

U.S. Country Commercial Guides



Slovakia

2020

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Doing Business in Slovakia

Market Overview

Discusses key economic indicators and trade statistics, which countries are dominant in the market, the U.S. market share, the political situation if relevant, the top reasons why U.S. companies should consider exporting to this country, and other issues that affect trade, e.g., terrorism, currency devaluations, and trade agreements.

Slovakia is a country of 5.4 million people and is strategically located at the geographic heart of Europe. The Slovak market is dominated by the automotive, electronics, engineering, tourism, and service industries. In addition to its strategic location and educated population, Slovakia's stable macroeconomic policies have made it a good place for U.S. exporters to do business.

Slovakia is a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the European Union (EU), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the United Nations (UN), the Council of Europe, the Visegrad 4 (V4), the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA), the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the International Finance Cooperation, the World Trade Organization (WTO), UNESCO, INTERPOL, and other multi-lateral organizations. It is also a member of the EU Schengen Agreement, which allows for the free movement of people.

Slovakia adopted the euro (EUR) as its currency on January 1, 2009, becoming the 16th member of the European Monetary Union, which facilitated trade through lower transaction costs, higher pricing transparency, and greater monetary stability. Slovakia has a stable financial outlook according to Moody's and a negative financial outlook according to S&P. Real GDP growth was 2.4 percent in 2019.

Registered unemployment nationwide has increased from 5.6 percent in 2019 to 7.4 percent at the end of June 2020 but varies widely from region to region. Inflation in 2019 was 2.8 percent. The Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic expects a GDP decline of approximately -13.3 percent in 2020 due to recession caused by COVID-19.

U.S. exports to Slovakia in 2019 totaled USD 563 million. U.S. Imports from Slovakia in 2019 totaled USD 2.78 billion. Total Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) stands at more than USD 51. billion as of 2018, with U.S. FDI estimated at approximately USD 867 million. The primary U.S. imports from Slovakia are Volkswagen, Audi, and Porsche Sports Utility Vehicles that are manufactured at the Volkswagen plant in Bratislava. Slovakia's major trading partners are Germany, the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, Austria, France, Italy, United Kingdom, Russia, China, Romania, South Korea, Netherlands, Spain and the United States.

Market Challenges

Learn about barriers to market entry and local requirements, i.e., things to be aware of when entering the market for this country.

Corruption: Slovakia ranked 59th on Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index in 2019. International companies doing business with the Slovak Government or attempting to obtain licenses required by the Slovak Government to do business in the country report poor transparency in bureaucratic processes. Corruption is perceived as widespread in courts, government contracting and public procurement, and in the health care system. While the legal system generally enforces property and contractual rights, decisions may take years, thus limiting the utility of the courts for dispute resolution.

Labor: A lack of labor in specialized and expert professions is the result of the slow adaptation of the education system to new conditions and the needs of specific industries that are developing more rapidly than other industries, for example automotive and IT. IT companies could immediately employ about 7,000 qualified employees and automotive producers and their suppliers need additional 12,000 new workers. Health care has ageing doctors and the lack of nurses. At the same time, there are 180,000 people in the labor market without jobs. The main reason is that

schools still offer education programs that are no longer needed in the market while jobseekers don't have the specific education and practical skills demanded by employers.

Certification: Since September 2018 the Slovak Office for Public Procurement maintains a List of Economic Operators, which requires companies to register and meet conditions for participation in Slovak public procurement tenders. In order to register, companies must submit several documents issued by Slovak or foreign government authorities; only originals or certified copies may be submitted. Many of the documents are not commonly requested in the United States and are often not readily obtainable from U.S. authorities.

Market Opportunities

Overview of best prospect sectors, major infrastructure projects, significant government procurements and business opportunities.

Best Prospects for U.S. Exporters include:

- Black coal and briquettes;
- Iron ores and concentrates;
- Aircraft, spacecraft;
- Electrical machinery, sound equipment;
- Reactors, boilers, equipment, machinery.

Market Entry Strategy

Generalizes on the best strategy to enter the market, e.g., visiting the country; importance of relationships to finding a good partner; use of agents.

The best way to gain firsthand experience in Slovakia is to visit. You can get a feeling of what the market is like and how your product or service would be received; Bratislava is a 45-minute drive from the Vienna airport.

