

**SEEMIG - Managing Migration and its Effects in SEE –
Transnational Actions towards Evidence Based Strategies
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**Work Package 5: Developing future scenarios of demographic,
migratory and labour market processes**

SEEMIG National Foresight Report in SLOVAKIA

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Executive Summary

Foresight exercise about future migratory, demographic and labour market developments in Slovakia by 2025 was organized in Fall 2013 as part of the SEEMIG project. The objective of the foresight exercise was to encourage thinking about future developments in migration and labour market trends in the country and to identify the areas and issues that might need strategic planning, policy focus and policy intervention. In spite of a strong propensity of Slovak citizens to work abroad and a growing immigrant numbers, the topics and issues that migration phenomenon raises have largely evaded public discourse and serious policy debate.

The key characteristics of foresight are a strong participatory nature and a medium-to-long term vision-building process, both aimed at raising awareness and mobilizing common actions in different spheres of public life. The foresight exercise in SEEMIG was methodologically built around brainstorming and brain-mapping exercises and had a dominant scenario building component. It consisted of three stakeholder workshops where diverse groups were invited- experts, decision-makers and migrants - and were asked to present their ideas and expectations of future migration and labor market trends in the country. The fourth workshop brought the participants together to formulate scenarios and develop life histories of selected heroes within a particular scenario.

While various stakeholders presented different perspectives on the present and future drivers of migration, there were many similarities in the overarching themes and factors. These have been then selected to compose four key drivers of migration to be considered in the elaboration of scenarios of future: economic prosperity, bonds to home, legal and administrative framework and generational change. Two binary scenarios were elaborated, positive and negative. These scenarios helped to imagine the future at the possible extremes with different social, economic and cultural implications for the country and various challenges for policy-making.

The key finding of the foresight is that under any scenario, emigration is likely to continue and it deserves more policy attention that it has gained to date. There are several broad conclusions that can be derived on the basis of the foresight exercise. First, migration balance, prevalence of emigration or immigration, composition of outflows and inflows, and the rate of return migration will all evolve differently depending on the contours of future economic prospects. In case of growth, emigration is likely to decline with time, return migration might further increase and immigration grow. In the case of negative scenario, economic decline is envisaged, resulting in growing unemployment, frustration and incapacity of formal governance structures to improve conditions for business, work and life. All these processes will require adequate policy response as they will impact various aspects of social and public life. Second, emigration, which is a widely spread phenomenon already, is seen to continue under both scenarios, with potentially different broader consequences. Benefits to Slovakia will ensue if return migration takes place and people who return are able to successfully integrate after return and utilize their financial and human capital.

Return of whole families with school-aged children is likely, and will require effective local-level responses to the increased demand for public services (positive scenario). If a decision to stay abroad will prevail, it will be important to nurture close ties among physically disconnected family members. Adult children who settle abroad might need to provide important family nets to ageing parents living in Slovakia who might not be able to get sufficient state support in pensions or healthcare. Unsustainability of the welfare system due to high emigration of young people from the country and rising demands on the system are also a challenge (negative scenario).

Third, due to demographic decline which is a reality in the mid-term future, labour force is envisaged to decline with negative consequences of this process on economic growth (positive and negative scenario). This will require an effective policy response that can be organized along different lines. Less restrictive and more active immigration policy might contribute to higher attractiveness of Slovakia for immigrants. In order for positive benefits of migration to materialize, integration policies will need to improve and so enable the management of growing religious and cultural diversity. Internal resources can be also mobilized, especially through elimination of poverty and social exclusion and integration of the Roma minority who faces high unemployment and discrimination on domestic labour market. Finally, the workshop participants commented on poor knowledge about migration as a phenomenon due to the gaps in data collection and registrations. The areas of policy focus in order for the positive future to materialize can be summarized as follow:

- In light of increasing immigration likely to ensue, **integration policies** are necessary in order to tap on the potential
- **Measures tackling racial and ethnic discrimination** of domestic minorities (mainly the Roma) and of immigrants, supporting diversity policies, and nurturing diversity discourse will be important
- **Pension and welfare systems sustainability** might be at risk should emigration continue;
- **Transferability and coordination of social rights** will be crucial to facilitate return and ensure full benefits from intra-EU mobility
- **Reintegration of return migrants** needs policy attention
- **Diaspora might be a key resource** with respect to social support to parents left behind and in the context of demographic aging so diaspora engagement should be enhanced
- Better **integration of Roma communities** is desirable **to tap on the demographic potential of this ethnic group** and to develop its labour market opportunities
- **Evidence-based policy making** about migration and effectiveness of measures focused on migration governance is an imperative
- **Data collection** about migration flows and stock, especially with respect to **emigration and return**, should improve in order to support informed decision-making

1. INTRODUCTION

This report presents findings of foresight exercise about future migratory, demographic and labour market developments in Slovakia by 2025 carried out in October and November 2013 as a part of the SEEMIG project.¹ A broad aim of the SEEMIG project is to contribute to an improved data collection and data management in the fields of migration and labour markets across the SEEMIG partner countries.² The objective of the foresight exercise was to encourage thinking about future developments in migration and labour market trends in the country in order to identify areas and issues that might need strategic planning, policy focus and policy intervention, going beyond data collection.

