

Bulletin

2|2025

The Netherlands Chamber of Commerce in the Slovak Republic

EMERALD GALA

20 YEARS
OF GIVING



THE NETHERLANDS
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
IN THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

30 YEARS IN SLOVAKIA
HEINEKEN

THIRTY

We've been quenching your thirst with our Slovak brands for 30 years.



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Komerční banka, a. s.



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Business Environment
Hillbridges



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Talent Garden
Arval



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Najat Bakkal
Bulletin and Marketing
Hairless

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Info

Bulletin is a magazine published bi-annually by the Netherlands Chamber of Commerce in the Slovak Republic
Editors: Najat Bakkal, Marek Novotný
Contact: director@netherlandschamber.sk
Graphic design: Martina Vrablová
The Netherlands Chamber of Commerce in the Slovak Republic
Karpatská 8, 81105 Bratislava / www.netherlandschamber.sk



President Speaks

As 2025 comes to a close, I would like to take this opportunity to briefly look back on a very memorable year of growth, connection and celebration.

Together, we strengthened the Dutch-Slovak business community at a variety of successful events. These included a vibrant King's Day Celebration, our AI seminar, W2 Social Cheers and Proost gatherings, a Back to Work event at the Ambassador's Residence, the cross-chamber Golf trophy, a Speed Business Meeting, and the traditional Mussels & Fries evening, all of which once again brought our members closer together and were filled with entertaining moments.

This year, we are especially looking forward to the 20th anniversary of our annual Charity Gala Dinner, a festive evening dedicated to celebration and giving back to the community.

We were pleased to welcome our new Executive Director, Marek Novotný, whose energy and vision are already shaping the future direction of the Chamber. Looking ahead to 2026, we hope to make our cooperation with members even more interactive and engaging.

I would like to thank you all for your continued support and wish you a joyful festive season and a successful, inspiring New Year.

Richard Kellner



List of Members 2025

PATRON MEMBERS:



CORPORATE MEMBERS:

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| Alanata | Ernst & Young Slovakia, spol. s r.o. | Ohpen Technology Slovakia, s.r.o. |
| Advokátska kancelária Mgr. Štefan Rybovič, s.r.o. | GEMOR Fashion s.r.o. | Peoply |
| AspenStaff s.r.o. | Hillbridges s.r.o. | Scaleup Marketing |
| BRNDS Intermediary | KLM Royal Dutch Airlines | Sheraton Bratislava Hotel |
| Cargo-partner SR, s.r.o. | Komerční banka a.s., pobočka zahraničnej banky | SOCIA – Nadácia na podporu sociálnych zmien |
| Cesam s.r.o. | KOKS Robotics | Studio 21 s.r.o. |
| CLA Slovakia s.r.o. | Koppert s.r.o. | Roffelsen Plastics |
| Crowne Plaza Bratislava | Lugera & Maklér s.r.o. | WorkSpace Europe / Stážista.sk |
| De Heus s.r.o. | MB Pictures | |
| Euro Planit s.r.o. | NEWAYS SLOVAKIA a.s. | |

HONORARY MEMBERS:

- | | | |
|---|------------------------|---------------------|
| Netherlands Royal Embassy in Bratislava | Emile Roest | Paul Verlinden |
| Miroslava Tvarog Michalková | Henk Cor van der Kwast | Richard van Rijssen |
| Anton van Beek | Martijn Lambarts | Jan Lamber Voortman |

INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS:

- | | |
|-------------------|---------------|
| Robert Machalíček | Peter Steiner |
| Ivana Pylypovova | Hairless |

Want to become a member?
Check the membership options on www.netherlandschamber.sk

A Word from the Ambassador

Dear Members
of the Netherlands Chamber of Commerce,



Jules Gerzon
Ambassador Extraordinary
and Plenipotentiary of the
Kingdom of the Netherlands

As you can imagine, the life of an ambassador can be described by many adjectives, but never as boring. In my first half-year as Ambassador to Slovakia, I have had many interesting conversations with ministers, governors, mayors, politicians and other key governmental and non-governmental stakeholders. I have especially enjoyed the trips outside of Bratislava to discover different parts of Slovakia, meet with local partners and support interesting projects involving the Dutch private sector.



There are simply too many important embassy projects and initiatives to be able to mention them all here, so here's three examples of what we have been focussing on:

Given my background in international trade, I am particularly pleased that we are focussing on business opportunities. In recent months, we have focused on the defence industry, circular construction and green urban planning. The embassy is always happy to help Dutch companies explore and navigate Slovak business environment.

We have also continued the discussions on healthcare cooperation that originated during the State Visit two and a half years ago. Our goal is to continue the mutually beneficial

Dutch-Slovak partnership in the area of children's healthcare and I am pleased that discussions between the government and Dutch experts are progressing well.

We have also continued to support key policy values such as respect, tolerance and non-discrimination in our engagements with the private sector. The embassy brought the iconic Amsterdam Rainbow Dress to Bratislava to mark the International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia (IDAHOT). The Dress is a piece of art made of the national flags from countries where being LGBTIQ+ is illegal. I am pleased that many companies active in Slovakia joined us at the residence in celebration of IDAHOT and in the Pride march to support equal rights for all.





