elon Musk that could in theory carry passengers at speeds up to 1,200 km/h. Initial agreements have been signed on a Hyperloop network connecting Bratislava with Vienna and Budapest.

**How liveable is Bratislava?**

For all the complaints about transport and parking, the locals are unanimous: Bratislava is a very liveable city. The centre is compact and easily walkable, with a largely pedestrianised core. Due to its status as a cold war border zone, much of the green belt around the city is pristine. Particularly popular are the riparian forests near the confluence of the Danube and Morava. The Small Carpathians, a range of low mountains stretching north of the city, provide another option for outdoors activities. Some of

the best cycle paths are around Petržalka. Once a multi-ethnic village known for its orchards, the district was settled in the post-war period by Slovaks from around the country, and a wave of "panel block" developments followed in the 1970s. The district had a reputation as a "concrete jungle" and was nicknamed "the Bronx" in the 1990s and was notorious for its drug problems. Now, it has a reputation as one of the greenest areas of the city, with easy access to the Old Town.

Source: The Guardian

**Did you know Slovakia...**

- Has a similar population to Denmark, Finland, Singapore, Minnesota, or New Zealand!
- Is a member of NATO (since 2004) and a fully integrated European country (since 2009)
- Has a higher rating than Greece, Portugal, Spain and Italy; 2nd highest in V4 region
- Produces high quality products, mostly for Germany (21% of its exports)
- Offers the third lowest labour costs in Europe
- Is a global leader in cars produced per capita (192 per 1,000 capita)

**City in numbers**

- 907** The year Bratislava is first mentioned in historical sources, though the area has been settled for thousands of years
- 1993** The year of Slovakia's independence
- 17,9 %** Proportion of the working-age population in "brain businesses" – the highest of any capital in Europe, according to the European Centre for Policy Reform and Entrepreneurship
- 88,9 %** Slovaks as a proportion of the population in 2008





# Highlighting Good Relations and Blossoming Slovensko Tulips

2018 is a year of celebrations and commemoration in Slovakia. The centennial celebration of the establishment of the First Czechoslovak Republic in 1918, the 50th commemoration of the Prague Spring in 1968 and the 25th celebration of the establishment of the independent Slovak Republic in 1993. For the Netherlands, it means we are celebrating 25 years of fruitful bilateral co-operation.

by:  **Henk Cor van der Kwast,**  
Dutch Ambassador in  
Slovak Republic

 Kingdom of the Netherlands


The Dutch ambassador Henk Cor van der Kwast and Slovak President A. Kiska symbolically baptizing the tulleps in the presidential garden

From the first day on 1 January 1993, we recognized the new Slovak Republic. Soon after that, a special envoy with the title "Chargé d'Affairs" was sent to Bratislava to set up the Embassy. In 1994, we rented the building at Frana Krala 5. We are still located there today, but have renovated the office and made it a green office. From the end of the nineties, the Netherlands was an active supporter of the European ambitions of the young

state, assisting with its accession to NATO and to the EU, both successfully concluded in 2004. Since then, Slovakia and the Netherlands have forged a strong partnership. For both our countries, the membership of these organizations has brought peace, security and prosperity. The Netherlands strongly supported Slovakia when it introduced the Euro in 2008. The active economic role in the Euro group has placed Slovakia in

the heart of Europe.

It is important to remember these milestones, as they should not be taken for granted. The achievements came after hard work. Slovaks can be proud of what they have achieved: a country with strong democratic institutions, a flourishing economy and a vibrant civil society.

In a short documentary made by the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava and the Embassy, we highlighted the main topics of our 25 years of partnership. In this bulletin, you will find an article about it. I want to thank the companies that have supported the documentary, without them this would not have been possible. The documentary underlines, that our partnership has been built on good personal relations, trust, the positive image we have of each other, and a shared commitment to co-operation. The documentary has been distributed to the sponsors and will be available to a larger public soon.

To express our gratitude for our strong partnership, I had the honor to present a special gift to President Andrej Kiska: a new tulip variety, red and white, and officially named "Slovensko". We baptized the first blossoming tulips in the Presidential Garden in April. The tulip is a beautiful symbol of our friendship. We plan to plant the Slovensko tulip this year in the major cities of Slovakia. The tulip will then blossom all over the country and

grace many gardens.

Looking back at those 25 years, there are many interesting stories of co-operation to be told. Later this year, the Embassy will start a project to document some of those stories, as they should not be forgotten. Whether it is on official level, between businesses, in the cultural field or between civil society organizations, Slovaks and Dutch have always successfully worked together, benefitted from each other's experiences and, in the meantime, often have developed personal friendships. It is those stories of successful co-operation, that in my view lay the foundation of our common future in Europe.



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# Documentary on 25 Years of Bilateral Relations between Slovakia and the Netherlands



A shot from the documentary.

Link to the documentary: <https://goo.gl/i7FVU1>

On the occasion of the 25th anniversary of bilateral relations between Slovakia and the Netherlands, the Dutch Embassy prepared a short documentary film showing the key areas of Dutch-Slovak cooperation and reflecting on 25 years of strong bilateral relations. We hope the film will serve as a trigger for further partnerships in perspective areas.

The film was produced by documentary film students of the Academy of Performing Arts as a part of their studies and one of their first real projects, and comprises 5 chapters which function as separate short films: Political Cooperation, Civil Society, Economic Cooperation, Culture and Looking Ahead.

The film includes interviews with Dutch and Slovak personalities, such as former Dutch Ambassadors, Gajus Scheltema and Daphne Bergsma, the former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Slovakia, Pavol Demeš, current Ambassadors, Henk Cor van der Kwast and Roman Bužek, the President of the Chamber Jan-Lamber Voortman, the Dutch Honorary Consul, Matúš Murajda, the founder of Danubiana, Gerard Meulensteen, and the translator, Abram Muller.

The documentary was sponsored by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, Danubiana Meulensteen Art Museum, GEMOR Fashion, ING Bank, Union, Dolphin Slovakia, pro4CE, Davinci software, and Cloetta Slovakia.

The Embassy hosted a premiere at the Academy of Performing Arts on May 22, 2018, and the film will be available through our channels, including social media.



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# Bryndza and Stroopwafels:

looking back at 25 years  
of Slovakia and the Netherlands

by:



**Boudewijn Dekker,**  
*thecuriousdutchman.com*

*"A Dutch guy living in Slovakia, sharing blogs, pictures and opinions. Discover the life, culture, history, landscapes, downsides, upsides and, above all, the unique beauty of Slovakia."*

## Bryndza on the road to Europe

It was a drizzly autumn morning, when the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs, Peter Kooijmans, and other representatives of the European Community (EC) met in Luxembourg on Monday 4 October 1993 with the Prime Minister of the newly created Slovak Republic, Vladimír Mečiar. That day would enter the books as a historic moment for Slovakia and a starting point for new opportunities for both sides. On this eventful day, Slovakia officially entered into a new bilateral trade agreement with the European Community focused on economic and industrial cooperation between Slovakia and the EC member states.

This bilateral trade agreement was a milestone for all countries involved. For the EC, it opened doors to a part of Europe that



*Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs, Peter Kooijmans (left) and the Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic, Vladimír Mečiar*

had been closed for decades, creating new opportunities for the development of individual member states and the European Union as a whole. For Slovakia, however, the agreement would have an even bigger impact. First of all, it was a clear sign for Slovakia that it had the potential to play alongside the big players in Europe, after having been controlled by other governments for centuries. Slovakia was always part of a larger entity - the Hungarian Empire, the Habsburg Empire, the Nazi German Empire, the Czechoslovak Republic, and the Soviet Union. It never had the opportunity to shine in its own right. To enter into a trade agreement with the majority of Europe would open the Slovak market to a new world of products, labour, knowledge, and experience. After its independence on 1 January 1993, Slovakia could finally step out of the shadows and show itself to the world.

Secondly, this bilateral trade agreement laid the foundations for Slovakia to enter the European Union as a member state on 1 May 2004. In 1993, this was not a guaranteed outcome. At that time, Slovakia was not considered a candidate to join the EU or NATO. Despite gaining its independence, the political situation was far from stable, the economy was only at the beginning of taking off, the split from Czechoslovakia saw most industry crossing the Slovak borders, and even the renowned Czechoslovak ice-hockey team moved in its entirety to the Czech Republic. In 1997, US State Secretary Madeleine Albright famously described Slovakia as "a black hole in the heart of Europe", while later in 2006, Bulgarian political scientist Ivan Krastev compared Slovakia in the 90s to a "beer-drinking version of Belarus". It was clear that Slovakia still had a long way to go.

Instead of resigning itself to this situation, however, Slovakia took this opportunity firmly by the horns. Slovakia boomed under Prime Minister Mikuláš Dzurinda. Reforms were pushed

through that significantly improved the tax, pension and labour systems. Foreign direct investments poured in, as Slovakia moved ahead of the rest of the post-communist world. Moreover, Dzurinda ran a government that was markedly pro-European and Slovakia broke with its past and became a force to be reckoned with. Slovaks are notoriously hard workers and this hard work paid off. On 29 March 2004, Slovakia joined NATO. On 1 May of the same year, it joined the European Union. On 21 December 2007, it became part of the Schengen Agreement. Slovakia was (and still is) one of the fastest growing new economies in the EU, which resulted on 1 January 2009 in the introduction of the euro as the national currency.

## Stroopwafels in Slovakia

Slovakia has clearly developed extensively since its independence in 1993 and it is still going strong. This development should undoubtedly be credited mainly to the achievements of the Slovak people. However, no country can break away from a troubled past without outside help. When the Netherlands signed their bilateral trade agreement with Slovakia, twenty five years ago, this is exactly what they set out to provide. Slovakia had just emerged as a free state and the market opened up to all things western, while the West could start to profit from all things eastern. The Netherlands would not be the Netherlands if it did not rise to the occasion, while Slovakia also had its eyes on progression.