We find this effort important in its own right as migration has been a neglected phenomenon in Slovakia, in spite of its significance and important social and economic consequences. Existing research points out that labour market conditions in Slovakia, with prevailing structural imbalances and high unemployment rates, continue to push workers, including the youth, to seek work abroad (Kureková 2011; Kahanec and Mýtna Kureková 2014; Mýtna Kureková 2014a). At the same time, with rising GDP levels, economic prosperity (though unequal across the country) and skill gaps, the country is gradually becoming more attractive to foreigners whose composition is becoming also more diverse across the countries of origin (Hlinčíková, Lamačková, and Sekulová 2011). In spite of a high share of Slovak citizens working abroad and the growing immigrant numbers, the topic and issues migration raises have largely evaded public discourse and serious policy debate.

The foresight methodology can be a very useful tool when it is used to encourage strategic thinking and policy engagement with migration and labour market phenomena in the medium-term future. Foresight as an analytical and planning method has been pioneered in strategic military planning and further developed in business strategies. In recent decades, it has been increasingly applied in public policy across Europe as a tool that merges policy analysis, strategic planning and futures studies. Its key features are a strong participatory nature and a medium-to-long term vision-building process aimed at raising awareness and mobilizing common actions in different spheres of public life (Gavigan and Scapolo 2001; Georghiou 2008). It is different from forecasts, which are characterized by quantitative estimations based on past trends. Foresights can be organized using various methods, quantitative and qualitative, which are selected based on the focus of the study, available resources (time and finance) and nature of the phenomenon under investigation.³

¹ The foresight exercise was organized at these dates, but detailed analysis of the material took place in the summer of 2014. The events in Ukraine that might affect future migration to Slovakia in important ways, are not part of the foresight discussions, as most events evolved later.

² Austria, Bulgaria, Italy, Hungary, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Romania

³ See for example: http://forlearn.jrc.ec.europa.eu/guide/4_methodology/methods.htm or (Gavigan and Scapolo 2001).

The methodology for the SEEMIG foresight exercises was developed with the aim of complementing the prevalingly quantitative focus of the project.⁴ National foresights, including the Slovak exercise, were therefore methodologically anchored as a qualitative exploratory approach based on creativity methods (brain-mapping and brainstorming) and scenario building on two levels - macro and micro - following common guidelines developed by Toth (2013). Following the overall analytical and conceptual approach of the SEEMIG project, also the foresight approach defined migration as a social phenomenon closely interlinked with labour market and other demographic processes.

The professional background of stakeholders invited to participate in the exercise took this diverse determination of relevant expertise into consideration. Given its strong participatory design, the following diverse stakeholder groups were invited to participate in foresight development in Slovakia: *experts* across various academic disciplines; *public authorities and decision makers* at local and national levels; and *migrants and activists*. Such design facilitated a triangulation of different sources of expertise (experts, decision makers, migrants) and experience (practitioners, researchers, migrants). It also contributed to developing foresight exercise on pre-existing knowledge and experience (practical or more formal/academic) and so achieving (to the extent possible) a consensual understanding of the issues of migration within the country's context.

To the best of our knowledge, foresight methodology has not been applied in Slovakia in relation to migratory and labour market developments in the past, but similar approaches have been used to create future trajectories of development in health care sector (Central and East European Health Policy Network 2012).⁵ In addition to substantive conclusions of the foresight, another contribution lies in circulating new methodological approaches to a wider audience in Slovakia. At the same time, the Slovak foresight was organized as the first foresight among the SEEMIG partner countries. In principle, it served as a pilot foresight and methodological guidelines were further developed based on its practicalities and set-backs. The fact that a new methodology was tried and pioneered, the Slovak foresight experienced some setbacks, which will be discussed in the methodology section. We nevertheless believe that the project has come to relevant conclusions and implications.

The key finding of the foresight exercise is that emigration is likely to continue and deserves more policy attention that it has gained to date. This is not only due to the potential that diaspora or return migration can have for further development of the country, but also because of a wide range of consequences it is likely to have across policy fields such as pensions, healthcare, elderly care, regional development, etc. Additional interesting findings relate to how immigration was understood. Contrary to survey findings suggesting negative perceptions of Slovaks towards foreigners (Bleha et al. 2013), immigration was overall positively perceived and portrayed among the foresight participants. However, negative

⁴ National foresights were conducted in all SEEMIG partner countries: Austria, Bulgaria, Italy, Hungary, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Romania

⁵ For a recent foresight exercise about EU mobility see (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2014).

opinions intertwined with prejudices were frequently presented with respect to the 'domestic' minorities, especially the Roma.

The remaining part of the report is structured as follows. Section 2 briefly discusses Slovakia's economic, political and social trajectory and describes recent migration patterns to provide the reader with a broader context, which might have shaped opinions and perceptions of stakeholders that took part in the foresight exercise. Section 3 presents methodology and encountered difficulties in more detail. Key findings related to drivers of future migration trends, scenario formulation and hero contextualization is presented in Section 4. The last section synthesizes empirical material and analytically derives sets of challenges and opportunities ensuing from the envisaged scenarios and develops areas of policy focus.