Welcome to the New Executive Director Marek Novotný

Some of you may know me from the Talent Garden traineeship program I have had the privilege to manage since February of this year. In August I accepted the challenge of the Executive Director role at the Netherlands Chamber of Commerce in the Slovak Republic.

Throughout my professional and academic journey, I have sought environments defined by openness, collaboration, inclusiveness, and responsibility.

This path has taken me to Prague, Paris, Vienna, Budapest, and Bratislava, shaping both my perspective and professional aspirations.

My career has been deeply connected to educational and diversity initiatives, particularly via my work at IBM and at Diversity Pro, an NGO dedicated to advancing equal opportunities and fair treatment in the workplace. These experiences allowed me to strengthen ties with the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands and contribute to projects with a meaningful impact.

Most recently, I completed an Executive MBA in Global Executive Management, which broadened my understanding of international business, fuelled new ideas, and expanded my professional network worldwide.

As Executive Director, and with the invaluable support of our board members, I aim to foster a welcoming, professional, and vibrant platform for business leaders and friends of the Slovak-Dutch community in Slovakia. I look forward to connecting with each of you and working together to create an inclusive and inspiring environment.



We unite expertise and tech
so you can
outthink, outpace and outperform



Corporate Social Responsibility

Every year, the Netherlands Chamber of Commerce selects a unique project which supports people in need. The Chamber has been helping people in need for 13 years and has supported various projects during the charity gala dinners with more than EUR 200 000 and will continue to support people in need.

- 2005: € 2,556 for a hospital in Spišská Nová Ves
- 2006: € 3,529 for a day care centre for disabled children in Hnúšťa
- 2007: € 7,070 for St. Anna's project in Spišská Belá
- 2008: € 13,467 for the Barlička association in Prešov
- 2009: € 27,000 for the Maják association in Zlaté Moravce
- 2010: € 16,000 for NÁRUČ – Crisis Centre for Children in Need in Žilina
- 2011: € 18,500 for Maják in Zdoňa, Sady nad Torysou
- 2012: € 16,000 for Dlaň in Lučenec
- 2013: € 22,000 for Betánia in Bratislava
- 2014: € 30,000 for Návrat in Prešov
- 2015: € 21,000 for Kaspian in Bratislava – Petržalka
- 2016: € 15,000 for St. Norbert Social House in Jasov
- 2017: € 10,000 for AkSen in Piešťany
- 2018: € 10,000 for Depaul in Bratislava
- 2019: € 12,092 for Spy, o.z.
- 2020: € 1,500 for Kto pomôže Slovensku
- 2021: € 14,870 for Food Bank of Slovakia
- 2022: € 8,000 for Bring the River Bela Back to Life / WWF Slovakia
- 2023: € 10,000 for fire brigades
- 2024: € 15,466 for Malý šéfkuchár bez čapice



Total
-approx. €
265,000



Our journey so far



1997 – establishment of the Netherlands Chamber of Commerce in Slovakia

Introduction of new Chamber activities

New members

Bartošík Šváby, PNO Consultants, Hrivis holding, Iura Edition, Otto Slovensko, UPC, Compaan, Probugas, Ahold, Hotel Danube, CW Consulting, TNT Express Worldwide, Socia – Social Reform Foundation, YES Interim Management Solutions, Mazars, Gemor Fashion, Océ – Slovenská republika, Grafton, Peterka and Partners, Lease Plan, Shell, Exact software, ASN Metal



Key events

Opening of honorary consulate in Prešov

Culinary Mission



€ 3,529

2nd charity gala dinner for a day care centre for handicapped children in Hnúšťa

New members

PriceWaterhouseCoopers, ASB Slovakia, Union Poistovňa, Convoi, ABN Amro Bank, Larive Slovakia, Leaf Slovakia, Gálik Guniš and Partners Law Firm, Advokátní Kancelár Polverini Strnad, Industrial Park Chemko



Key event



Queen Beatrix visits Bratislava – first 3-day official visit to Slovakia – Bratislava and Košice



€ 13,467

4th charity gala dinner collection for Barlička in Prešov



1997 – 2003

2004

2005

2006

2007

2008

Members

Aegon Levensverzekering, ING Bank, Tatra banka, Business Lease Slovakia, JMUČTO, KPMG Slovensko, Symsite Research, TMF RERO, VGD Podzimek a Šuma, Q-Nova, Van Aarsen, Heineken Slovensko, Royal Brinkers Slovakia, Getronics, Peter Bartošík, Peter Bollardt, Šimon Meliš, Tepede Slovakia, Viena International, Dolphin Slovakia, Ewals Cargo Care, Royal Metaalunie



1st issue of the Netherlands Chamber Bulletin



€ 2,556

1st charity gala dinner collection for a hospital in Spišská Nová Ves

New members

Crowne Plaza Bratislava, AS Trenčín, Golf Development Sekule, Circle Investment Support Services (Slovakia), ISC Real, Exact Recruitment



H.E. Rob Swartbol – new ambassador to Slovakia

Key event



€ 7,070

3rd charity gala dinner collection for St. Anna's project in Spišská Belá

New members

Crowne Plaza Bratislava, AS Trenčín, Golf Development Sekule, Circle Investment Support Services (Slovakia), ISC Real

Chamber visits members in Košice and Prešov



Key event

Hans van Essen (ING bank)

Emile Roest (VVMZ)

Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to Slovakia
Ambassador of the Slovak Republic to the Kingdom of the Netherlands