A new chapter for both sides, but one with a whole new set of challenges. For starters, interacting with a different country is far from straightforward. Apart from the language barriers, this meant interacting with a nation with a different history, identity and evolution, as well as differences in business mentality, personal relationships, habits and traditions, social and economic values, as well as ethics. Would the Slovak people be able to deal with Dutch straightforwardness and outspokenness? Would the Netherlands understand the importance of hierarchy and formality, ingrained in Slovak society? Would Dutch liberalism clash with Slovak conservatism? Or perhaps we might ask: would "bryndza" go well with "stroopwafels"? The answers to such questions would lay the foundations of either a successful and long-lasting relationship or a failure to cooperate. It would be fair to say that centuries of trading with other cultures prepared the Netherlands better for such cooperation than the Slovaks. However, one should never underestimate Slovakia's mentality of hard work, technical skills, and drive to compete on the international market, as well as a desire to be taken seriously by its partners. The Netherlands, with its strong sense of tolerance, business-mindedness and fighting spirit, found a strong partner in Slovakia at all levels of society.

The Netherlands has had a strong presence in Slovakia since the signing of the trade agreement. The relationship between Slovakia and the EU in the early 90s can be best described as being like a diesel engine - slow starting, but unstoppable once at full speed, and cooperation between Slovakia and the Netherlands moved into top gear in 1997, when The Netherlands Chamber

of Commerce was established in Slovakia. The Netherlands had had an embassy in Bratislava since 1994, under the first ambassador, H.E. Gajus Scheltema, under whom the foundation of the relationship between Slovakia and the Netherlands was laid down. Together, the Chamber and the Embassy made it their mission to help Slovakia become a better version of its former self. Due to Slovakia's financial stability, combined with the work ethic of the Slovak people, international companies found an attractive home away from home. Around 140 Dutch companies have established themselves in Slovakia, ranging from large multinationals like Heineken and Shell, to small IT companies and rural guest houses, stroopwafel-makers and a "kroket"-restaurant, making the Netherlands one of the largest investors in Slovakia.

Also in other areas, Slovakia and the Netherlands have a strong history of cooperation. On a social level, in 2017, the Chamber of Commerce held its thirteenth Charity Gala, an event launched in 2005 which has raised more than EUR 200 000 for various social institutions around Slovakia. In 2000, the Danubiana Meulensteen Art Museum opened its doors on the banks of the Danube, 20 km south of Bratislava. The museum, founded by the Dutch art collector, Gerard Meulensteen, and the Slovak gallery, Vincent Polakovič, houses a beautiful fusion of Dutch and Slovak modern art. The Dutch Embassy and the Dutch Chamber have worked together on many occasions to promote history, culture, traditions and the arts in Slovakia. Celebrations such as King's Day and Sinterklaas are just some of the examples where the Dutch and Slovak community come together and celebrate a traditional Dutch feast.

With twenty-five years of cooperation in the rear view mirror, can we say the relationship between Slovakia and the Netherlands is a success story? Although I would not recommend a "stroopwafel" with a "bryndza" topping, the answer is a definitive "yes". The relationship between the countries is one of steel forged in fire. After a turbulent start in the early nineties, the Netherlands and Slovakia have built a cooperation founded on mutual respect and appreciation. In Slovakia, they have worked, are working and will continue to work closely to build a better future for the country, for Slovaks as well as its foreign citizens. Undeniably, this fruitful relationship has contributed to changing Slovakia's image from a "black hole" to a "little gem" in the heart of Europe.

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# Dutch Slovak Agricultural Relationships

by:



**Martijn Homan,**  
Agricultural Counsellor



Kingdom of the Netherlands

Cooperation between Slovakia and the Netherlands goes back to the seventies and early eighties, when an agricultural working group was established. In this working group, common plans were developed focused on cooperation in politics and agribusiness. At the end of the nineties, the need for intensifying cooperation increased due to the accession of Slovakia and the Czech Republic to the EU. In 1999, an agricultural office was opened in Prague, dedicated to strengthening bilateral agricultural relations between the Netherlands, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Times have changed, and relationships have developed.

Today, many contacts are established in Brussels, or via email and phone. Dutch agricultural exports to Slovakia have increased to over EUR 250 mil. annually. Horticultural products (flowers and vegetables) are the most exported products. Imports from Slovakia to the Netherlands have increased (sugar and oilseeds are important categories). In recent years, the Embassy has been involved in several activities with Slovak counterparts, related to the Common Agricultural Policy, dairy and pig production and flowers. The 25th anniversary of Slovakia was highlighted with the baptism of the "Slovensko" Tulip.



## Colouring Public Greenery

On April 19, 2018, the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in cooperation with the Slovak Landscaping Association organized a seminar "colouring public greenery" in Bratislava-Ružinov. The seminar's goal was to stimulate the use of flower bulbs and perennials in public spaces via sharing knowledge and exchanging experiences.

The use of flowering plants in public greenery used to be much more common in Slovakia. Many of the plants were also grown in Slovakia. Currently, the use of flowering plants in public greenery is much more limited, partly due to objections to the cost, partly because the knowledge of plants is deteriorating at the public level. During the event, Slovak and Dutch experts gave lectures on the history and role of flowers and plants in public greenery and present challenges and opportunities. They emphasized that the use of flowers and plants does not only have an aesthetic value, but has much more added value. For example, plants have positive impacts on climate change preparedness, biodiversity, water-absorption, temperature, social interaction, productivity and health. All these aspects are combined in the Green City philosophy, an international approach initiated in the Netherlands in 2002 that places green space at the centre of development and regeneration. This philosophy uses evidence-based arguments to highlight the importance of greenery - an investment in green infrastructure is repaid many times over in terms of the benefits it brings.

The seminar was opened by the Dutch Agricultural Counsellor, Martijn Homan and Mayor of Bratislava-Ružinov, Dušan Pekár. It was moderated by Miroslava Pačlova and contained presentations by Griffioen Vaste Planten, JUB Holland, Kulla and the municipality of Piešťany. Over 60 people attended the seminar, amongst them growers, landscapers and governmental representatives from several Slovak municipalities.

More info can be found on: <https://goo.gl/ib8AxA>

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# Denisa Kasová

## Slovak Honorary Consul

**"I want to build something with a big impact and, in doing so, reach the next level for our economy."**

In the summer of 2017, Slovak-Dutch entrepreneur, Denisa Kasova, was officially appointed as Honorary Consul to the Slovak Republic. Kasova says that it was an honour to be asked, even though she did not actually know exactly what the position was at first.

As honorary consul, Kasova represents the economic goals of both the Netherlands and Slovakia. "There are two main responsibilities: civil affairs and economic diplomacy", she explained. She seeks themes, industries and initiatives that the two similarly sized European nations have in common: when the western Slovak city of Trnava wanted to become more bike-friendly, Kasova helped to organise a delegation to visit Groningen, a city with more bikes than people, to see how their infrastructure is built around cycling.

Both the Dutch federal government and the Confederation of Netherlands Industry and Employers (VNO NCW in Dutch), which represents 115,000 large and small Dutch companies at home and abroad see honorary consuls as a crucial way to foster connections with other countries.



Denisa Kasova with the Royal family during King's Day in Groningen

According to Kasova, the preeminent economic strengths in Slovakia are the automotive sector and its peripheral industries, the robotics industry (Slovakia has the highest number of robots per capita in Europe), the financial sector, IT, steel and aluminium, and the chemical industry. The potential of the nation's human capital is one of its greatest resources: "In the Netherlands, we have a labour shortage, so I've been learning more about Slovak measures to ensure a growing well-educated highly skilled population", she said. "Slovaks can learn from the Dutch, and vice versa."

According to the honorary consul, the Netherlands' strengths are: the energy transition and innovation, healthy ageing, the agricultural and food industries, digital society, water technolo-

gy, world class education, innovation and research. "I could talk about the prospects for hours!" she said with a laugh.

In this 25th year of bilateral cooperation between the two nations, Kasova is looking ahead toward potential collaborations, be they business and economic development, cultural or educational exchange. Eurosonic, a large European music showcase in Groningen, features a different region of Europe each year, and the 2019 edition will highlight musical talents from Slovakia and the Czech Republic. "This is just a coincidence", she said, "but we are looking into ways to expand this even further by focusing on business activities." Comenius University in Bratislava, where Kasova graduated in 1994, will celebrate its centenary in 2019, and Kasova wants to put the institution in touch with the University of Groningen, which recently celebrated its 400th anniversary in grand style.

Kasova has lived in the Netherlands for more than 20 years, but she came of age in Slovakia as the Velvet Revolution ended in 1989. Virtually anything was possible for young Slovaks at that time, which may help explain why she continues to view the world as a place without barriers. "If you wanted to do something back then, you could just do it if you worked for it", Kasova said. "That was the environment at the time, and the entrepreneurial spirit really took hold both locally and among foreign companies moving in."

One of those foreign companies was the international advertising agency, BBDO. A year before graduating with a degree in English and Slovak literature, Kasova got a job there as an account manager, and she quickly realised that business and strategic company development were her true passion.

Her position at the company also introduced her to a Dutch colleague with whom she would eventually move to the Netherlands in 1997. The couple had a great lifestyle in Bratislava, but maintaining that momentum in a new country proved challenging. "There weren't many businesses and organisations that were keen to work with people who couldn't speak Dutch in the Northern Netherlands", Kasova says. "If they were out there, I wasn't able to find them."