2. COUNTRY CONTEXT

In Slovakia, labour market developments and migration have been two strongly interconnected phenomena (Divinský 2007; Bleha et al. 2013). In addition to economic factors, political changes have shaped migration patterns too. A most marked impact on labour mobility in the last decade has clearly been the accession of Slovakia to the European Union in May 2004. Overall, Slovakia's accession to the EU in 2004 marked an era of improving living standards following a sequence of comprehensive economic reforms that the country mainly implemented in the early-2000s. At the same time, the EU accession caught Slovakia on a trajectory of population aging and demographic decline. The fertility rate has stood significantly below the replacement rate, and the old-age dependency ratio is projected to rise to over 60% by 2060, marking one of the highest figures among the EU member states (Eurostat 2012). Immigration remains low, standing at around 1% of the population in 2011 (Hlinčíková, Lamačková, and Sekulová 2011), and cannot be expected to sufficiently compensate for these demographic trends in the foreseeable future.

The labour market still has not fully absorbed the structural imbalances originating from the pre-1989 command economy. High general unemployment and youth unemployment have become protracted symptoms of country's developmental trajectory. Youth unemployment rate stood at 33% in 2004 and while a decline to 19% occurred in 2008, by 2013 it rose again to 34% (Eurostat). Partly for this reason, Slovakia experienced relatively a high share of post-accession migration (Kureková 2011; Kahanec and Mýtna Kureková 2014; Bahna 2012). The number of migrants working abroad rose from around 100,000 in 2004 to a peak of 177,000 in 2007. It then fell sharply to around 129,000 by 2009 due to the crisis in the key destination countries, and stabilized thereafter (Kahanec and Mýtna Kureková 2014). The share of active labour force who had worked abroad between May 2004 and December 2007 alone was estimate to be as much as about 4% (Kureková 2011). In spite of this, the issue of large work migration abroad has escaped serious policy attention.

The country has gradually become also increasingly attractive to immigrants. The key countries of origin include neighbouring countries (Ukraine), the EU member states (Romania) but also countries further away (Vietnam). A strong link between the structure of immigration and the origin of foreign investment can be tracked: the numbers of persons from France and South Korea have increased following large investments from these countries in the automotive sector (Kureková 2012; Hlinčíková, Lamačková, and Sekulová 2011). According to attitudinal surveys, the attitudes of national population to foreigners have been negative and affected by prejudice (Bleha et al. 2013).

3. METHODOLOGY

This section describes the process of foresight exercise and highlights the key difficulties or problems encountered. The content of discussions will be presented in the following section.

3.1 Workshops

The foresight exercise was composed of four workshops (Table 1). The first three workshops were brainstorming and brain-mapping exercises where individual stakeholder groups discussed key drivers of migration from their perspective. These were conducted at different dates during the month of October and November at the premises of INFOSTAT and lasted 1-1.5 hours each. The fourth workshop brought the participants together to formulate scenarios and develop life histories of selected heroes within a particular scenario. The joint workshop was organized at the end of November and lasted approximately 2.5 hours.

Table 1: Sequence and timing of foresight workshops in Slovakia

	Brainstorming workshop 1: Experts	Brainstorming workshop 2: Migrants	Brainstorming workshop 3: Decision-makers	Scenario development workshop: Joint workshop
Slovakia	24/10/2013	20/11/2013	20/11/2013	21/11/2013

The whole process was supervised and steered by workshop facilitators whose role was to guide the discussions without projecting own perceptions and beliefs on the participants.⁶ This included allowing the participants to define the contours of ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ scenarios in a joint discussion as well as to choose freely the characteristics of heroes and their life trajectories without any value or opinion imposition by the facilitators (Toth 2013).

The goal of brainstorming and brain-mapping sessions was to encourage free thinking and idea sharing within the stakeholder groups. Participants were invited to share their views and opinions about *key drivers, i.e. key factors, which, in their opinion, influence their and their country’s present and future in relation to migration and the labour market*. The participants in each group were posed the following set of interrelated questions:

⁶ The workshops were facilitated by Fanni Toth. The author of this report assisted the facilitator in 3 out of four workshops and took part in the team discussions.

- *How would you describe the current state of migration in Slovakia?*
- *What are the most important push and pull factors?*
- *Which positive and negative features of migration do you perceive?*

Based on the analysis of the material and the effort to shorten the duration of the joint workshop, the facilitator derived a set of four drivers around which the discussion in the fourth workshop revolved. After the explanation of key drivers and ensuring common understanding across the groups, the participants were randomly divided to two groups and were asked to develop key drivers into future scenarios. Two scenarios – positive and negative – were to be framed. After this a narrative of heroes' profiles and life stories was to be prepared within each scenario in order to work with the micro-level implications of the imagined futures. Elaboration of hero life stories was encouraged in order to depart from abstract thinking and imagine more concrete consequences of a given scenario on specific persons and their families. The groups were asked to describe a highly specific person by specifying sex, age, place of residence, occupation, family status, etc. It was also highlighted that a hero does not necessarily mean a person with *only* positive characteristics and they could incorporate a negative hero in their scenario. In order to stimulate a comprehensive approach to opportunities and challenges stemming from future migration and labour market developments, the groups were encouraged to define both 'an emigrant hero' and 'an immigrant hero'.