Presidents of the Netherlands Chamber of Commerce

1994 – 1998
H.E. Gajus Scheltema

1998 – 2002
H.E. Henk Soeters

1997 – 2000
H.E. Lubomír Kopaj

2000 – 2004
H.E. Ján Kuderjavý

H.E. Laurent Stokvis

H.E. Rob Swartbol

H.E. Oksana Tomová

Focus on

Focus on

Key events



New Year Reception



Visit to Leaf (now Cloetta)



New members

Techo, TSR, Radisson, Cargo group, Lotos, Gemma, Havel & Holásek, HSBC, Class

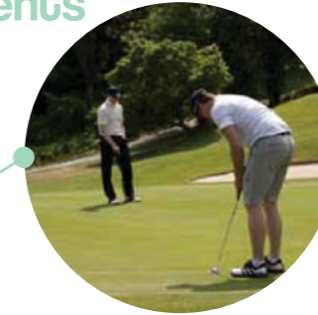
Key events

1st Netherlands Chamber golf tournament in Hainburg (AT)

20 Years of Shell in Slovakia

20 Years of ING in Slovakia

Key events



2nd NL – Chamber golf tournament in Hainburg (AT)



Visit to Cemmac, Teleperformance Slovakia, Zumtobel



€ 22,000

9th charity gala dinner collection for Betánia in Bratislava



€ 18,500

7th charity gala dinner collection for Maják (Lighthouse) in Sady nad Torysou

New members

Templar Metal, Čarnogurský ULC, City Hotel Bratislava

New members

Komerční banka, ETN, Goodwill magazine, Goodwill Realty and Invest

2009

2010

2011

2012

2013

Economic crisis hits Slovakia

New members

Licitor Group, Hoektransport, Hillbridges, Randstad, Start people, Sheraton, AspenStaff, DVSK



€ 27,000

5th charity gala dinner collection for Maják in Zlaté Moravce



€ 16,000

6th charity gala dinner collection for Náruč in Žilina

Political party speakers series

1st Mussels & Fries Evening

Visit to Continental Automotive Systems, Witzemann Slovakia, Kuster, Evonik Fermas

Key events

New members

Conweco, Pinnacle Consulting & Investments



€ 16,000

8th charity gala dinner collection for Dľaň in Lučenec



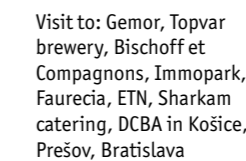
Last Queen's Day celebration

Blind wine tasting

CEE The Opportunity Seminar Series

Hillbridges 5th anniversary

Key events



Visit to: Gemor, Topvar brewery, Bischoff et Compagnons, Immopark, Faurecia, ETN, Sharkam catering, DCBA in Košice, Prešov, Bratislava

Emile Roest (VVMZ)

H.E. Rob Swartbol

H.E. Daphne Bergsma

H.E. Richard van Rijssen

H.E. Oksana Tomová

H.E. Jaroslav Chlebo

Focus on

Focus on



€ 30,000

10th charity gala dinner collection for Návrat in Prešov

Key events

Visits to: PSA (Peugeot Citroen), Inalfa roof systems, Wertheim, Spa Pišťany, Schenker, Bohunice Nuclear Power Plant



€ 15,000

12th charity gala dinner collection for St. Norbert Social House in Jasov

New member

Herry's

Key events



Trip to the East



Goodbye to NL Ambassador Richard van Rijssen, and hello to new Ambassador Henk Cor van der Kwast

The Year of Orange Culture



TMF 20 Years in Slovakia



Visiting Cloetta in Levice



2014

2015

2016

2017

2018

New members

Park Inn Danube Hotel, EWE, Dozen



Tax Seminar

Meeting the new Slovak president Mr. Kiska

1st King's Day Celebration



Wine Experience

Visits to: Gebruder Weiss, Jungheinrich, NMH

Key events

Emile Roest (VVMZ)



€ 21,000

11th charity gala dinner collection for Kaspian in Bratislava

New members

HIC Slovakia, Workspace Europe, Grand Hotel River Park, AK Štefan Rybovič



H.E. Richard van Rijssen



Slovakia and the Netherland's chair the EU commission

Goodbye to Emile Roest, and hello to Jan Lambert as Chairman of the NL Chamber

Visits to: Koval systems, Mikrotech, Spanner, PLS, Scheidt & Bachmann, Immopark and ECCO

Key events

New members

G&P Quality Management, GHS Legal, The Concierge, Winterpack, PRO4CE, NMH, Larive, ING Business Shared Services



€ 10,000

13th charity gala dinner collection for AkSen in Piešťany



H.E. Roman Bužek

New members

Falkensteiner Hotel Bratislava, Aon Central and Eastern Europe, VASIL, ŠIMONOVIC & Partners, Wall it, Wesconi, NN poisťovňa a dôchodkové spoločnosti, Pontrain, UPSTUDIO



€ 10,000

14th charity gala dinner collection for Depaul in Bratislava

Jan Lamber Voortman (DAVINCI)

H.E. Henk Cor van der Kwast

H.E. Jaroslav Chlebo

Focus on

Focus on



€ 12,092

15th charity gala dinner collection for Spy, o.z.