She effectively had to start all over again, whether she liked it or not. So she did – and she thrived. "I've worked in top level management positions for 17 years", Kasova said. "They're positions where I have about 100 balls in the air at any given time, from commercial companies to public-private companies, and now I tend to be more

involved with bigger societal issues."

Kasova possesses the same strong entrepreneurial spirit that she sees embodied in the Northern Netherlands. That is perhaps best demonstrated by her current role at the Noordelijke Innovation Board (NIB), where she started working two years ago. "I've taken to it like a duck to water. It calls for big picture, creative thinking and being able to see problems clearly."

The Noordelijke Innovation Board is a collaboration among businesses, education and governments in the Northern Netherlands. This triple helix, or new governance, approach is based on the idea that innovation and economic development occur when business takes the lead and academic and educational institutions get involved. All three elements influence each other, organically resulting in new forms of collaboration and business development.

Kasova believes that businesses are best equipped to realise fundamental changes due to their understanding of the market and vision for the future. "But what we want to add to that, and have been able to do in dozens of cases, is to have a more holistic view of these companies and how they can best achieve those goals."

NIB focuses on the big game changing issues: their biggest issue to date is changing the entire global energy system. For more than 60 years, natural gas has been extracted from a massive gas field in the province of Groningen, providing a reliable source of funding for Dutch infrastructure and energy. But in the past decade, extraction operations have led to a number of earthquakes. NIB's ambitious and comprehensive solution to the problem is to switch from natural gas to green hydrogen, first locally and then internationally.

"Green hydrogen will facilitate the energy transition in terms of chemistry, transportation and electricity", Kasova said. "It is necessary for the realization of the Paris climate goals, as well as making the economy stronger and greener. The Northern Netherlands is uniquely positioned to develop a green hydrogen economy because of its large-scale green electricity production (especially off-shore wind), its knowledge infrastructure, large-scale chemical clusters, importation of green electricity and its existing gas infrastructure which can be retrofitted easily and cheaply to transport green hydrogen."

In addition to the business, education and government strands of the helix, Kasova and her fellow NIB team members see the average citizen as the fourth and equally crucial element in new governance. "There will come a day that I won't have natural gas in my home, and my home could be well suited to transition to hydrogen gas instead. So that is something that is tangible for the average person", Kasova explained.

Kasova sees promoting economic and cultural development in the Northern Netherlands and fostering connections between the region and the wider world as vital to ensuring a continued high quality of life in the region. "This is a wonderful area to live in, and we need strong companies to make sure that continues to be the case", she said. "If you want to live somewhere, you have to be able to find work there. So we need to create jobs."

Follow on [twitter.com/kasovadenisa](https://twitter.com/kasovadenisa)



### Bio

Name: Denisa Kasová  
Nationality: Dutch and Slovak  
Date of birth: 4 May 1972, Bratislava

#### Professional Experience

Noordelijke Innovation Board, April 2016 - present  
General Director

Consulate for the Slovak Republic, January 2016 - present  
Slovak Honorary Consul

Storm Digital (previously Storm Marketing Consultants),  
January 2013 - March 2016  
CEO

Energy Delta Institute, Energy Business School, January  
2008 - January 2013  
Managing Director

AOG School of Management, October 2006 - December  
2007  
Programme Director

Initio strategic communication, April 2001 - January 2008  
Managing Director

#### Education

Wagner Group: Governance training for management and  
supervisory board members - 2018

Nyenrode Business University: Master class Finance and  
Accounting - 2016

University of Groningen: Post academic course on  
Business Strategy - 2009-2010

Comenius University, Bratislava: Philosophy faculty,  
Slovakian and English - 1990-1994

# Choosing and Preparing Talent at Fifteen

Every employer's dream is to employ as many motivated and talented people as possible and to employ people interested in their own development, as such employees will provide the backbone for company development. The best tool for achieving this company goal is the dual educational system.

by:



**Tomáš Kurtanský,**  
Štátny inštitút odborného  
vzdelávania



Dual education picks talent for future employers at 15 years of age and gives them the opportunity to develop their skills and knowledge in a particular area. In the dual educational system, employers become a part of the educational process and are able to form and practically prepare their future employees directly in the production process. Young people become experienced professionals able to start work immediately.

## How it works

The dual educational system was set up in September 2015 and is governed by No. 61/2015 Coll. The Vocational Education and Training Act. It allows employers looking for a technical high school to cooperate with to enter the dual educational system. The partnership between the employer and the student is defined in a learning agreement. The employer-school



technologies, we are gradually adapting the fields of study to them. We are planning to create more new fields of study in the future."

## Less administration and more money for employers

A combination of education at school and at the company will make the legislative changes even more effective and increase the attractiveness and quality of vocational education and training.

One of the amendments to the Act on Vocational Education that will be implemented in the new school year, is the introduction of direct payments to help smaller firms and tradesmen enter the dual education system. Small and medium-sized enterprises will be able to receive a contribution of up to EUR 1 000 per student.

For large employers that will provide practical lessons of over 400 hours, this will be EUR 700 per student with a learning contract. A grant of EUR 300 can be obtained when 200 to 400 hours of practical lessons are provided per school year. Benefits provided to employers in the dual education system will remain at the original amount.

relationship is governed by a dual education contract. This contract specifies the scope, conditions and coordination of the student's vocational training with the learning agreement. In the dual education system, the school-student-employer cooperation brings clear benefits for all involved.

## Join the club

The "one stop shop" for dual education is the State Institute of Vocational Training (which is managed by the Ministry of Education). It provides all the necessary information during the entire dual system. If you need to develop high quality employers to take your company forward, take the opportunity and enter the dual education system!

## Companies grow with the dual system

Overall, nearly 500 employers have joined the Slovak dual education system. By educating students directly in production, employers avoid the lack of skilled workers and the long and financially demanding training for an inexperienced workforce.

Martin Tvrdý, an experienced coordinator of dual education at ZF Slovakia said "We can only produce high quality with highly trained people who know the company and have a positive relationship with it. We can do all this in three or four years. During this period, students get to know the corporate culture and all about the company". When the graduates get a job offer from the company, they know what to expect because they know the company. Dual education at ZF Slovakia will produce its first graduates this year.

The first students will also graduate this year from the dual education system at Decodom.

From the beginning of the next school year, Decodom, in cooperation with technical high schools working with wood, is starting a new position - technician for wood-working CNC equipment - furniture production that will create experienced woodworkers and furniture manufacturers. Monika Stoličná, from Decodom said "We have created a completely new field of study, techniques for wood-working on CNC equipment, in cooperation with wood-working schools." They created a new field of study based on experience with the dual education and have adapted it to their conditions. She added "We adapt fields of study to our new technologies that we have in the manufacturing process. In the beginning, students were taught the basics, but as we now have many new production



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# Help! My Staff Are Leaving... What Can I Do????

Retaining your staff in tight labour markets is a challenge. It is becoming an even bigger challenge as the demand for professionals is way bigger than the supply.

What can you do? Here are some practical tips:

1. Increase the salaries of your key people before they ask for a raise
2. Ask your staff what they think should be improved (before they leave you due to problems)
3. Fix the problems immediately
4. Create transparency about everything in your company (goals, policies, finances... everything)
5. Keep your promises (many great people leave because promises are not kept)
6. Reward your top-performers generously
7. Train your not-so-good-performers so they become top-performers
8. Search for and select the very best: don't compromise - engage an agency (such as us!) by doing a thorough selection process
9. Pay competitive salaries
10. Select your staff at a high quality assessment centre so that you are sure there is a good match
11. Remove trouble makers, and terrible managers and team-leaders (many companies have departments with relatively high personnel fluctuation and this is usually caused by bad managers and/or terrible team-members)
12. Don't hire overqualified staff for simple jobs, often the profiles are unnecessarily demanding, and if you hire overqualified people they will leave
13. Make sure you implement 12!
14. Show loyalty towards your staff instead of demanding they are loyal to you
15. Do everything you can so that your staff can be as successful as possible, instead of demanding they work to make you successful

If you know any more tips and tricks, please share them with all of us. We all need to retain our talented colleagues!

by our member:



**Gerard Koolen**,  
Group Managing Partner



## Bio

Name: Gerard Koolen  
Date of birth : September 29, 1961  
Languages: Dutch, English,  
German, French,  
Slovak, Czech

### Professional Experience

Lugera & Makler, 1996 - present,  
Group Managing Partner

Obutex/Interconti, 1992 - 1996,  
Managing Director

A-Select/Q-Sense, 1991 - 1992,  
Sales Manager

KKB kunst of vormgeving, 1986 -  
1991, Owner

A-Select, Market Research  
Company, 1984 - 1986,  
Part-time sales & market research  
job

### Education

HES (HEAO) Amsterdam CE  
(Commerciële Economie -  
Marketing) Higher Economical  
School of Amsterdam, Commercial  
Economy, 1983 - 1986

### Other:

Co-author of Reply with History,  
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ReplyWithHistory.com

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# The Netherlands Chamber of Commerce in the Slovak Republic

non-profit civil association  
est. 1997.



The Netherlands Chamber of Commerce is a meeting place for people looking to conduct successful business in the Slovak Republic or the Netherlands and a place to exchange information.