In sum, two broad questions framed the discussion in the scenario formation, one at the macro, and one at the micro level:

- *How do these factors/drivers might change in the future? What can we expect?*
- *Now imagine a specific person living in the scenario you have described – how would his/her life evolve? What are the implications of systemic processes on the hero's (his family's) life trajectory?*

In order to work effectively with the 12-year-long time span, foresight participants were asked to break down the period into two main segments: *the time between present and 2020*, elaborating on the change and the effect of selected drivers on macro level. More specifically, participants were encouraged to elaborate ideas on how the country's existence would change, if the key drivers would affect its functioning in the given time period and to think which new phenomena might occur and which older ones might fade away. During the second time period, the participants could pick up the thread of discussion at the year of 2020, and discuss how the future would look like if the selected drivers were shaping the reality *by the year of 2025*.

After the group discussions, scenarios and hero life histories were presented to the whole group by selected volunteers and were further discussed to reflect on the role of the previously described drivers and to share visions of the future under different scenarios.

3.2 Participants

The stakeholders were invited by SEEMIG project leaders in the form of email invitation, which included a detailed description of the exercise aims and structure. The team members collected suggestions of organizations and individuals who could be invited and the invitations were sent out well in advance of the workshop organization, with reminders prior to the workshop dates. While a large number of invitations were sent out and a good number of participants confirmed their participation, the real show-up on the workshop dates was lower.⁷

In the decision-makers groups, the local partner to the project – the town of Turčianske Teplice - was strongly represented. A mixture of local administration officials with diverse agenda responsibility, including the town mayor, was present. In addition, a representative from Immigration Office and a representative from the Ministry of Interior participated in this workshop (7 participants in total). The participation of a local partner was interestingly reflected in the formulation of individual life histories where these were contextualized in Turčianske Teplice for an ‘emigrant hero’ as well as for an ‘immigrant hero’. The group of experts was dominated by demography and migration researchers from INFOSTAT and two additional researchers from the Slovak academia (9 in total). The group was fairly balanced with respect to gender. While a number of immigrants were invited and also NGOs active in the migration field were invited, only one participant in the end came.

Consent forms were signed by each participant at the beginning of each workshop session to follow ethical research guidelines. Anonymity with respect to attribution of opinions presented during the discussion was guaranteed.

3.3 Approach to analyzing material

The analytical stage consisted of the preparation of a detailed description of the results of brainstorming sessions, key drivers, and scenarios as envisaged on the systemic level and then elaborated from the perspective of individual heroes. The workshop discussions were recorded and facilitators also took notes during and immediately after the workshop to draw down the most important elements of the discussion and outline the main analytical points. During the scenario workshops, each group also took notes, which were used as a further source of data. The empirical content of discussions has been evaluated in light of the findings of other SEEMIG work packages. While a strong policy dimension of the exercise was not initially envisaged in the methodological instructions, challenges and opportunities and areas of policy focus and intervention can be derived on the basis of a careful analysis of the content of discussions and implications of scenarios on the individual level. While quotations from the discussions might be included, precise identity of the participants will not be disclosed to ensure their anonymity.

⁷ This was a common problem in other countries too. For suggestions on how to overcome it see (Mýtina Kureková 2014b).

3.4 Problems and difficulties

Due to a pilot nature of the foresight exercise, it encountered several shortcomings related to the recruitment of participants and selected methodological choices in the process of the selection of drivers and formulation of two scenarios. First, in spite of efforts to invite a satisfying number of participants for each stakeholder group, the organizers were unable to ensure a sufficient number of participating migrants. In the migrants group, only one participant was present, which could have led to underrepresented point of view of this particular group. While the migrant committed to attend the joint workshop, he did not participate in the end. Due to a back-to-back organization of migrant brainstorming workshop and scenario development workshop, a repeated migration session with a new recruitment effort was not feasible.

We believe this handicap was partly balanced in the form of a very long and detailed discussion with the participating migrant where the facilitator encouraged him to think about the asked questions from the perspective of a migrant community, and not only from his own perspective. Furthermore, the issues relevant from the perspective of emigrants were fairly strongly covered in the group of experts, many of whom have studied the issues of emigration in details. Given the size of emigration phenomenon in the country, nearly all foresight participants knew a person among close relatives who have had migration experience over the last two decades and could therefore closely relate to this phenomenon. As will be seen in the next section, emigration experience was very much present in the workshop discussions, and was covered from different perspectives. The same has been the case for the issue of immigration and its implications in the medium-term future.

Second, the process of the selection of drivers was not conducted in a joint discussion with all participants. Due to an explicit request of the participants to keep the second workshop limited (originally, a half-a-day workshop was announced), the facilitator made a decision to deductively select four drivers based on the content of discussions within the stakeholder groups. In an ideal context, drivers were to be selected in a participatory way, by means of weighted voting, a consensual discussion or other suitable method with a sufficient level of rigor. At the same time, after the presentation of the key drivers at the beginning of the joint workshop, the participants were able to identify with what has been proposed, not least due to the fact that a certain level of overlap in the key drivers appeared across the stakeholder groups (see Table 2).