After a visit to Slovakia, you may want to consider the other regional markets, including the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, Austria, and Ukraine. Slovakia is an EU member and can serve as a gateway to the 28-member EU market.

The Euro became Slovakia's nationwide currency on January 1, 2009, easing trade transactions among the 19 EU countries that use it. The most common and simple option for establishing an office in Slovakia is the limited liability company (LLC). Make the U.S. Commercial Service Bratislava office your first stop when considering entry to the Slovak market.

Leading Sectors for U.S. Exports and Investment

These are best prospect industry sectors in Slovakia. Includes a market overview and trade data.

Mineral Fuel, Oil, Bituminous Substances, HS Code 27

This is a best prospect industry sector for Slovakia. Includes a market overview and trade data.

Overview

	2017	2018	2019	2020 (Estimated)
Total Market Size	2,816,757	4,211,276	3,310,483	2,035,000
Total Local Production	36,116	32,585	34,680	35,000
Total Exports	2,731,909	2,736,495	2,552,916	2,500,000
Total Imports	5,512,550	6,915,186	5,828,719	4,500,000
Imports from the U.S.	83,271	53,868	89,596	80,000
Exchange Rate: 1 USD	1.1297	1.1810	1.14	1.13

USD thousands (total market size = (total local production + imports) - exports)

Data Sources:

Total Local Production: [Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic](#)

Total Exports: [Global Trade Atlas](#)

Total Imports: [Global Trade Atlas](#)

Imports from U.S.: [Global Trade Atlas](#)

Exchange Rate: [European Central Bank](#)

Leading Sub-Sectors

The following specific items were the leading exports from the United States to Slovakia covered by this Leading Sector, ranked in USD from 2018 to 2019:

HS code	ITEM	2018	2019
2701	Coal; Briquettes, Ovoids Etc. Mfr From Coal	43,549,564	82,015,662
2713	Petroleum Coke, Petroleum Bitumen & Other Residues	9,543,094	6,029,519
2715	Bit Mix Fr Nat Asph, Nat Bit,Pet Bit,Min Tar Or Pt	168,700	1,270,047
2710	Oil (Not Crude) From Petrol & Bitum Mineral Etc.	604,875	279,938
2712	Petroleum Jelly; Mineral Waxes & Similar Products	1,786	908

Opportunities

Black coal and briquettes made from black coal are used primarily for production of iron and steel. There are three main producers of iron and steel in Slovakia - U.S. Steel Kosice, Zeleziarne Podbrezova, and Indo-Spanish joint venture ArcelorMittal Gonvarri. There is also growing import demand for petroleum coke, petroleum bitumen, bituminous coal, and petroleum jelly, which are used by the chemical industry and other industries for further reprocessing and the production of final goods.

Resources

[Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic](#)

[Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic](#)

[Slovak Customs Office](#)

Contact: marian.volent@trade.gov

Ores, Slag & Ash, HS Code 26

This is a best prospect industry sector for Slovakia. Includes a market overview and trade data.

Overview

	2017	2018	2019	2020 (Estimated)
Total Market Size	539,653	603,742	527,596	476,100
Total Local Production	2,256	2,168	2,181	2,100
Total Exports	39,339	35,257	28,802	26,000
Total Imports	576,736	636,831	554,217	500,000
Imports from the U.S.	5,613	9,921	77,991	50,000
Exchange Rate: 1 USD	1.1297	1.1810	1.14	1.13

USD thousands (total market size = (total local production + imports) - exports)

Data Sources:

Total Local Production: [Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic](#)

Total Exports: [Global Trade Atlas](#)

Total Imports: [Global Trade Atlas](#)

Imports from U.S.: [Global Trade Atlas](#)

Exchange Rate: [European Central Bank](#)

Leading Sub-Sectors

The following specific items were the leading exports from the United States to Slovakia covered by this Leading Sector, ranked in USD from 2018 to 2019:

HS code	ITEM	2018	2019
2601	Iron Ores & Concentrates, Including Roast Pyrites	2,122,284	68,931,799
2620	Ash & Residues (Not Fr Iron Etc Mfr) W Metal Cont	7,798,789	9,060,052

Opportunities

Iron ores and concentrates are used primarily for the production of iron and steel. There are three main producers of iron and steel in Slovakia - U.S. Steel Kosice, Zeleziarne Podbrezova, and Indo-Spanish joint venture ArcelorMittal Gonvarri. The U.S. is the largest supplier of Slag, Ash and Residues containing mainly Copper, which are used by the automotive, chemical industry and other industries for further reprocessing and the production of final goods.