The main purpose of the Chamber is to provide extensive support for commercial and other relations between the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the Slovak Republic and to support and protect the common interests of its members, primarily:

- to assist members with networking and lobbying
- to promote Dutch and Slovak businesses, particularly those of our members
- to support the exchange of information, know-how and experience among the members
- to promote investments and trade with Slovakia

## Membership Benefits

- Chamber members are invited to all business events to network and socialize
- Members can attend most Chamber events free of charge
- Enjoy priority over non-members at all events organized by the Chamber
- Promote your company in The Bulletin, on the website and via other channels
- Receive the Chamber's quarterly magazine – The Bulletin

**Become a member!**

If you are interested in becoming a member, please contact us at:

Moskovská 13, 81108 Bratislava  
Tel.: +421 944 308 441  
e-mail: director@netherlandschamber.sk  
www.netherlandschamber.sk

# From School to Work and Life

For more than 15 years, the SOCIA Foundation has been promoting and supporting social change and innovation.

The goal of one of our programs is to support people who, for various reasons, rely on help from others, especially through the development of community-based social services. For this reason, at the end of the last year we initiated a project to include young people with health or social disadvantages into the work process.

by our member:



Martina Petijová, Project manager

# socĩa



Photo by Rawpixel on Unsplash

This 40-month transition program: from school to life, will be financially supported by the VELUX Foundation from Denmark. These young people seek self-realization from applying their abilities and skills. This applies not only to private life, but also to professional opportunities. It is important to have a supportive

environment in which young people with disadvantages can cope with the search for a first job, housing, and social contacts, especially if they cannot rely on a supportive environment in their own family or children's home. Why is it important to integrate them? So they can find themselves in a supportive

environment and in supportive relationships at the time of crucial inclusion. And so they can cope with the transition to professional life when they need to learn independence and acquire all the necessary skills for normal professional and personal life. The program will focus on transition from the educational system to professional life, which is also meant to prevent long-term unemployment of hard-to-employ young people and school leavers from vocational training schools and special boarding schools. The result should be a reduction in reliance on social benefits and a transition to the combination of receiving a disability pension (for people with severe disabilities) and part-time or full-time employment. We strive to support young people in stronger social relationships and in taking responsibility for their own lives and the environment in which they live.

We will provide support for young people with disabilities in finding jobs and in integrating into the community. They will get their first work experience and develop social skills. We will also support the development of other areas needed for independent living, such as money management, leisure activities, travel and interpersonal relationships.

We will implement the project in the Banská Bystrica region

(mainly Banská Bystrica, Brezno and Lučenec). Through individual support for young students with multiple disadvantages, we will enable them to transition to life and work.

As part of the project, we are looking for partners who can help us with the basic technical equipment for workers in direct contact with students and potential employers and we are also looking for potential employers, or professional mentors in these locations in the Banská Bystrica region.

[www.socia.sk](http://www.socia.sk)  
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responsibility



commercial sense



sustainable business

Moving towards sustainability is not about achieving perfection. It is about achieving improvement. And at ING, we reward improvement.

We want to help your business improve its sustainability performance and we offer you the financial incentives to do so. Whether you are increasing supply chain transparency or building a more collaborative circular business model, we look at where you are going and want to help you get there.

In short, we take the long view, offering you our connections to finance as well as a network of expertise and experience in making sustainable business practice pay.

[ingwb.com/improve](https://ingwb.com/improve)

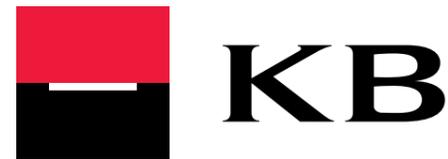
# Why Slovak Wages do not Grow Fast Enough?

by our member:



**Monika Junicke,**  
Economist

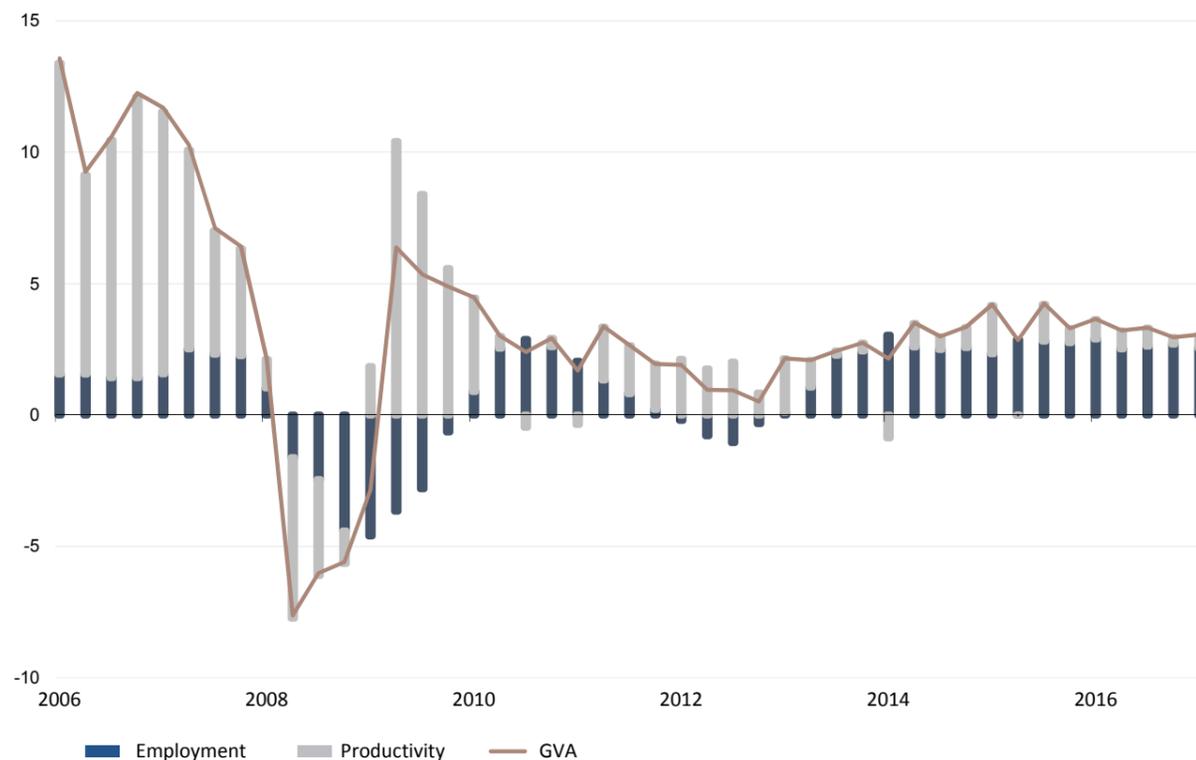
NA PARTNERSTVE ZÁLEŽÍ



Slovak labour market is tighter than ever before. Unemployment fell below 6% for the first time at the end of the year, although even before the financial crisis in 2008 it was always higher than 7.4%. Employment has grown for eight consecutive quarters at a stable pace of above 2% yoy, with more workers arriving from abroad, including returning Slovaks. However, the dynamics of

the real wages remains the lowest in the CEE region and thus, there is still space for further growth. According to classical economic theory, when unemployment declines and there is a labour shortage, wages rise. The wage dynamics depends on pressure created by unemployment rate falling below NAIRU (the non-accelerating inflation rate

Graph 1. Productivity, employment and GVA (% , yoy)



of unemployment). The lower the unemployment relative to NAIRU, the higher the wage dynamics should be. The inverse relationship between the unemployment rate and wage growth is described by the Phillips curve. It seems, however, that the strong evidence of the curve no longer applies for Slovakia. The relationship has weakened since the recession in 2008 and the wage growth remains subdued despite a sharp decline in the unemployment rate. There might be several explanations for why wage growth lags the falling unemployment rate. Possible reasons the Phillips curve no longer works could be an inflow of workers from abroad boosting employee levels, inflationary expectations anchored at low levels and the decreasing influence of labour unions. But the solution to the puzzle might be simply hidden in productivity growth. Thus, the sources of gross value added dynamics might explain why wages in Slovakia have not accelerated much despite the unemployment rate being below NAIRU for more than two years. GVA is rising, but is driven mostly by a rise in employment, while productivity growth has been negligible. (Graph 1)

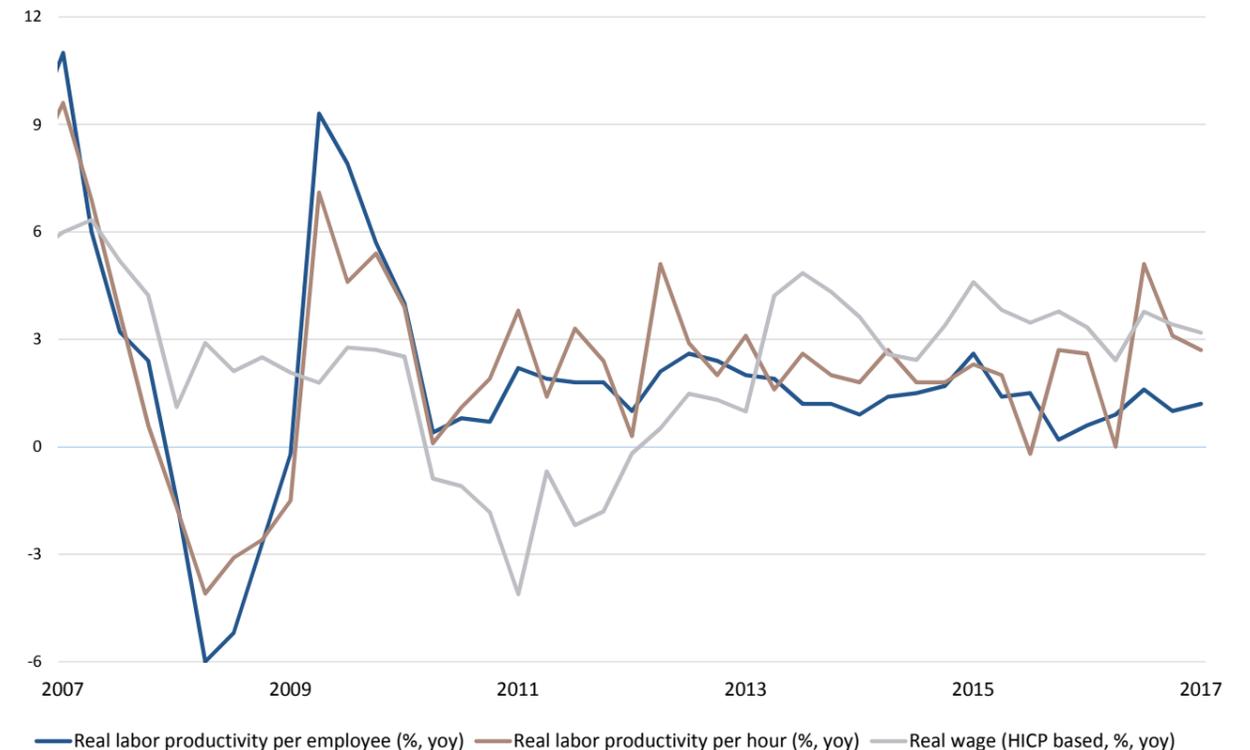
Nevertheless, wage growth should be in line with productivity growth. Otherwise, higher wages cut corporations' profit margins or force them to raise prices. Currently, wage growth in Slovakia exceeds productivity growth. Low productivity means the Slovak wages remain substantially below those of other developed EU. While in the EU15 the average hourly wage was slightly above EUR20 in 4Q17, in Slovakia it was around EUR6,8. This may be explained by its economic structure. The main part of the gross value added is