New members

Corporate members – Crayonic, Graban, Torma and partners



€ 14,000

16th charity gala dinner collection for Food bank Slovakia

New members

Patron members – Philips, CTP Slovakia

Corporate members – Ernst and Young, BRNDS intermediary

Individual member – student Ivana Pylypovova



€ 10,000

18th charity gala dinner collection for Fire Brigades



2019

2020

2021

2022

2023

2024

New member

Corporate member – Werkemotom



€ 1,500

Charity collection for Kto pomôže Slovensku

New members

Patron member – Arval Competence Center Bratislava

Corporate member – KOKS Robotics



€ 8,000

17th charity gala dinner collection for Bring the River Belá Back to Life under the auspices of the WWF Slovakia

New members

Patron members – PWC, Ilias Solution

Individual member – Peter Steiner

Honorary member – Jan Lamber Voortman



€ 15,466

19th charity gala dinner collection for Malý séfkuchár bez čapice

New members

Patron members – Corwin SK a.s.

Corporate members – De Heus, Ecoshare s.r.o.



Key event

The Three Day State Visit of Their Majesties King Willem-Alexander and Queen Máxima

Jan Lamber Voortman (DAVINCI)

Gijs van der Loo (HEINEKEN)

H.E. Henk Cor van der Kwast

H.E. Gabriella Sancisi

Jules Gerzon

H.E. Roman Bužek

H.E. Juraj Macháč

Wendy Van Sante: Global Vision and Slovak Pride

Wendy Van Sante, the new Marketing Director of HEINEKEN Slovakia, brings a fresh and unique perspective to the company. Since joining in January 2025 after spending eight years in Vietnam, she has quickly connected with Slovakia's rich brewing heritage and its passionate beer culture.

by:



Michaela Hircová
Heineken Senior Corporate Affairs Specialist Department

Looking ahead, the focus is on strengthening the company's portfolio, especially as it celebrates its **30th year anniversary. Zlatý Bažant**, Slovakia's best selling and most-loved beer brand, recently received the **Golden Slovak Quality Award in Slovak Beer Crown** for its iconic **Zlatý Bažant '73**, while **Zlaty Bazant Radler 0.0%** remains the market leader in Radlers, embodying the company's commitment to no alcohol alternatives. Brands like **Bradáč** appeal to the premium craft beer drinker, who wants to try new beers.

Van Sante's personal brand philosophy emphasizes authenticity and relevance. "Strong brands connect strongly with their audiences," she said. "My goal is to bring the stories of our brands to life by celebrating their craft, their Slovak roots and their quality."

This focus on Slovak identity is key to her vision. Van Sante wants to honour the company's heritage while continuing to innovate to ensure HEINEKEN Slovakia creates a powerful foundation for the future of brewing.



"Slovakia is a beautiful country, rich in nature and culture. Although HEINEKEN Slovakia is part of a global company, it respects its local roots and iconic traditions. To have the opportunity to continue this legacy is an inspiration to me."

"I've witnessed the pride and craftsmanship at our Hurbanovo brewery—a place where tradition and passion come together," Wendy said. "It became clear how much Slovak consumers not only love beer, but truly understand and appreciate its quality."

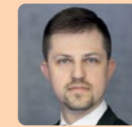
For Van Sante, who has spent 8 years in different markets, looking at the market with fresh eyes is vital for understanding and strengthening the role of brands.

Wendy emphasizes that Slovak beer drinkers respect their traditions, but are also eager for new experiences. Today, wellness trends and low / no alcohol alternatives are shaping the market. The future of beer may well be lighter, more flavourful, and more inclusive—especially for younger and female consumers," she stated.

Talent Garden

Are you a university student looking for a paid traineeship at top Dutch companies Arval, Heineken, ING, KOKS Robotics or Union with offices in Bratislava, Trnava and Hurbanovo? Would you like to gain valuable experience in a variety of projects over a 12-month period? Would you like to belong to a community of talented people which will help you grow as a person and professionally? If yes, the Talent Garden Traineeship program is for you!

by:



Marek Novotný
Executive Director Netherlands Chamber of Commerce in Slovakia

The traineeship begins with the 1st September – 31st October application period when students complete a questionnaire posted on the Netherlands Chamber of Commerce website and send their CV and creative self-presentation to talentgarden@netherlandschamber.sk. Only complete files are shared with recruitment departments of the participating companies for evaluation. A handful are invited for an interview with the recruiters in December.

Successful candidates are invited to the Talent Garden Kick-off Event and Certifying Ceremony where they meet and network with their peers, program alumni who are representatives of the participating companies, the

Netherlands Chamber of Commerce in the Slovak Republic, and the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Students rotate from one company to another during a 4 - 6 month traineeship starting in February and the program lasts 12 months. Starting with the 3rd cohort, the program offers two types of rotations. While the standard rotation is open to students looking for a more general type of work experience in HR, marketing, finance, IT and customer service, a more specialized rotation is open for students in engineering programs. What's more, trainees from all participating companies can meet at cross-company training courses to enhance their soft skills.



Trainees can also attend prestigious events such as the King's Day and Orange Party as program alumni and become part of the Talent Garden community. They can also practice their interpersonal skills by promoting the Talent Garden program at events such as Profesia Days, Europe Day, and Gaudeamus Bratislava.

With the second cohort successfully entering their last rotation, we can't wait to meet with the talented students that will take over the baton in February 2026.