Resources

[Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic](#)

[Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic](#)

[Slovak Customs Office](#)

Contact: marian.volent@trade.gov

Aircraft, Spacecraft, HS Code 88

This is a best prospect industry sector for Slovakia. Includes a market overview and trade data.

Overview

	2017	2018	2019	2020 (Estimated)
Total Market Size	158,559	79,950	94,341	58,000
Total Local Production	9,000	11,200	10,439	10,000
Total Exports	19,298	29,750	17,513	22,000
Total Imports	168,857	98,500	101,415	70,000
Imports from the US	89,130	31,978	73,500	50,000
Exchange Rates	1.1297	1.181	1.14	1.13

USD thousands (total market size = (total local production + imports) - exports)

Data Sources:

Total Local Production: [Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic](#)

Total Exports: [Global Trade Atlas](#)

Total Imports: [Global Trade Atlas](#)

Imports from U.S.: [Global Trade Atlas](#)

Exchange Rate: [European Central Bank](#)

Leading Sub-Sectors

The following specific items were the leading exports from the U.S. to Slovakia covered by this Leading Sector, ranked in USD from 2018 to 2019:

HS code	ITEM	2018	2019
8802	Aircraft, Powered; Spacecraft & Launch Vehicles	31,978,290	73,500,122
8803	Parts Of Balloons Etc, Aircraft, Spacecraft Etc	26,738,489	63,533,437
8805	Aircraft Launch Gear; Deck-Arrest; Gr Fl Train; Pt	4,221,043	9,252,161
8804	Parachutes (Including Dirigible Parachutes) Rotoch	1,013,706	705,079

Opportunities

There are nine international airports and nine national heliports in Slovakia. A full listing of international, national, special use airports and heliports out of which seven are used for air ambulance services can be found [here](#).

The M.R. Štefanik airport in Bratislava is the biggest international airport in the country. The Ministry of Transport of the Slovak Republic is considering leasing it to the private sector due to imminent investments worth tens of hundreds of millions.

The Sliač airport in Banská Bystrica region is the only Slovak international airport with both civilian and military service. The Slovak government is planning a ten-year, EUR 67.9 million (USD 76.7 million) reconstruction of Sliač,

expected to start in 2021, to prepare for the arrival of F-16s. The Ministry of Transport of the Slovak Republic has approached NATO to manage the project and procurement.

Piešťany airport has put on hold a 2020 investment of EUR 100,000 (USD 113,000) into departure hall equipment, check-in counter expansion and other facility repairs.

There are no major airlines flying directly to the US from Slovakia. Slovaks can fly direct to Chicago, New York, Washington, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Boston and Miami from Vienna Schwechat International Airport (45 minutes from the capitol, Bratislava), or to New York, Chicago and Philadelphia from Budapest Ferenc Liszt International Airport (approximately 2 hours and 45 minutes from the country's second biggest city, Košice).

Slovakia is making up for many years of low army modernization spending. Defense spending is due to increase from 1.7 percent of gross domestic product this year to 2.0 percent by 2024. Slovakia plans to spend EUR 1.6 billion (USD 1.81 billion) in 2020 and about EUR 6.5 billion (USD 7.34 billion) by 2030 to modernize its military.

The Ministry of Defense of the Slovak Republic has begun with modernization of the Slovak Air Forces by purchasing nine U.S.-made Sikorsky UH-60M Black Hawk helicopters for USD 261 million, to replace its outdated Russian Mi-17 fleet, reducing the NATO country's dependence on Russian parts and servicing. The Slovak Air Force received the first four Black Hawk helicopters in 2017-2018, and five additional in 2019. Six crews have already completed training and three crews are in training. The Ministry of Defense of the Slovak Republic also wants to reconstruct and extend the operations area of the Kuchyňa airport to provide sufficient space for parking C-27J Spartan and L-410 Turbolet aircrafts.

The Ministry's tenders and other public contract opportunities can be viewed on its [website](#) and accessed free of charge via [online bulletin](#) of [The Slovak Public Procurement Office](#).