created by industry, where the most important sector is the car industry and this sector is heavily pro-cyclical. This makes the Slovak economy more vulnerable to external shocks, especially now in light of the risk of trade wars. In developed EU countries, the share of the industrial sector in GVA is significantly lower. (Graph 2)

Another problem is that while industry creates the largest proportion of gross value added in Slovakia, productivity in this sector is not the highest. Firms based in Slovakia are often suppliers of components with lower value added to more developed countries. At the same time, they are unable to sell their products at the same price as advanced economies. If the Slovak employees want their wages to converge on those of developed countries in absolute terms, an increase in productivity is needed.

Nonetheless, production up to now has been increased in large part by hiring more workers. For all that, companies are already reaching production limits, especially in terms of labour force. They will now have to increase production through higher productivity and thus, invest in modernising production capacities. Conclusively they will produce goods with higher value added, switching their production towards more sophisticated goods.

Graph 2. Real wage growth and productivity



# Only when we are well fed, can we really perceive art

Illah van Oijen and Symon Kliman, owners of Waflicky, look back at the beginnings of the brand in Slovakia, talk about the connection between their two countries and their life full of cultural and social innovation.



**You are the creators of the Wafličky brand, but we only see the final product. How did the story begin? When did you realize that Waflicky would be part of your lives?**

**SYMON:** Every time we visited the Netherlands, I had to buy many stroopwafels, since all my friends and family wanted me to bring them. Once I ended up buying three boxes, and paying extra for my luggage. I said to myself: Slovakia needs Waflicky! I borrowed €5000 from my aunt and decided to make it happen. We started on the Dutch market, and from there we started delivering to horeca and retail and selling at markets and festivals.

**ILLAH:** I stepped in when we were looking for a producer in the Netherlands to deliver stroopwafels in small amounts and who was flexible. And when I found a producer willing to cooperate, a little miracle happened. After the first months, the owner, a young guy running a family business, came to visit us in Bratislava. When he saw us bake Waflicky, he had an epiphany! He went home, and turned his manufacturing around and started to focus on exporting. We went through a long process of creating the right product that was suitable for export and of course in the beginning there were some bumps on the road. But he established his Alex&Max stroopwafels (named after our King and Queen) that are just perfect, and this year when we visited him he showed us the new manufacturing hall he is building in the Netherlands and he is now exporting as far away as India, Morocco, and Saudi Arabia. It not only changed our lives, but also that of the producer. He continues to maintain a special relationship with his first export country, Slovakia.



**Manufacture and import is now routine - what still makes you passionate about Waflicky after almost 9 years?**

**SYMON:** That people simply love it. As a wise man (Illah's grandfather) once said: "Sex and candies will always sell."

**ILLAH:** Bringing a traditional Dutch product to Slovakia, a country that very much values traditions and sweets, is a privilege. It is wonderful that we managed to get Waflicky on the international food map of Slovakia. Imagine that someone did the same for Bratislavské rozky in the Netherlands, wouldn't that be wonderful?

**What is the standard process for making them? Do you use special ingredients and, if so, where do you get them?**

**SYMON:** Our Waflicky are all made traditionally in The



Netherlands. When you look at the various copies of the product, it never tastes the same. It needs to be the real thing - the flour from the Netherlands is different in structure, for instance. When we bake the fresh ones, all ingredients are from The Netherlands.

**Illah is from the Netherlands and Symon is from Slovakia, you live together in Bratislava. Why did you decide to live here? Illah, what are the differences between living in the Netherlands and Slovakia? Why did you choose Bratislava?**

**ILLAH:** What we have in common, is that we see opportunities for growth and change where others don't necessarily see them and we love to take our "hands out of our sleeves", as we say in The Netherlands. We are both social innovators, a quality that is very much needed in Slovak society - there is so much to do! Symon also has a large and wonderful family, that we want our children to grow up with. And, last but not least, I love the Slovak weather! (laugh)

**SYMON:** We have been together for more than ten years, and for ten years I tried to make us move to The Netherlands. But Illah always pointed out to me what a wonderful country full of possibilities Slovakia really is. For instance when Illah and Abram Muller created the travel guide about Slovakia, I rediscovered my country, things I was never taught in school came to light. When Illah wanted to publish her book about Bratislava in 2005, everybody told her it wasn't possible, even me. She showed me that everything is possible. You just have to do it.

**Wafličky are not your only activity. Both of you are artists and both of you are involved in public projects, cultural management and social innovation. What are you working on currently?**

**ILLAH:** I studied as a photographer and cultural scientist. Since I live in Slovakia, I have explored the development of public space as a photographer and publisher here. I really enjoyed the time that I worked for the Dutch embassy in Bratislava as cultural officer. Building bridges between our countries was very rewarding for me and we worked on some great projects, a festival about sustainable design: Made in Holland, and an exchange program for photographers and the Dutch market were highlights. The past few years, I have dedicated my time to the development of the local economy and urban planning in

Bratislava. For instance, I was lucky enough to be involved in the revitalization of Stara trznica in Bratislava. After our youngest son was born, I returned to my activities with o.z. PUNKT, where I co-founded and run two successful projects together with my friend Barbara. Dobry trh (Good Market) has been our flagship project since 2011. It's a street market partly inspired by the Dutch Kings Day celebration, but it goes further than that, since we work year-round with local stakeholders in the neighbourhoods, we deal with participatory processes together with local government and we are the first producers-only market in Slovakia and trendsetters in zero-waste management for public events. Funnily enough, it was our experience of selling at traditional markets all over Slovakia that inspired me to organize this market differently. I kept telling myself: 'this could be so much better'.

Our conference Whatcity? takes urban activities a step further, we initiate dialogue between local municipalities, politicians, ministries and (international) experts and the general public and local stakeholders.

**SYMON:** First of all, I am a gardener, cook, sailor, dreamer and an artist. Secondly, as a photographer I specialize in commercial campaigns. Banks, mobile operators, insurance companies. When they need a complicated job done, I'm their man. Probably all of you have seen my photographs on a daily basis. In 2010, I was named "European citizen of the year" for my social portraits "Beautiful People", portraying Roma people in Slovakia, and I am doing ongoing research on partisan fighters during the Second World War. Recently I started the foundation, Nadacia Cvernovka. We created one of the biggest cultural centres in Slovakia and this made me a cultural manager. My main job is fundraising and international cooperation.

**How is possible to combine so many of your activities with your kids? What ideas do you want to share with them?**

**ILLAH:** I have discovered that being able to positively influence the world around you, is THE recipe for happiness. This insight and experience, will be the most important heritage for our children. As for the practical side, we are self-employed and both of us have our offices in Nova Cvernovka, where we also have daycare for our son, so we are very flexible and have a lot of time together. Our bigger children are also involved in our projects. They regularly sell at the kids' market we organize.

**What keeps the original idea going - offering Netherlands sweets to Slovak people? Is it just a business, or is there something deeper between you and this brand?**

**SYMON:** Only when we are well fed, we can really perceive art', sang our famous singers, Lasica and Satinsky. It has been our motto since the beginning of Waflicky in Slovakia. For us, it is about keeping connected to The Netherlands.

**ILLAH:** We have learned a lot about the world and about business through Waflicky, sometimes it worked and sometimes not and we have many happy memories connected to them. I remember our first time selling at Pohoda festival, it was our biggest financial investment, and it was the hottest year ever

at Pohoda, so many waffles melted. Then, on the second day, after our stall was closed I took my bike and tried to sell Waflicky from the back of my bike. This is why I asked our friends not to go inside to the front by the concert, but stay with me outside. The next thing we knew, the tent collapsed and fortunately, we were standing outside. Symon went in and carried bleeding people outside. Somebody died. Thanks to Waflicky we were unharmed. Like everybody else, we had to leave the festival site immediately, and as a result all the food stalls stopped selling food. In the night, people were waiting for hours to leave the site, and I spent hours and hours going on my bike through the cars, offering Waflicky to people. People were so grateful. Waflicky are something that have been part of our lives ever since Symon brought his first packages by plane and they are a favourite sweet in many Slovak households. If I think about it, it is through me that Symon learned to love his country more, and through him I have learned to appreciate what I always took for granted. Isn't that beautiful?