4. RESULTS OF THE FORESIGHT EXERCISE

This section presents empirical material gathered during the four workshops. It describes key elements of stakeholder discussions presented in brainstorming and brain-mapping workshops and explains selection and conceptualization of the drivers of future migration and labor market developments elaborated in a scenario matrix. Next, two scenarios are

described as discussed and imaged by the stakeholder groups. Finally, scenarios are also imagined on a micro-level by developing personal stories and events as affected by particular features of economic, political, cultural and social environments of the developed scenarios. In this section, only opinions of the workshop participants are presented, while analytical assessment and evaluation of key implications is presented in the last part of the report.

4.1 Key drivers of migration

Experts

Much of the foresight discussion in the group of experts focused on outlining the key features of migration in Slovakia to date. Economic migration has been a main form of mobility and has been strongly affected by language as a key factor. In principle two types of migration can be identified which differ in the motive of mobility. The first type identified is the migration of older workers pushed by unemployment in Slovakia (to Czech Republic, Germany and Austria), while the second is the migration of younger people after the EU accession (to UK and Ireland) motivated by other than primarily economic factors, such as gaining experience and travelling.⁸ In addition, a strong wave of student migration, especially to the Czech Republic, which in many instances might lead to permanent outflows of brains, was noted. The experts also discussed effects and consequences of emigration from Slovakia, which have been rather mixed. Care migration to Austria can be seen as bringing a positive impact due to improved living standards of families, but on the individual level it also means a lack of career growth and salary progression and employment in secondary and unstable labor market. In many instances, work migration of a parent has negative consequences on children left behind and dissolution of families. A tendency of return or circular migration rather than permanent emigration was also noted. As a critical point incentivizing return of whole families working abroad was argued to be the time when a child born abroad reaches school age.

Migration has been described as a life strategy for people residing in regions distant from the capital city. Roma migration to Belgium and UK for reasons of asylum seeking was described as a distinct stream of migration and in a rather pejorative way. These attempts have been successful for some families. It is typically the better off and more educated Roma who finds resources for this type of migration, while the most deprived families remain in Slovakia.

The experts also discussed the issue of internal migration. Contrary to international mobility, internal mobility is very low. It is more common for women who tend to change residence after getting married, but in most cases this is the only instance of a permanent moving within a life trajectory. Generational change was mentioned as an element which can change this sedentary bias as younger people are less likely to be tied to property and have had

⁸ On migrant types and motivations see also (Kureková 2011).

more exposure to living in diverse environments through the opportunity to travel, study and work abroad.

In view of the experts, Slovaks mistrust foreigners and immigrants and view them with prejudices. However, due to population aging, attracting immigrants to Slovakia will be crucial. While labor market is currently not in a great need of immigrant labor due to high unemployment rates, in the pre-crisis period Slovakia experienced labor shortages, which subsequently led to increased immigration of skilled workers. In the future immigration to Slovakia is likely to grow. It is likely to originate in the countries East and South-East Europe, such as Ukraine or Romania. The post-communist countries generally show an interest in high-skilled emigration, including research staff, so the sending potential is there, but more qualified migrants are often attracted by even richer countries. This is also due to the fact that these countries are much more active in attracting migrants and have developed better functioning legal and administrative frameworks, including the sphere of migrant integration. Slovakia therefore should focus on incentivizing return migration of the skilled emigrants as many are likely to return due to family ties, but might need assistance in order to integrate successfully.

Not related to the drivers of migration, experts also commented on poor knowledge about migration as a phenomenon due to the gaps in data and registrations. It is difficult to analyze migration, to evaluate its impact and to adopt policies unless data collection is improved on all aspects of mobility: emigration, immigration, return migration, student mobility as well as other forms of non-economic migration.

Decision-makers

Decision-makers, composed of the representatives from the local partner Turčianske Teplice and immigration officers, formulated as a key driver and barrier of migration the legislative framework and governance structures. They highlighted many loopholes in the immigration system that has been misused by asylum seekers. On the other hand they also acknowledged that immigrants coming to Slovakia face many barriers and often unprofessional communication on the part of responsible offices who deal with migrants. The fact that institutions do not communicate among each other and unnecessarily burden applicants for work permits or residence permits was mentioned as a problem which builds a bad image of the country. In spite of this, there are examples of well-integrated immigrant communities, such as Vietnamese, who send their children to local schools and invest in their knowledge of Slovak language and customs. In relation to governance, a lack of a longer-term perspective and more effective allocation of resources were discussed as a problem. Migration management and integration of immigrants is poor, as the following quote highlights:

“We do not have our legislative system prepared for integration of immigrants. We are just starting to experience the effects of migration, and do not fully understand what the Germans or French mean by handling the immigrant issue.”