In 2018 the Government of Slovakia purchased 14 U.S. made F-16 fighter jets to replace aging Russian made MiG29s. The contract includes the acquisition of 12 single-seater aircrafts, 2 two-seater aircrafts, aviation ammunition, two-year logistics support, training of 22 pilots and 160 ground crew technicians. The first aircraft is to be shipped in the last quarter of 2022. The whole fleet should arrive by the end of 2023.

Resources

[The Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic](#)

[The Ministry of Defense of the Slovak Republic](#)

[The Slovak Transport Authority](#)

[Slovak International Air Fest](#)

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Electrical Machinery, Sound Equipment, HS Code 85

This is a best prospect industry sector for Slovakia. Includes a market overview and trade data.

Overview

	2017	2018	2019	2020 (Estimated)
Total Market Size	5,078,888	5,816,867	7,758,760	6,100,000
Total Local Production	5,620,000	4,740,000	5,592,000	5,100,000
Total Exports	17,627,048	18,035,517	16,498,280	15,000,000
Total Imports	17,085,936	19,112,384	18,665,040	16,000,000
Imports from the U.S.	41,683	48,757	64,530	50,000
Exchange Rate: 1 USD	1.1297	1.181	1.14	1.13

USD thousands (total market size = (total local production + imports) - exports)

Data Sources:

Total Local Production: [Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic](#)

Total Exports: [Global Trade Atlas](#)

Total Imports: [Global Trade Atlas](#)

Imports from U.S.: [Global Trade Atlas](#)

Exchange Rate: [European Central Bank](#)

Leading Sub-Sectors

The following specific items were the primary exports from the U.S. to Slovakia covered by this Leading Sector, ranked in USD from 2018 to 2019:

HS code	ITEM	2018	2019
8517	Electric Apparatus For Line Telephony Etc, Parts	4,851,375	10,724,875
8542	Electronic Integrated Circuits & Microassembl, Pts	4,552,396	9,199,398
8525	Trans Appar For Radiotele Etc; Tv Camera & Rec	10,076,397	9,146,872
8507	Electric Storage Batteries, Incl Separators, Parts	2,761,702	7,638,793
8536	Electrical Apparatus For Switching Etc, Nov 1000 V	11,147,616	7,364,720
8526	Radar Apparatus, Radio Navig Aid & Remote Cont App	2,625,807	3,335,828
8501	Electric Motors And Generators (No Sets)	464,288	3,289,790

8544	Insulated Wire, Cable Etc; Opt Sheath Fib Cables	2,403,586	3,045,345
8504	Elec Trans, Static Conv & Induct, Adp Pwr Supp, Pt	1,810,414	1,470,762
8515	Electric, Laser Or Oth Light Or Photon Beam Etc	175,334	1,238,784
8529	Parts For Television, Radio And Radar Apparatus	382,031	1,067,347
8523	Prepared Unrecorded Media (No Film) For Sound Etc.	1,155,898	1,052,504

Opportunities

There is high demand in Slovakia for information and communications technology (ICT) products and services due to rising investment from the central government, municipalities, banks, private companies, financial service institutions and the public sector. There is strong market demand for the implementation of new cellular and Internet networks, cloud storage, cyber security solutions, and the maintenance of existing network hardware and software. Automobile manufacturers, engineering companies, and energy production and distribution companies are also contributing to the growth of the ICT sector by implementing advanced manufacturing technologies.

The best prospects in the area of business process technology are teleworking applications, cyber security solutions, complex artificial intelligence customer services and virtual call centers solutions, cloud storage systems and application software, customized software, solutions for electronic distribution channels providing all basic retail functions, complex information systems for electronic payments and e-card payment services, decision-support information systems, information systems for management staff, and complex information systems for insurance companies.

The best prospects in communication technologies are: high speed internet for teleworking solutions, smart phones, tablets, cloud technology, Wireless Application Protocol (WAP) services, 5G and 4G (LTE) equipment and solutions. There are also opportunities for alternate internet providers and other new services such as virtual call centers and tele-education or distance learning services.

The best prospects in digital equipment and systems are cloud-based data systems, thin work stations, data communications equipment, packet switching and routing equipment, key systems and circuit switching equipment, data and network equipment, system and application software, switched data and leased line services, streaming, cable and digital TV services, set-top boxes, and digital presentation technology.