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# Legal Update

for April 2018 – June 2018

by our member:



A **new taxation of insurance has been introduced in Slovakia**. The taxation will apply on insurance policies as of 1 January 2019. The tax will be paid by insurance companies in the amount of 8 %. The taxation will relate to non-life insurance policies, such as insurance of real estates or car insurance.

The Parliament has approved a **new Cybersecurity Act** which became effective on 1 April. This Act stems from the EU directives and sets forth

several obligations for so called „providers of basic services“, e.g. pharmaceuticals, transport services, banking, telecommunications and providers of digital services. **Providers of basic services must adopt specific technical and organisational security measures and notify and cooperate with public authorities in case of substantive cybersecurity incidents.**

An amendment to the Income Tax Act clarifies that **tax needs to be paid from**

**income achieved from sale of virtual currencies**. The taxation will not apply to the mining process but only to the sale of the virtual currency.

Several amendments have been made to Slovak labour laws. One of the most controversial changes is the **duty to advertise salary** in job offers. Furthermore, employees are to be **paid more for working at night, holidays and during weekends**.

Under an Amendment to the Cadastral Act, the **cadastre will contain data on the price of real estate**. Such information will not be public but may be accessed by specific subjects, including public authorities and independent expert appraisers.

A proposal of an **amendment to the Public Procurement Act** aims at making the proceedings and mechanisms of public procurement simpler and more effective. For instance, the amendment proposes to introduce a new type of contracts, the so-called ‘small scale contracts’. **Contracts with the value of less than 5,000 Euro will be exempted** from the scope of the Act. The amendment also **enables to repeatedly change an existing contract** if each of such changes does not exceed 50% of the original contract value.

The new Social Enterprises Act establishes various benefits to social enterprises regardless of their legal form. **A social enterprise may register for state aid** provided that its main purpose is to have a positive social impact. Examples of such activities may be employment of disadvantaged persons or activities in an underdeveloped region.

The Parliament approved an **amendment to the anti-money laundering legislation**. The amendment **strengthens obligations of various entities to identify and keep records of beneficial owners** for a period of five years. The amendment also increases the maximum fines for

violations of the AML legislation to 5 million Euros.

The National Bank of Slovakia aims to combat the growth of household indebtedness. One of the adopted measures is the **introduction of a specific debt to income ratio (DTI), a criterion by which applicants for consumer loans and mortgages will be assessed**. The maximum amount of debt a person will be able to incur, whether in form of mortgages or other consumer loans, will be the 8-fold of the person’s net yearly salaries. The new rules will not affect already existing loans and their refinancing, provided that no new debt is incurred.

The new Act on Providing Grants specifies the new specific procedures for grants awarded by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. The Office provides **grants for projects in the area of informatization, eGovernment and sustainable development**.

The Parliament approved the **Act Against Bureaucracy**. This Act obliges public authorities to automatically use public records and public IT systems to obtain information about individuals and companies, and prohibits them to request information from them if such information has been already provided to the public sector. The changes will become effective in stages. For instance, as of 1 September 2018 **public authorities can no longer require submissions of extracts from the Commercial Register**

**or certificates of title from the Cadastre of Immovables.**

The Government approved the **strategic document on future functioning of Commercial Registers**, which aims to make the services of the Commercial Register better and more accessible. One of the plans is to only have the registration procedures in electronic form. The Government also plans that the agenda of Commercial Registers will be carried out by notaries and not by the courts which should instead only focus on dispute matters.

# Annual General Meeting & New Year's Reception

When: January 25, 2018

Where: Crowne Plaza Hotel Bratislava

We would like to thank our generous partner:



The traditional first event, the Annual General Meeting, was held at the start of the year. Chamber members were informed about Chamber activities in 2017, whose highlight was the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the Chamber. Jan Lamber Voortman, President of the Netherlands Chamber of Commerce, presented the plans and vision for 2018. The main challenges for 2018 are: membership growth and looking after members, preparation of top events, cooperation with the Netherlands Embassy, the annual charity gala dinner and a focus on the Bulletin and digital

features. Igor Mandryš, GM of Cloetta, was elected as a new board member and Beatrix Šidová from ING Bank was re-elected as board member.

The Annual General Meeting was followed by the New Year's Drink. Members present received surprise membership certificates at the event.

Thank you all for participating in this great event!



# Tax Seminar

*When:* February 6, 2018

*Where:* Austria Trend Hotel, Bratislava

**We would like to thank our generous partners:**



*František Imrecze, President of Financial Administration*

The main title of the of the traditional tax seminar was changes to tax legislation. The seminar provided an overview of tax amendments and important legal changes for corporations, valid from January 1st 2018. Practical examples were used to illustrate the topics presented by the main speakers:

**František Imrecze**, President of Financial Administration

**Dana Meager**, State Secretary, Ministry of Finance

**Bart Waterloos**, Partner, VGD SLOVAKIA s.r.o.

**Branislav Kováč**, Tax Partner, VGD SLOVAKIA s.r.o.

**Silvia Hallová**, Tax Partner, Grant Thornton Slovakia



*Bart Waterloos, Partner, VGD SLOVAKIA s.r.o.*



*Branislav Kováč, Tax Partner, VGD SLOVAKIA s.r.o.*



*Peter Andrišín, Dozen s.r.o.*



# Speed Business Meetings

*When:* In Košice, on February 21 and June 5,  
In Bratislava, on April 10 and June 11



The speed business meeting format remains as popular as ever and was successfully extended to Košice. In the first half of

2018, two events of this kind took place in Bratislava and two in Košice.



# Business Breakfast on the GDPR

When: March 15, 2018

Where: Grand Hotel River Park, Bratislava

We would like to thank our generous partners:



Marek Múčka, TMF Services Slovakia and Andrea Farinič Štefančíková, PETERKA & PARTNERS

The business breakfast focused on the **most significant changes to personal data protection and the GDPR** (General Data Protection Regulation), a European Union regulation that entered into force on 25 May 2018. Its aim is to increase the level of protection of personal data and to strengthen the rights of European Union citizens in this area. The GDPR is the most comprehensive regulation on work with personal data to date. It introduces a number of new concepts and categories. The GDPR regulates the treatment of any information relating to an identified or identifiable person.

During the business breakfast our speakers covered the following topics:

- **GDPR - The Most Significant Changes to Personal Data Protection in Slovakia** by Andrea Farinič Štefančíková, PETERKA & PARTNERS
- **GDPR – Security of Processing and Data Protection Officer** by Marek Múčka, TMF Services Slovakia



Tibor Majzún from cargo partner s.r.o. and his membership certificate



Slavomír Cyprich from AON with his membership certificate

# King's Day Celebration 2018

When: April 24, 2018

Where: Primaciálny Palác, Bratislava



Opera singer Tomáš Selč gave a great performance singing the national anthems

On the 24th of April Kings Day was celebrated together with the Dutch Embassy with a reception at the Mirror Hall of the Primate's Palace in Bratislava historical old town. Ambassador van der Kwast gave a speech on the Slovak and Dutch anthems, the EU and 25 years of Slovak-Dutch relations. After the speech there was a great performance of the national anthems. This

was followed by an Orange Party in the courtyard. The weather was great, and so was the atmosphere. With a variety of Slovak and Dutch music, food and drinks attendees enjoyed and danced till late in the evening.



Martijn Lambarts (NL Embassy) and his colleagues welcoming the guests



Embassy representatives welcoming H.E. Adam Sterling, US Ambassador



H.E. Henk Cor van der Kwast addressing the audience





Jan Lamber Voortman (NL Chamber) inviting the guests to the Orange party



Markéta Stará, KLM (in the middle)



H.E. Andrew Garth, British Ambassador



Shell Slovakia management team



Wafličky



Shell Slovakia management team



Belgicatessen tasting



Cheese from Knip



H.E. Henk Cor van der Kwast raises the glasses in a dutch tradition with Katarina Holan and H. E. Gabriele Meucci, the Ambassador of Italy in Slovakia



Rober Machalíček, Elena Májeková and Štefan Rybovič



Paul van Dongen, Ab Olde Scheper and Jope Jansen

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# ORANGE PARTY 2018

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# King's Day Celebration 2018 in Prešov

When: April 27, 2018

Where: Prešov, Plaza Beach Resort



On the 27th of April honorary consul, Matus Murajda, organized a Kingsday reception in Presov. Traditionally well attended by the Dutch living in the eastern part of Slovakia it was also visited by the ambassador this year.



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Tickets reservation: [netherlandschamber.sk/events](http://netherlandschamber.sk/events)  
Dress code: Business casual

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# Regional Conference on Challenging Talent and Visit to KIA Factory in Žilina

When: May 15, 2018

Where: KIA Motors Slovakia and Chateau Gbelany

We would like to thank our generous partners:



This exclusive event offered a unique chance to visit the KIA Motors Slovakia production company in Teplička nad Váhom. KIA, one of the leading automotive companies in Slovakia, provided a special factory tour led by the Director of Communications at KIA Motors Slovakia. The CEO of Kia Motors Slovakia took tea at the end of the visit with H.E. Henk Cor van der Kwast and Jan Lambert Voortman, who represented our delegation.

The visit was followed by a conference on challenging talent in Slovakia held at Chateau Gbelany. The conference addressed education, development, retention and attracting talent to industry.

Gerard Koolen, Lugera Group Managing Director opened the conference with a presentation on current HR trends. Then, we

heard from a Heineken representative on how they recruit new talent. Michal Koháni, Vice Dean for Science and Research at the Faculty of Management Science and Mathematics, University of Žilina gave a presentation on how the university works with talent.