Opening Doors to International Education: Why the Netherlands Stands Out

When we started our studies in the Netherlands, the number of Slovak students at our university could be counted on one hand. Today, our WhatsApp community for Slovak and Czech students in the Netherlands has grown to over 280 members. The trend is clear: **studying abroad is becoming increasingly popular in our region.**

At Holprom, we guide students step-by-step - from selecting the right study program, preparing and submitting applications, arranging housing, and helping with the transition to life in another country. Our first-hand experience and trusted partnerships make the process problem-free and reduces stress. Our team consists of people who have studied in the Netherlands. We know the system, the culture, and the challenges first-hand.

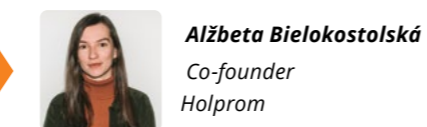


This personal experience enables us to give advice that is practical, realistic, and grounded in everyday student life.

Why do Slovak & Czech students choose the Netherlands for their university studies?

Our recent survey explored the motivations behind studying in the Netherlands. Here's what stood out:

- Availability of English-taught programs (85.9 %)
- Quality of education (73.9 %)
- International atmosphere and diversity (59.8 %)
- Career growth and job opportunities (43.5%)
- Financial factors: tuition fees and living costs (38%)



by:



These findings confirm what we've seen first hand: **studying abroad isn't just about academic quality.** It's about access to opportunities, a high-quality education system, building a global network, and preparing for a future without limits.

Two practical recommendations for anyone considering studying in the Netherlands:

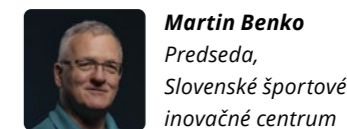
- **Don't underestimate housing.** Accommodation is limited, especially in bigger cities. We help by pointing students to universities with housing guarantees or connecting them with trusted housing partners.
- **Plan ahead.** Application deadlines for popular programs fall earlier than many expect. Preparing on time means more options and less stress.

At Holprom, we don't just guide students to the right university - we help them **start their life abroad with confidence.**

ALŽBETA BIELOKOSTOLSKÁ & REBEKA JENDRIŠÁKOVÁ
Co-founders, Holprom
www.holprom.eu, info@holprom.eu

Bratislava Launches First Sports Innovation Summit to Spark Business Cooperation

by:



On June 10, 2025, Bratislava hosted the first-ever **Sports Innovation Summit**, organized by the Slovak Sports Innovation Center (SSIC) together with the Dutch platform **Sportinnovator**. Held under the auspices of the Slovak Ministry of Tourism and Sport and the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the summit was opened in the presence of **Jules Gerzon, Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to Slovakia**, underscoring its strong diplomatic and international dimension.

The event was officially inaugurated by **Martin Benko**, SSIC Chairman, and **Harry van Dorenmalen**, Chairman of Sportinnovator. Their joint address symbolized the passing of an "innovation baton" aimed at deepening cooperation in research and knowledge exchange and in business **partnerships** across the sports sector.

In her keynote, **Ivana Šufliarská Libiaková**, State Secretary for Sport, stressed that digitalization, new technologies, and international

collaboration are vital for building a competitive and sustainable sports environment in Slovakia. Representatives of UEFA, Slovak diplomacy, and Dutch institutions also voiced their support for closer ties.

The program featured three thematic blocks:

- **Innovation in Elite Sport and Football** – *Charles Frémont* from the UEFA Innovation Hub and *Claudine Breton* from ThinkSport discussed global trends, while CATAPULT and Ubuntu showcased applied sport technologies.
- **A New Era of Fan Engagement** – *Thomas van Schaik* of The Athlete Brand delivered insights on athlete-fan connections. The Johan Cruyff Arena, Signify, FC Urban, and Sorama presented tools for data-driven engagement.
- **AI & Data in Sport** – *Samir Cerić* from EPSI highlighted how AI is reshaping sport and business. Fittar, Pulse Sport,

bot.media, and *Miroslav Chlipala* addressed innovation potential and regulation.

The **SportTech Spotlight** was a highlight, with Slovak and Dutch startups pitching their solutions to investors and partners. Companies such as ColosseoEAS, TRISPO, Paysy, and MBCD joined Dutch innovators Fittar, Pulse, and FC Urban, positioning the summit as a **gateway for Dutch sport tech into Slovakia and the wider CEE market.**

In closing, **Martin Benko** emphasized the summit is not only about sharing ideas, but also about **forging concrete business opportunities** and positioning Slovakia as a regional hub for sports innovation.

The **Sports Innovation Summit 2025** laid the foundation for long-term cooperation, opening doors for Dutch and Slovak companies to co-develop solutions, expand into new markets, and strengthen Central and Eastern Europe's role in global sports innovation.