Analog television is no longer broadcast in Slovakia. End-users have already replaced traditional CRTs and analog plasmas with digital flat panel displays. Advances in digital technology for the AV/IT/Telecommunications/Consumer Electronics markets are stimulating demand for the latest innovations in both the residential and business sectors. Internet services offered by Slovanet, T-Com, O2, Orange, UPC and SWAN usually include “triple play” package (internet, TV on demand and VoIP)

The consumer electronics entertainment segment of the AV market is the largest and fastest growing segment in this sector. Among television sets, there is a trend towards large digital LED and OLED units with full 8k and 4k resolution and equipped with DVBT-2, DVBS and DVBC receivers. Popular products include 4k OLED and LED TVs, set top boxes, HiFi audio equipment, and digital satellite receivers. For the business segment, popular AV products include electronic display systems and signage, projectors and control systems. Demand for wireless/mobile/portable products is fast growing.

Good opportunities also exist in the telecommunications sector for construction of 5G network and sale of innovative peripheral products and services. The largest three mobile operators in Slovakia are Orange, Slovak Telecom, and O2. Slovak Telecom offers the primary land-line service.

ICT-related consulting, virtual web conference solutions, virtual education and virtual training services, and teleconferencing audiovisual equipment are promising value added services, as many SMEs and large enterprises implement the newest teleconferencing solutions. Examples include cloud data storage, thin office models, teleworking, and virtual web conference and virtual trade show solutions.

All public procurements in ICT sector can be found at the following website of the Public Procurement Office:
<https://www.uvo.gov.sk/vyhľadavanie-profilov-4db.html>

Resources

[Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic](#)

[The Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic](#)

[The Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic](#)

[UPC](#)

[Orange](#)

[O2](#)

[SWAN](#)

[Slovak Telecom](#)

Contact: marian.volent@trade.gov

Reactors, Boilers, Equipment, Machinery, HS Code 84

This is a best prospect industry sector for Slovakia. Includes a market overview and trade data.

Overview

	2017	2018	2019	2020 (Estimated)
Total Market Size	9,560,432	9,748,578	8,917,203	9,300,000
Total Local Production	9,640,000	9,139,000	8,269,598	9,300,000
Total Exports	10,290,719	11,159,874	10,956,375	10,000,000
Total Imports	10,211,151	11,769,452	11,603,980	10,000,000
Imports from the U.S.	88,477	81,127	61,484	50,000
Exchange Rate: 1 USD	1.1297	1.181	1.14	1.13

USD thousands (total market size = (total local production + imports) - exports)

Data Sources:

Total Local Production: [Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic](#)

Total Exports: [Global Trade Atlas](#)

Total Imports: [Global Trade Atlas](#)

Imports from U.S.: [Global Trade Atlas](#)

Exchange Rate: [European Central Bank](#)

Leading Sub-Sectors

The following specific items were the leading exports from the U.S. to Slovakia covered by this Leading Sector, ranked in USD from 2018 to 2019:

HS code	ITEM	2017	2018
8407	Spark-Ignition Recip Or Rotary Int Comb Piston Eng	21,259,232	13,203,170
8413	Pumps For Liquids; Liquid Elevators; Parts Thereof	15,243,903	9,439,200
8471	Automatic Data Process Machines; Magn Reader Etc	5,911,314	4,824,661
8421	Centrifuges; Filter Etc Mach For Liq Or Gases; Pts	3,649,443	4,164,003
8479	Machines Etc Having Individual Functions Nesoi, Pt	3,116,676	3,533,933
8412	Engines And Motors Nesoi, And Parts Thereof	4,071,195	3,222,927
8483	Transmission Shafts, Bearings, Gears Etc; Parts	4,417,472	2,630,048
8429	Self-Propelled Bulldozers, Graders, Scrapers Etc	2,089,090	2,415,647

8414	Air Or Vac Pumps, Compr & Fans; Hoods & Fans; Pts	1,650,853	1,872,576
8473	Parts Etc For Typewriters & Other Office Machines	1,598,679	1,859,843
8481	Taps, Cocks, Valves Etc For Pipes, Tanks Etc, Pts	2,893,304	1,815,798
8467	Tools For Working In The Hand, Pneum Hyd Etc, Pts	737,582	1,384,035

Opportunities

Excellent opportunities exist in the energy sector, which is mostly covered by HS Code 84. Slovakia had a shortage of electricity production capacity after closing two 440 MW nuclear reactors at Nuclear Power Plant Jaslovske Bohunice in 2006 and 2008. The Slovak and U.S. governments signed a Joint Declaration Agreement concerning industrial and commercial cooperation in the nuclear energy sector in March 2012.