In the panel discussion, Gerard Koolen from Lugera; Paul Choi, Director of KOTRA; Roman Lakoštík, representative of the Board of Employers for Vocational Education and Training; and Michal Koháni, Vice Dean, University of Žilina discussed how to attract, develop and retain talent and the current situation in Slovakia.



H.E. Henk Cor van der Kwast



Michal Koháni, University of Žilina



Gerard Koolen, Lugera



Panel discussion



Zuzana den Dekker and Marco den Dekker (QP Quality Management)



Networking



Bart Pennewaert from the Belgian Embassy in Vienna



Roman Lakoščík



# Investment or Start Up in Slovakia?

The Netherlands Chamber of Commerce is here to help you!

We provide networking events, business support and guide you through the maze of Slovak legislative and cultural need-to-knows. Become a member or contact us for more information on [www.netherlandschamber.sk](http://www.netherlandschamber.sk)



## Useful links:

[www.netherlandschamber.sk](http://www.netherlandschamber.sk) - Official website of the NCC in Slovakia. Check and subscribe for upcoming networking events here!

[www.netherlandsworldwide.nl](http://www.netherlandsworldwide.nl) - Useful site with important links for Dutch living abroad.

[www.profesia.sk](http://www.profesia.sk) - The largest recruitment platform online in Slovakia

[www.orsr.sk](http://www.orsr.sk) - The official business register online. Find out who you are dealing with and who are the authorized directors and owners of every Slovak company here.

[www.finstat.sk](http://www.finstat.sk) - Annual closing figures of all Slovak companies including relevant parameters and historical performance can be found on this website, which displays the official deposited tax statements of all Slovak companies.

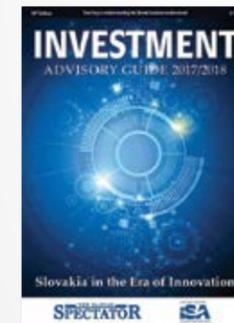
[www.platy.sk](http://www.platy.sk) - Helpfull website to compare salaries with industry standards and average payments in Slovakia regions and neighbor countries.

[www.greenpages.spectator.sk](http://www.greenpages.spectator.sk) - From cleaning services to sports facilities, education to legal services, health or real estate... the green pages offer the links.

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# Patron's Dinner

*When:* May 16, 2018

*Where:* Kogo Restaurant, Bratislava



Patron members met for a special dinner just for our patron members on May 16 at the Kogo restaurant in Bratislava. We are very glad that our invitation to the dinner was accepted by H.E. Henk Cor van der Kwast and Martin Barto, former Deputy Governor of the National Bank of Slovakia. The patron members

had an interesting and fruitful discussion on healthcare system reform in Slovakia and also discussed the macroeconomic situation in Slovakia in depth.



*Kamila Pudišová, Bart Waterloos, Mirka Michalková and H.E. Henk Cor van der Kwast*



*Jarmila Gurská from Shell*



*Marian Tatár (ING Bank) and Jan Lamber Voortman (Davinci software)*



*Martin Barto, former Deputy Governor of the National Bank of Slovakia*



# Shaping Up for the New Digital Economy

When: May 29, 2018

Where: Falkensteiner Hotel Bratislava

We would like to thank our generous partners:



Our modern world is moving towards a complete digital economy. Soon all economic processes will be facilitated and optimized with the help of digital technologies. This will of course have an impact on many aspects of our daily business such as, accountability, transparency, responsibility of data protection, transacting, payment processing, taxation methods and much more.

During the business breakfast on 29th May, these topics were addressed by Wall it and VGD SLOVAKIA to give insights into changes that are already happening and changes expected soon in your day to day business activities.

The event started with Rastislav Vašička, CTO at Wall it s.r.o. explaining the blockchain and smart contracts. He told us that the

blockchain is an unchangeable digital ledger of economic transactions that can be programmed to record not just financial transactions, but virtually everything of value. All information stored on the blockchain remains there forever. Smart contracts can help you exchange money, property, shares, or anything of value in a transparent, conflict-free way, while avoiding the services of a middleman. We learned that the blockchain is perfect for storing data and protecting it. Combining blockchain and smart contracts can provide various services for customers.

Following this introduction, Ockert Loubser, CEO at Wall it s.r.o. continued with how he sees cryptocurrency as a means of payment in retail, e-commerce and loyalty programs. In a retail and ecommerce environment, cryptocurrency and blockchain

networks are designed to protect shoppers, vendors and merchants in ways the traditional financial servicing and currencies cannot. Apart from savings on fees, costs and time, they also bring risk management for both retail and e-commerce.

ICOs, or Initial Coin Offerings was dealt with by Michael Loubser, Chairman of the Core Group, and how they can raise funding. An ICO is a completely unregulated means by which funds are raised for a new cryptocurrency and blockchain based ventures. It is used by start-ups to avoid the legally regulated capital-raising process used by venture capitalists and banks. In an ICO, a percentage of the cryptocurrency is sold to early backers of the project in exchange for legal tender or other cryptocurrencies, usually for Bitcoin.

And what about the tax and accounting aspects? Daniel Martiny, tax manager at VGD SLOVAKIA s.r.o. explained that the proceeds from cryptocurrencies are considered as 'Other Income' and will be taxed (including health insurance contributions for physical persons). In the bookkeeping, they need to be included as Short-term Financial Assets and should normally not be revalued at year-end. From a VAT point of view, the purchase and sale of cryptocurrencies is exempt from VAT.

The digital economy is also creating an entire new area of digital platforms over which business is now conducted. This in turn creates questions regarding how to tax these new digital platforms. In his presentation, Robert Kalmar, tax advisor at VGD SLOVAKIA s.r.o., introduced us to new Slovak legislation valid since 1st of January 2018. The Slovak authorities will now

consider that when a permanent establishment is created in Slovakia, tax must be paid locally. This can lead to a situation where withholding tax should be withheld when paying for services to a foreign digital platform.

Branislav Kovac, tax partner at VGD SLOVAKIA s.r.o. closed the event by explaining the initiatives that are being taken at the EU and OECD level. Each country wants its share of the tax on the value that is generated on its territory by digital economy firms. The EU's interim solution is to tax very large digital firms at 3% of their turnover.

With almost 50 persons registered, this event was fully subscribed and a follow-up event is being considered.



Bart Waterloos, VGD Slovakia opening the business breakfast



Rastislav Vašička, wall it s.r.o.



Róbert Kalmár, VGD SLOVAKIA s.r.o.



Ockert Loubser from wall it s.r.o. talking about current trends in digital economy



Daniel Martiny, VGD Slovakia



Branislav Kováč, VGD SLOVAKIA s.r.o.



Wall it s.r.o. team with their membership certificate



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# in short:

## Members' News:

### Mazars Slovakia announced a partnership with nettle.ai



Mazars Slovakia, an audit, accounting, payroll, tax and consulting company have announced a partnership with conversational Artificial Intelligence (AI) developer start up - nettle.ai. Mazars Slovakia supports exploration, development and delivery of AI platforms to their customers in Slovakia and across the CEE region. Nettle.ai delivers advanced bot technologies where natural language processing and machine learning provides human-like communication. According to Gartner, conversational AI, such as chatbots, will power 85% of all customer service interactions by 2020. Conversational commerce will soon dominate the mobile market. The Nettle.ai team are now our officemates at the Mazars office.

### New SOCIA Foundation Administrator



At the latest Board of Directors' meeting (at the end of 2017), Helena Woleková, announced that she would leave her position on 12 May 2018, saying it was time for the younger generation. She has been foundation administrator for 16 years. In Slovakia, the towns, municipalities and self-governing regions frequently do not fulfil their tasks set by the law and citizens often seek social services in vain. This must change. She is passing the baton to Vladislav Matej (the executive director of the foundation until now), who will be the new administrator. Under his leadership, the foundation will continue to pursue its vision of a society in which everybody has their place and no-one is excluded and alone.

### TMF Group Acquired by CVC Capital Partners



TMF Group, a global provider of compliance and administrative services specializing in accounting and tax, HR and payroll and corporate secretarial services, has announced its acquisition by CVC Capital Partners, one of the world's leading private equity and investment advisory firms, for €1.75 bil. TMF Group, with 125 offices in 83 jurisdictions, provides compliance and administrative services to over 15,000 clients in a €10 billion market. The acquisition will allow TMF Group to capitalise on significant future growth opportunities, add new clients and services, and continue to attract and retain the very best talent in the industry.

### VGD Slovakia Appoints HR Manager

Employees are at the heart of every consulting company and VGD Slovakia is no exception. Having grown to more than 120 staff, the partners took the decision to hire a full time HR manager to further professionalise this area and they chose Gabriela Cicmancova. She brings with her extensive experience in building and integrating various HR processes with the core business of a firm from previous employers such as Volvo Trucks, VUB Bank, and Printec Group. Gabriela sees her role as "a challenge to be an active part of building a new VGD Slovakia". Bart Waterloos, one of the four partners, said: "Having moved away from micro-management of our small teams, this was the next logical step in preparing VGD for the digitisation of our profession and the entry of the younger generation. I'm looking forward to working with Gabriela on building our VGD employer brand".

### Nexia Strengthens Central Services

Nexia, the international network of independent audit and consulting firm, to which VGD belongs, is further strengthening its services at its international headquarters. It has hired Darren Enderson, who has been appointed Chief Digital & Information Officer to oversee all the activities in this field and to bring the best solutions in the fast moving world of digitisation to all member firms. In addition, Paul Ginman was hired as new Regional Executive Director to assist in delivering on the overall Nexia strategy in the EMEA Region. Bart Waterloos, one of Nexia's EMEA Board members said: "Paul's experience will assist the Board with its ambitious plans to ensure that Nexia remains a strong top-10 player and the entire network continues on its remarkable growth path of recent years."