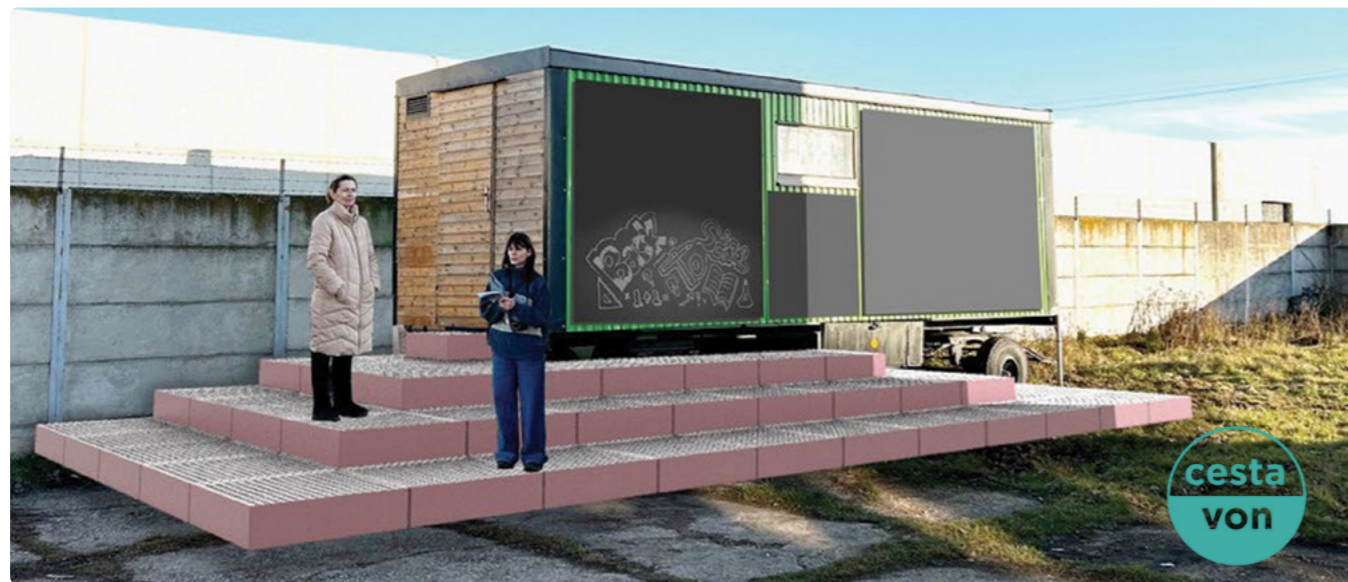
The OMAMA Program

Cesta von / The Way Out

Cesta von (The Way Out) is a civic association whose mission is to help people trapped in generational poverty become self-sufficient, find employment, and live a dignified life. We support families via interconnected activities, focusing on Roma communities in eastern Slovakia, where poverty is most prevalent.



Lenka Czikková
rozvojová manažérka,
Cesta von



Children here are born into difficult conditions. Their parents' low education level, unemployment, inadequate housing, and health problems create a vicious circle of problems from which it is difficult to escape without outside help. Children face challenging conditions that negatively affect their development. They have a significantly poorer vocabulary, as their parents speak to them less than parents from other socio-economic groups. Moreover, most of them speak only Romani, which makes it difficult for them when entering the education system. Adverse living conditions lead to toxic stress, which has long-term negative consequences for their mental and emotional development.

To address this, we launched the OMAMA program, focusing on children's early development and parental involvement. Omamas – from poor communities, trained with experts – teach mothers how to stimulate their children during the

key early years. Our tailored program helps children build the foundations needed for kindergarten and school while strengthening parenting skills in families that did not receive such support themselves. Currently, 54 Omamas work in 40 poor communities, supporting 1,100 children and over 300 have already completed the program.

In six years, we have reached about 10% of children in the target group. In cooperation with Oxford University, we measured the program impact: children in the Omama program show significant improvements in cognition, motor skills, language, and behaviour compared to peers without the intervention. Early neurodevelopment improvements mean stronger foundations for future success, both in school and life. Long-term work with parents (3–4 years) also changes their attitudes toward education, builds new habits, and helps break the cycle of poverty.



In addition to direct support, we advocate for systemic change. The OMAMA program was included as good practice in Slovakia's Recovery and Resilience Plan and inspired a new type of social service in the National Strategy for Coordinated Early Intervention and Care Services (2022–2030). This service is planned in the amendment to the Social Services Act.

The program has received several awards, including SozialMarie, Roma Spirit, and the SDGs Award, confirming its innovation and impact.

The Future of Farming in Slovakia

Dutch Agricultural Entrepreneurs on Innovation, Technology, and the **Next Generation**



Interview 1

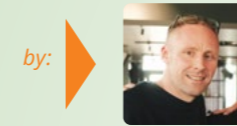
THIJS & RICK DE SCHUTTER

Could you introduce your company and explain what agricultural innovations you are currently developing or implementing?

We run an arable farm in the Trnava region. Our focus is on growing grains, sugar beet, potatoes, and onions as efficiently as possible. A key factor is water availability for irrigation.

High-intensity crops like potatoes and onions need a lot of water to give high yields. If the summer is hot and dry, we also irrigate other crops. Our pumping stations are gradually being automated using software and frequency-regulated pumps.

When we took over the farm in Slovakia in the summer of 2023, GPS systems weren't being used. In the Netherlands, this is already standard. These systems have significantly improved



Nick Barends
Professional and Leisure Events, Charity
BRNDS Intermediary

our efficiency and made the work less physically tiring for employees. With GPS-integrated machinery, we can apply fertilizer and crop protection products precisely where needed using shut-off sections and site-specific mapping.

Soil is crucial—it ultimately determines our yield. That's why we take site-specific soil samples, which are analysed in a lab to assess the elements present, pH levels, and offer recommendations to optimize soil health. We also take leaf sap samples during the growing season to check if plants are missing certain elements, and we add supplements accordingly to maximize output.