(Immigration Officer, own translation)

The second driver discussed was the economic prosperity in the country. Firstly, most immigrants come to Slovakia for economic reasons, and this motivation is likely to prevail. Second, emigration patterns of Slovaks have also changed and many of them have returned from abroad after economic conditions home improved and wage differentials declined. From the locality of Turčianske Teplice, however, especially young people continue to leave for education and employment reasons. Local level economic conditions attract relatively few immigrants, who rather tend to target the most prosperous urban agglomerations in Slovakia concentrated around Bratislava and Kosice.

The group also perceived that Slovaks do not have a strong national identity and bonds to home. Their attitudes to life are often passive – while they often criticize the state and complain about conditions in the country, only a few try actively to improve the situation. An important factor to consider is a relatively closed attitude towards foreigners across the country, with the exception of Bratislava which is more multicultural.

Migrants

The presentation of the view of migrants about the key drivers of migration is based on a thorough discussion with a doctoral student from Central America who has settled in Slovakia and plans to stay in the country. In many respects, his personal account regarding encounters with public officials and preparedness of the country to integrate the foreigners was similar to the perceptions and opinions provided by experts and decision-makers. Without knowledge of the Slovak language, existence in the country is very difficult as key services, including Immigration Office or doctors, are unable to provide basic information in any foreign language. A first-hand experience of foreigners coming to Slovakia is typically shocking and impression poor.

On the other hand, his experience in the day-to-day interactions in his living and working environment has been very positive. He has been treated fairly and generally feels well in the country, not least due to similarities in religion, culture or folk tradition that he was able to identify. For this reason, and because of better living standards and security in Slovakia, he is not planning to return to his home country. He found support for this decision in his family as a long-distance communication has become easier due to technological improvements. As for the employment perspectives, he was aware of the job market difficulties for nationals as well as foreigners but believed that opportunities for foreign workers were available, especially in foreign-owned firms. He was also optimistic about his own employment chances after finishing his third-level studies.

The migrant also expressed a belief that improvements are likely with generational change in Slovakia. He perceived very different attitudes to foreigners and differences in other general views and ‘temperament’ between the older and the younger generations of Slovaks:

“The young generation is totally different.”

4.2 Comparison of the key drivers

The main drivers of migration as discussed within each group are summarized in Table 2. Unsurprisingly, the experts provided the most detailed account of migration, including past trends and already could consider the impact, implications and consequences in the present and for the future. Economic factors, character of migration policy, generational change in the sedentary bias and competition for workforce across Europe are in their view likely to affect migration also in the future. Language, networks and ties will influence directionality and composition of the flows – both emigration and immigration. The discussion in the group of decision-makers focused primarily on the legal and administrative framework and systemic weaknesses that discourage nationals as well as foreigners. Economic factors were again considered as an important driver, together with the system of values and ties to home. The migrant’s perspectives echo factors discussed by the other groups, although his account was perhaps more personalized.

Table 2: Summary of drivers identified in each stakeholder group

Drivers	Experts	Decision-makers	Migrants
Driver 1	Economic conditions in Slovakia	Legal and administrative framework	Attitudes to migration
Driver 2	Language, networks and ties	Economic prospects in Slovakia	Generational change in attitudes
Driver 3	Character of migration policy	Bonds to home and system of values	Restrictive migration policy and legislative framework
Driver 4	Generational change	-	Work opportunities in Slovakia
Driver 5	Competition for brains across Europe	-	Bonds to home

4.3 Matrix of key drivers

While the stakeholders presented different perspectives on current and future drivers of migration, there were many similarities in the overarching themes and factors. These have been then selected to compose four key drivers of migration to be considered in the elaboration of scenarios of future migration and labor market developments (Table 3): economic prosperity, bonds to home, legal and administrative framework and generational change. These factors were selected because they were considered important at least in two stakeholder groups. At the beginning of the joint workshop, they were presented and conceptualized to a ‘positive’ and a ‘negative’ scenario. The groups in each scenario were asked to develop in a greater detail *according to their own understanding* how their scenario will materialize under positive or negative future by 2025. The actual group discussions highlighted contradictions as the effect on net migration is not unidirectional. For example, strong economic growth is likely to decrease emigration potential but to increase immigration. Weak bonds to home are likely to lead to disembedding, more emigration and

less return migration to Slovakia. Facilitators did not intervene in this conceptualization and let the groups discuss and develop scenarios independently. This led to a certain level of convergence in the positive and negative scenarios, but also allowed for a dynamic description nature of elaborated scenarios, more closely reflecting likely 'real' developments (e.g. periods of economic growth and stagnation; periods of enhanced policy reform and a lack of reform; electoral cycles, etc.).

Table 3: Scenario matrix of key drivers

DRIVERS	POSITIVE SCENARIO	NEGATIVE SCENARIO
Economic prosperity	Strong economic growth	Poor economic growth, high unemployment
Bonds to home	Weak	Strong
Legal and administrative framework	More liberal migration policy	Restrictive migration policy
Generational change	New generation more open-minded towards migration	New generation with negative attitudes to change, to migration

4.5 Development of scenarios

Positive Scenario

In the period 2013-2020, the positive scenario group first imagined a further economic decline and growing youth unemployment. This will incentivize further emigration of well-educated people in particular. A link between human capital, migration and economic growth was highlighted by expecting that increased outflows of workforce will contribute to a stagnating labor market, job shortage and a lower rate of inflow of foreign investment. The legislative and administrative set-up will need to react to the situation by improved efforts in developing immigration policy in particular. However, decision-making process is likely to be slow and lagging behind the country needs, including poor capacity to measure real migration flows. Generational change is expected whereby the younger generation is likely to be more flexible and open to travel in order to expand experiences and improve education than the middle-aged and older generations whose main motivation with respect to foreign travel will be to earn money. Bonds to the homeland throughout the analyzed period were envisaged to be rather weak with economic conditions defining decision to stay or to leave.