### Dolphin acquires Purewater and Water&Coffee



Dolphin Slovakia, s.r.o. acquired water cooler companies Purewater, s.r.o. and Water&Coffee, s.r.o.. From the 1st of May their portfolios are integrated into Dolphin's and continue to be served under the Dolphin brand and service formula.

With this acquisition Dolphin substantially grows its customer and cooler portfolio with over 60% and expands with district centres and offices in Korytnica (for Northern Slovakia) and Humenne (in the East). All employees will stay and continue to serve their region. "Following our aim to grow in the Slovak market we found that Purewater's philosophy, quality approach and aim for the future was meeting ours, and we are proud that they will merge into our company and brand and their team members will become our colleagues" continues Ab Olde-Scheper, director and founder of Dolphin. Read more: [www.dolphin.sk](http://www.dolphin.sk)

### Philips Lighting is now Signify



Eindhoven, the Netherlands – Signify (Euronext: LIGHT), the world leader in lighting, has 16.5.2018 launched its new company name, following the amendment of the company's articles of association changing its name from Philips Lighting N.V. to Signify N.V. "The choice of our new company name originates from the way light becomes an

intelligent language, which connects and conveys meaning. It is a clear expression of our strategic vision and purpose to unlock the extraordinary potential of light for brighter lives and a better world." - Eric Rondolat, CEO, Signify.

Signify will continue to use the Philips brand for its products, the most trusted lighting brand in the world, under the existing licensing agreement with Royal Philips. The company expects the name change to be implemented in all the countries where it is active by the beginning of 2019. Founded as Philips in Eindhoven, the Netherlands, we've led the lighting industry with innovations that serve professional and consumer markets for more than 127 years. In 2016, we spun off from Philips, becoming a separate company, listed on Amsterdam's Euronext Stock Exchange. We were included in the benchmark AEX index in March 2018.

With operations in more than 70 countries and 32,000 people worldwide, Signify generated sales of EUR 7 billion and invested EUR 354 million in Research and Development in 2017. "We are driven by the principle that light is essential," Eric Rondolat added. "And by connecting it to networks, software, sensors and IoT platforms, we open the door to a smarter world." News from Signify is located at the Newsroom, Twitter and LinkedIn. Information for investors can be found on the Investor Relations page.

## Slovak-Dutch embassy news:

### Dutch embassy releases documentary on 25 years bilateral economic cooperation between the Netherlands and Slovakia

The 4th out of 5 parts of the documentary 25, celebrating 25 years of bilateral relations between the Netherlands and Slovakia, captures our bilateral economic cooperation.

All the video's are released on the Embassy Facebook page @the.dutch.embassy.bratislava

### New policy officer at the Embassy



Ondrej will be responsible for political, EU and press affairs, replacing Michaela Macejka during her maternity leave. After working at the Permanent Representation of the SR to the EU and GLOBSEC Ondrej is now joining the team hoping to contribute building even closer ties between the Netherlands and Slovakia.

### Tulip Ceremony with President Kiska



On the 26th of April, Ambassador van der Kwast was welcomed by the President of the Slovak republic, Andrej Kiska, at the Tulip ceremony at the Palace of the President in Bratislava. For the occasion, a new variety of tulips was bred and has been named Slovensko. The Royal General Bulb-growers' Association (KAVB) in Hillegom, The Netherlands, had reserved this name for registration and has listed this tulip variety permanently in the International Tulip Cultivar Register. With the baptism of the tulip, the Kingdom of the Netherlands congratulates the Republic of Slovakia with the 25th anniversary of its independence and wishes to express its gratitude for the excellent cooperation between our two countries.

### The Slovak Spectator: Automotive suppliers will invest further millions in Slovakia.



Create more than a thousand jobs and invest more than a hundred million euros – this is what five companies that supply car plants along with their products in Slovakia want to do in the country within the next few years.

In return, they are asking the state for almost €40 million in investment stimuli. The cabinet of Peter Pellegrini (of the ruling Smer party) could decide on this in the upcoming weeks. Firms have filed their plans for the review process.

New investments could help the regions where the companies decided to invest; this is probably especially true for the eastern-Slovak town of Kežmarok and its vicinity where the new plant of the German company Mubea will appear. Building new plants for expansion does not indicate the final arrival of a fifth carmaker, the German BMW, to Haniska near Košice, which has been speculated for some time.

### Why do young people remain with their parents?

Statistics show that Slovaks leave the nest only at the age of 31, the third highest in the EU.

Today's parents are more liberal when it comes to their adult children. Thanks to the family-oriented policy adopted by the communist regime in the 1970s and 1980s, many adults have their own rooms in their parents' house, which allows them live on their own, even while remaining with their parents, says Zuzana Kusá, sociologist at the Slovak Academy of Sciences.

"In their understanding, freedom and independence are not firmly connected with leaving their parents' house as it was in the case of their parents and

grandparents," Kusá told.

This may be the reason why young adults in Slovakia leave the nest at a relatively older age compared with the rest of Europe. The recent Eurostat statistics suggest that Slovaks live with in parents' household for 30.8 years in average, making it the third-highest age in the European Union.

The only countries where the age is higher are Malta (32.2 years) and Croatia (31.9 years). On the other hand, Swedes and Danes leave their parents' households at the earliest age: after they turn 21.

### Slovaks have new investment favourite – recreational real estate



Slovaks are increasingly interested in recreational real estate. The demand has increased by 20 percent over the last year. The most wanted properties are cottages near Michalovce in eastern Slovakia.

"The reason for this in particular is the Zemplínska Šírava lake, which has again become a significant recreational area for the whole east of Slovakia," Martin Lazík, real estate analyst with the real estate website Nehnutelnosti.sk, told the Hospodárske Noviny. In May alone, Slovak interest in cottages in this region increased by as much as 50 percent.

Michal Macháč, an expert on travel from TM Travel, confirms that people are looking for alternative and cheaper ways of spending holidays by the water.

"The low price of services in eastern Slovakia, compared with the west, means that Slovaks increasingly use the opportunities that, for example, Zemplínska Šírava, has to offer," said Macháč. "As well as the Zemplín region, people are also becoming more interested in cottages in Modra and Senec, closer to Bratislava."

In the long-term, the biggest interest in recreational real estate is in the Low and

High Tatras and their ski resorts. These regions attract most tourism investments.

### Which occupations do companies lack the most employees?

The Labour, Social Affairs and the Family Centre (ÚPSVaR) has published a list of occupations for which there is a high demand. The most sought after are building construction specialists, specialist nurses, assembly workers and welders as well as doctors, programmers and drivers.

Since May of this year, Slovakia has simplified the conditions for employing people from outside the European Union. However, this only applies to selected occupations where labour offices record the lack of a qualified labour force and districts with an unemployment rate lower than 5 percent. The list of shortage occupations is determined at the tripartite level and published on the ÚPSVaR's website.

The greatest lack of labour force is in the Bratislava Region, where up to 70 shortage occupations have been identified, including, for example, building construction specialists, specialist nurses, food shop assistants, car mechanics and assembly workers.

### Companies mostly sought informatics graduates in 2017

The job website found that almost eight employers looked at the resume of ITT graduate last year, with art graduates being the least in demand.

Companies in Slovakia were interested in graduates of study courses related to IT the most in 2017. The CV of such an applicant was seen by almost eight employers on average at the job website.

These were followed by engineering, economy, technology, civil engineering and humanities graduates – more than five companies studied each of their CVs.

Source articles:  
[www.spectator.sme.sk](http://www.spectator.sme.sk)

## Event Calendar 2018

### CHAMCHAM TATRY GOLF TOURNAMENT 2018



September 6, 19:00 - 21:00  
September 7, 8:00 - 16:00

Join the competition of teams and individuals of the Chambers of Commerce (UK, AU, IT, NL).

Registration deadline: September 3  
Venue: Black Stork Golf Resort, Veľká Lomnica

### SPORT'S DAY 2018



September 15, 8:30 - 16:00

Popular team building activity for all sporty members!

Registration deadline: September 1  
Venue: Sport Center Pavla Gleska, Račianska 103, Bratislava

### BACK TO WORK BUSINESS COCKTAIL 2018



September 18, 17:00 - 20:00

Popular networking event opening the busy autumn season.

Registration deadline: September 18  
Venue: Ambassador's residence, Korabinského 2, Bratislava

### BUSINESS LADIES DAY 2018



October 11, 13:00 - 18:00

Special day for all business ladies.

Registration deadline: October 8  
Venue: Club Penati, Agátová 33, Bratislava

### MUSSELS AND FRIES EVENING 2018



October 18, 18:00 - 21:00

Extraordinary connection of Dutch mussels, Belgian fries and beers and wines!

Registration deadline: October 16  
Venue: Sheraton Bratislava Hotel, Pribinova 12, Bratislava

### 14th ANNUAL CHARITY GALA DINNER 2018



November 17, 18:00 - November 18, 2:00

Prestigious charity tradition with gala menu, raffle and auction.

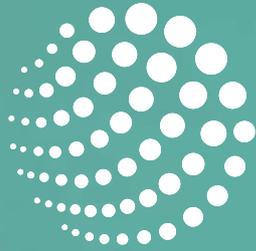
Registration deadline: November 8  
Venue: To be announced

Information about more events available at: [etherlandschamber.sk/events](http://etherlandschamber.sk/events).

### Want to join one of these events?

Become a member or register directly on:  
[www.netherlandschamber.sk](http://www.netherlandschamber.sk)

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