We aim to digitize our operations as much as possible. Although it's still a challenge, we've already digitized crop planning, land and lease management, and task scheduling and logging.

We also try to make our team more versatile and independent. In Slovakia, many workers are trained to do only one task, which creates bottlenecks. We encourage people to take ownership, make decisions, and not fear making or admitting mistakes—something more common in the Dutch work culture than here.

These might be standard practices in the Netherlands, but in Slovakia, they're still in the early stages.

What advice would you give to agricultural businesses looking to embrace new technologies?

Start as soon as possible and stay up-to-date with new technologies and their applications. Sometimes, solutions from other sectors can be applied very effectively in agriculture. You need to bring knowledge in-house or partner with others who can help you. The business will become more efficient and easier to manage, but you must be proactive in implementing this. We're lucky to have strong connections in the Netherlands, and it's clear to us how far ahead Dutch agriculture is in adopting innovation.

What are the biggest challenges regarding introducing new technologies to farmers, and how do you overcome them?

In Slovakia, the biggest challenge is convincing people to change. New technologies can disrupt business operations. Many people are resistant to change or don't see the benefits. We take small steps to demonstrate results, and that helps build trust—but not always. You have to be a little bit stubborn and brave enough to take the first step. Innovation often comes with high investment costs, so this can also be a barrier.





Interview 2

RICHARD KNOL, AGROLET spol. s r.o.

by: 



Nick Barends
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Could you introduce your company and explain the innovations you are implementing?

AGROLET is an agricultural company located at the foot of the Small Carpathians in Horné Orešany. I took over the business from Slovak owners in 2019. Since 1997, our main activities have been arable farming and contracting services for third parties. We grow corn for starch, rapeseed for biofuel, barley for beer, blue poppy seeds for baking, sugar beets for sugar, and durum wheat for pasta. Our contracting work focuses on crop protection and fertilization, which we do with a ground sprayer—a technical marvel from a leading Dutch innovator. We recently added broiler chicken farming to our portfolio.

Thanks to modern knowledge, technology, and motivation, our results have significantly improved in recent years. This sets us apart from the older generation of Slovak farmers. There is little influx of young professionals into farming. Farming is capital-intensive, so newcomers often start in niche markets like organic produce or wine. We keep AGROLET up-to-date via crop diversification, circular farming, technological advancement, and integrating higher-value vegetable crops.

What challenges and opportunities do you see for young farmers entering the sector today?

People will always need food, so demand is guaranteed. Globally, living standards are rising, which increases demand for healthier and protein-rich diets. There's also growing public demand for sustainable production with regard to people, the planet, and biodiversity. Agriculture must respond to these changes.

However, production costs are rising rapidly, and governments and consumers must be willing to pay the true price. Farmers also face growing challenges from climate change—heatwaves, droughts, and floods all affect yields and crop viability. Breeding more resilient varieties and using biological pest control are promising paths, especially as many chemical pesticides are being banned. If good alternatives aren't available, crop losses will become more common and threaten the sustainability of farming—especially for the next generation.



How do you see the role of technology and innovation for the next generation of farmers?

Technology is advancing rapidly, and agriculture is no exception. Today, many machines operate autonomously. Drivers monitor rather than steer and are increasingly supported—or even replaced—by sensors and cameras. Satellite and drone imagery can detect crop diseases and optimize fertilization down to the square metre.

AI is being used to weed autonomously and harvest ripe vegetables and fruit. This is a very welcome development in times of labour shortages. These innovations will only accelerate and become more influential. They provide tools to meet changing consumer demands—but they also require adaptation. For example, optimizing crops using satellite data analysis or adjusting machines based on leaf chlorophyll levels instead of a tape measure is a new pioneering advance, but it's far from mainstream yet.





King's Day 2025

SPRING EDITION

When: 28 April, 2025

Where: Primate's Palace in Bratislava

by:



Lenka Loučková
Educating and inspiring
young climate leaders

On April 26th, Dutch people around the world and friends of the Netherlands celebrated King's Day. The Embassy honoured the occasion by holding a reception at the Primate's Palace in Bratislava on April 28th. It was once again a celebration of good relations and long-standing ties between the Netherlands and Slovakia. In the run up to the NATO Summit hosted by the Netherlands in June, the event also served as a moment for reflection and contemplation on freedom, security and need for unity. Therefore, we were happy to have been joined and hear from the guest of honour, State Secretary of Defence Igor Melicher. We were also pleased by the attendance of many Dutch company representatives and our cooperation with the Chamber on event organization. Many thanks to the President of the Board Richard Kellner for sharing his views on Dutch-Slovak business cooperation with the guests.



Building Stronger Business Communities: Insights from Guido van Rooy

On 3 September 2025, the board of the Netherlands Chamber of Commerce in the Slovak Republic welcomed Guido van Rooy, former President of the Netherlands Chamber of Commerce in Vietnam. The session focused on exchanging experiences and exploring strategies that foster growth and member satisfaction.

Van Rooy outlined three pillars of a successful chamber of commerce. The first is organizational clarity. A clear mission statement and a strong executive director are essential, supported by a board that works in harmony. Listening to members' feedback, setting measurable targets, and creating dedicated sub-teams can further enhance effectiveness. Collaboration with partners, including embassies and fellow chambers, and the adoption of digital tools such as AI-driven customer relationship management, ensures efficiency and responsiveness.