In 2020-2025, emigration trends will continue but at a lower rate. Economic situation will gradually improve and unemployment rate decline. Brain drain will also decline and inflow of foreign experts mainly from Ukraine and Romania will ensue. Migration policy will become

more open, also on the EU level where the option of expansion of Schengen will be seriously considered, including countries such as Ukraine, Turkey and Belarus. As an outcome of improved living conditions, attitudes to migration across the generation will also alter. The young will continue to migrate for language and experiences, but also return home at an increasing rate. This will be an important asset for domestic economy due to the gained skills and qualifications. Mid-aged generation will manifest a declining need for labor migration as push factors ceased to pressure into foreign employment. The older generation will finally be able to reap the fruits of working abroad and enjoy earned capital at pension time in Slovakia.

Negative Scenario

In the *Negative Scenario* group envisioned Slovakia in 2020, where due to the decreasing economic stability and increasingly restrictive state policies the confidence of foreign investors is being shaken. By 2025 they were expected to gradually withdraw their assets from the country, leaving behind high unemployment. The young generations will therefore continue to seek work abroad, while Slovakia will be less and less attractive for immigrants. This will take place in the context of demographic decline which leads to a further weakening of the economy. The country will be characterized by depopulated villages with empty houses, and with elderly parents left behind. The situation will lead to increasing gaps between young, middle-aged and old generations of the population resulting in intergenerational clashes. The elderly Slovak generation of 2025 is expected to struggle with maintaining reasonable living standards, and they will be increasingly dependent on their middle-aged children. Legislative framework and governance is unlikely to improve due to the young and educated working abroad. Public offices will continue to be staffed by older people with little knowledge of foreign languages and little flexibility. Frustration will be widespread due to low wages and a lack of resources for infrastructural investment, but also underfinanced welfare, including pensions, healthcare and social assistance. The relationships to homeland will be poor and negative attitudes will prevail.

4.6 Development of personal life histories within scenarios

Heroes: Positive Scenario

Three different heroes were poisoned in the Positive Scenario. The group imagined a middle-**aged Slovak male** who has been living **in the UK** for over a decade has settled there and started a family. He knows the language very well and gained additional qualifications resulting in a well-paid and satisfying position. For this reason, he is unlikely to return, but actively keeps ties with his family in Slovakia. By 2025, his impact on Slovakia is marginal as he has integrated and embedded in the host country. He however plays an important role in financially supporting his parents living in Slovakia. A second profile of an emigrant was represented by **a Roma person** who left the country in view of better living conditions. He **went to the UK** where he expected to rely on social assistance system. He was able to save

money and decided to return home where he set up a business. In 2025 his impact on Slovakia was important by contributing to demographic growth and serving as an example to other people in his community. This hero was generally portrayed in a pejorative language.

An immigrant hero was imagined as ***an Afghan asylum seeker*** who initially had difficulties with entering and staying in Slovakia. He then overcomes the administrative hurdles and settles in the country. He establishes a family and adapts to cultural conditions and lifestyle in Slovakia. At the same time, he is socially active on the local level in the Afghan community. He does not intend to return home. In view of the group, this immigrant is able to work for a lower salary and replaces workforce which had emigrated, also counterbalancing demographic decline. Overall, the Slovak society is becoming more diverse. However, with growing communities of third country nationals, pressure for creating suitable conditions for their religious and cultural representation is also growing, which will require a public and policy response.

“If we imagine that Afghan community grows, this will for sure bring cultural and religious diversity. The state will have to accommodate these people to let them practice their religion. Mosques will need to be built.”

Heroes: Negative scenario

The *Negative Scenario* group first envisaged ***a middle-aged citizen of Turčianske Teplice***, a small town in the centre of the country experiencing increasing unemployment due to the departure of foreign automotive factories from the region. The city needs to cope with the rise of a black market economy in the midst of a shaken confidence in the state, resulting in an emptying treasury. Participants expected that their hero would have to work in two job positions in order to be able to finance his family’s life. Moreover, he would have to engage in the black market as well (e.g. by growing vegetables in his backyard and selling them without reporting it to the state and paying taxes). Besides, he would have to face the exodus of his children to Western European countries, most probably to the United Kingdom due to language skills and the already existing strong networks. He would also have to cope with the growing dependency of his own parents, who need increasingly more help in financing their daily life, their medical care, etc. His general attitude would be disappointment with the system and frustration with his employer(s). Finally, his hopelessness towards the future could be depicted in his cry for a long-disappeared “golden town”⁹, and his disbelief in his own and his community’s power to create and live prosperously.