The second pillar is ambition—what a chamber aims to achieve. Van Rooy emphasized the importance of community management, encouraging chambers to know their members personally and remain engaged with the local business environment. Signature events play a crucial role, ideally with at least one flagship gathering each year to strengthen networking and visibility. Complementary efforts such as consistent communication via newsletters or bulletins, business services including consultancy and translation, and competitive membership packages create tangible value for members.

The third pillar lies in the unique strengths a chamber can offer. A flagship event should have a clear and compelling purpose, while exclusive programs, such as talent development initiatives, can deliver benefits to both the Dutch business community and society as a whole. Visibility, influence on government policies, and innovative cross-border collaborations with neighbouring cities such as Vienna or Brno were highlighted as ways to extend impact and relevance.

The discussion underscored how chambers of commerce can thrive by balancing strategic vision with practical action. By prioritizing member engagement, fostering partnerships, and embracing innovation, chambers can continue to play a pivotal role in strengthening business ties across borders.



Marek Novotný
Executive Director
Netherlands Chamber
of Commerce in Slovakia



W2 Social – Cheers and Proost: Networking Made Fun

When: every second Wednesday of the month
Where: at Spin Cocktail Bar, Bratislava



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Looking for a relaxed way to connect with professionals in Bratislava? W2 Social – Cheers and Proost is the perfect opportunity. Organized jointly by the Netherlands Chamber of Commerce and the British Chamber of Commerce in Slovakia, this informal after-work gathering takes place every second Wednesday of the month at Spin Cocktail Bar.




The Dutch Chamber is proud to host this event to bring professionals together, foster new connections, and strengthen our business community in Bratislava. Each guest receives a complimentary welcome drink, and additional beverages are available at the bar.

Whether you're looking to meet like-minded professionals, exchange ideas, or simply unwind after a busy day, W2 Social offers a casual setting to expand your network. Raise a glass with us – Cheers and Proost! We hope to see you at the next one!





Back to Work Cocktail

by:  **Marek Novotný**
Executive Director
Netherlands Chamber
of Commerce in Slovakia

When: 18 September, 2025
Where: Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherland

On September 18, the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands graciously hosted the annual Back to Work Cocktail at Ambassador Jules Gerzon's residence, symbolically marking the end of summer and the start of a productive new season. With the kind support of the Embassy, the chamber of commerce welcomed around 30 members for an inspiring evening.




The event provided a valuable platform for Dutch and Slovak businesses, together with government representatives, to meet, exchange insights, and discuss future business plans and investment opportunities in Slovakia.

We are very grateful to the Embassy for their warm hospitality and long-standing partnership, which continues to strengthen the bond between the diplomatic and business communities. Our sincere thanks also go to our member companies for their active participation, and helping to create a vibrant and engaging atmosphere.



Golftrophy 2025



by:  **Marek Novotný**
Executive Director
Netherlands Chamber
of Commerce in Slovakia

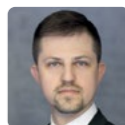
When: 19 September, 2025
Where: Sedín Golf Resort

The Golf trophy 2025 event, held at Sedín Golf Resort on September 19, brought together members and friends of foreign chambers of commerce for a day of sport, networking, and collaboration. Seasoned players enjoyed the Texas Scramble tournament, while beginners joined the golf Academy. In addition to the competition, the event provided a unique platform to connect across chambers, strengthening professional and personal ties.

We extend our sincere thanks to the teams of the foreign chambers of commerce for their cooperation, dedication and effort in preparing this special event. Their hard work ensured a seamless experience for all involved. Our gratitude also goes to our members from AspenStaff s.r.o., Komerční Banka a.s., and CORWIN SK a.s. who contributed to the lively atmosphere, and made this gathering a success.

We look forward to building on this spirit of cooperation and camaraderie at future events.

Speed Business Meeting

by:  **Marek Novotný**
Executive Director
Netherlands Chamber
of Commerce in Slovakia

When: 29 September, 2025
Where: Clarion Congress Hotel in Bratislava

On September 29, several foreign chambers of commerce joined forces to host another successful **Speed Business Meeting** at the Clarion Congress Hotel in Bratislava. It was a pleasure to welcome representatives from our members **Peoply.tech**, **Ernst & Young Global Consulting Services**, and **Best Hotel Properties, a.s.** to this energetic networking event. The evening was filled with insightful discussions, meaningful connections, and new business opportunities.

We look forward to seeing how the relationships and ideas sparked during this event will develop into fruitful collaborations in the future!





Mussels and Fries



Marek Novotný
Executive Director
Netherlands Chamber
of Commerce in Slovakia

When: 15 October, 2025
Where: Crowne Plaza Bratislava



On October 15, 2025, mussels and fries enthusiasts gathered at the newly refurbished premises of Crowne Plaza Bratislava to enjoy a traditional Belgian feast.

Members of the Netherlands Chamber of Commerce in the Slovak Republic joined the Belgian community in Slovakia for an evening of great food, lively conversation, and cultural exchange. The festive atmosphere was enriched by refreshing drinks generously provided by The HEINEKEN Company and Spin Bar & Nightclub. Kudos to the chef for mastering the recipe!

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