The participants in the Negative scenario also discussed how ***a Vietnamese citizen who arrives to Turčianske Teplice*** would cope with these circumstances in 2025, when Slovakia is not able to offer employment to its own citizens and introduces restrictive laws about migration and registration of the population. Foresight participants envisaged that the

⁹ Turčianske Teplice, one of the oldest spa towns in Europe, was part of a highly affluent gold-mining region.

middle-aged Vietnamese immigrant would be highly knowledgeable, and already prior to his arrival would utilise his network to gain information about realities of his destination country. He would get assistance from the already resident Vietnamese in fighting with the restrictive legal and administrative framework, which is maintained by low-paid, frustrated middle-aged (or even pensioner-aged) Slovak bureaucrats, who do not speak foreign languages. Relative to his home country, however, the conditions in Slovakia are better and he appreciates the opportunities he is given. The immigrant is envisioned to significantly contribute to the Slovak economy by filling a market niche in services and creating job opportunities for the locals. His attitude towards the State and its institutions is expected to be opposite of the Slovak population: in order to secure his permanent residence he would follow regulations, respect authority and trust the system. Quite on the contrary to the same age group of the host society, he would demonstrate pro-active behaviour by starting and developing own business instead of seeking dependent employment status. He would also put effort into learning the Slovak language in order to succeed. He will settle and start a family and his children will be fully integrated into the Slovak system.

5. SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUSIONS

While the foresight exercise focused on future migration and labour market trends in Slovakia, the implications of described scenarios and heroes life histories extend well beyond migration policy alone. This demonstrates that migration is a complex process which crosses national borders and its causes and effects transcend many issue areas and policy fields, including welfare system, education, social cohesion, economic policy and so on. These are briefly summarized in Table 4.

Table 4: Summary of opportunities, threats and areas for policy intervention based on foresight exercise

	Opportunities	Threats	Policy challenges
Positive scenario	Immigrants fill gaps in the labour market		Integration policies important to facilitate matching
	Religious and cultural diversity	Social disintegration and social unrest Rise of racism	Nurture diversity discourse Support evidence-based research about benefits and costs of migration
	Return migration of skilled	Increased demand on public services (e.g. schooling, infrastructure)	Local level management of services Policies support integration of returnees

Negative scenario		Increasing permanent emigration of prime-age workers from the country – children not living close to their parents	Welfare system sustainability in danger Improve elderly care system Challenges for medical sectors rise
	High-skilled migrants bring innovation	Danger of exclusion of high-skilled migrants due to poor integration framework	Better integration policies necessary
	Diaspora growing		Diaspora engagement in home country

There are several broad conclusions that can be derived on the basis of the foresight exercise. First, economic conditions will remain a key factor shaping migration future in the country. Migration balance, prevalence of emigration or immigration, composition of outflows and inflows, and the rate of return migration will all evolve differently depending on the contours of future economic prospects. In the case of growth, emigration is likely to decline with time, return migration might further increase and immigration grow. In the case of negative scenario, economic decline is envisaged, resulting in growing unemployment, frustration and incapacity of formal governance structures to improve conditions for business, work and life. All these processes will require adequate policy response as they will impact various aspects of social and public life.

Second, emigration, which is a widely spread phenomenon already, is seen to continue under both scenarios, with potentially different broader consequences. Benefits to Slovakia will ensue if return migration takes place and people who return are able to successfully integrate and utilize their financial and human capital. Return of whole families with school-aged children is likely, which will require effective local response to increased demand for public services. If a decision to stay abroad will prevail, it will be important to nurture close ties among physically disconnected family members. Adult children who settle abroad might need to provide important family nets to ageing parents living in Slovakia who might not be able to get sufficient state support in pensions or healthcare. Unsustainability of welfare system due to high emigration of young people from the country and rising demands on the system are a challenge.

Third, due to demographic decline which is a reality in the mid-term future, labour force is envisaged to decline with negative consequences of this process on economic growth. This will require an effective policy response that can be organized along different lines. Less restrictive and more active immigration policy might contribute to higher attractiveness of Slovakia for immigrants. Slovakia is competing with other European countries, especially for educated migrants, but due to language and historical ties or geographical proximity, the country might be more attractive than the more distant countries to migrants from post-communist countries East of Slovakia (especially Ukraine). Under both scenarios, immigrants

are positively pictured as contributing to the domestic societies and as an economic and cultural asset. In order for this to materialize, integration policies will need to improve to be able to manage growing religious and cultural diversity. Internal resources can be also mobilized, especially through eliminating poverty and social exclusion and targeted the integration of Roma minority who face high unemployment and discrimination on domestic labour market. Prejudices and stereotypes about the Roma are deeply engrained in public discourses and were also present in the foresight exercise. A lack of targeted integration of marginalized Roma might have negative consequences beyond the community.

Finally, the workshop participants commented on poor knowledge about migration as a phenomenon due to the gaps in data collection and registrations. It is difficult to analyze migration, to evaluate its impact and to adapt policies unless data collection and analytical capacity is improved on all aspects of mobility, including emigration, immigration, return migration, student mobility as well as other forms of non-economic migration.

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