Biomass has the largest technical potential at 11,200 GWh per year, which is approximately 40 percent of the total domestic production of energy in Slovakia. Geothermal potential in Slovakia is approximately 6,300 GWh per year, but currently only 145 GWh are being used, which is only 2.6 percent of the total potential. Geothermal waters in Slovakia are being used at 64 locations (with a heating capacity of 280 MW) but more need to be built to heat networks, swimming pools, greenhouses and residences. The technical potential for large hydro power plants is 7,600 GWh, of which 62 percent of is currently used. here are 25 large hydro power plants already built with an installed capacity of 2,446 MW. There is good opportunity to build more small hydro power plants. The solar radiation flux achieves a maximum of 1,100 kWh/m². The technical potential of solar energy has been estimated at 5,200 GWh annually, which is about 20 percent of the total technical potential of renewable power sources in Slovakia. There is growing demand for the supply of photovoltaic power plants and solar panels for installations on roofs. All procurements announced by Slovak Electricity Company can be found at the following website: <https://procurement.seas.sk/procurement>.

In addition, opportunities exist for the sale of machines, tools, and production technologies to a number of industries including the construction, food, and automotive industries. A number of new automotive subcontractors have opened production facilities near the three OEM (original equipment manufacturer) automobile manufacturing plants in Slovakia - Volkswagen in Bratislava, Kia in Zilina, PSA/Peugeot in Trnava and Jaguar Land Rover in Nitra.

All major procurements in this subsector can be found at the following website of the Public Procurement Office: <https://www.uvo.gov.sk/vyhľadavanie-profilov-4db.html>.

Resources

[Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic](#)

[Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic](#)

[Slovenske Elektrarne a.s.](#)

[Slovak Energy Agency](#)

[Slovak Electricity and Dispatch Company – SEPS](#)

[JESS a.s.](#)

[Public Procurement Office](#)

[Slovak Customs Office](#)

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Agricultural Sector

Overview

In 2019, Slovakia's total agriculture, fish and forestry imports were EUR 4.73 billion (USD 5.18 billion) and exports were EUR 2.92 billion (USD 3.19 billion). Due to its size and climate, Slovakia depends on imports for many fresh food products. More than 75 percent of all agricultural imports come from other EU countries, particularly neighboring Czech Republic and Poland.

The food-processing sector is one of the largest industrial sectors in Slovakia, accounting for 15 percent of total industrial output. The biggest share of total food production is in dairy production (18 percent), meat production (17 percent), brewing (8 percent), poultry production (8 percent) and confectionery-baking production (7 percent).

Slovakia imported USD 25.2 million worth of U.S. food and agricultural products in 2019, a 13 percent decrease from USD 28.9 million in 2018. Nevertheless, official import numbers do not include significant and steadily growing transshipments of U.S. products from other EU countries. Additionally, the latest data reported for the first quarter of 2020 indicate that the USD value of most best prospect categories is growing.

Best prospects for U.S. agricultural products include consumer-oriented products such as distilled spirits, wine, non-alcoholic beverages, and tree nuts, particularly almonds, as well as food preparation items for the food-processing industry.

The current government has said that it would like to increase the market share of locally made food products and reverse the trend of growing fast-profit and low-investment commodities like oilseeds and grains.

Best Sub-Sector Prospects for Agricultural Products

Dried Nuts and Fruits

Unit: USD thousands

	2017	2018	2019	2020 (Estimated)
Total Imports	351,227	384,036	385,823	416,000
Imports from the US	3,546	5,295	2,726	5,300
Exchange Rates	0.949	0.833	0.872	0.914*

Source: Trade Data Monitor (HS code: 08); Bureau of Fiscal Service, U.S. Department of the Treasury

*) as of March 31, 2020

Beverages, Spirits and Vinegar

Unit: USD thousands

	2017	2018	2019	2020 (Estimated)
Total Imports	399,313	489,058	462,259	475,000
Imports from the US	6,026	6,799	6,031	7,400
Exchange Rates	0.949	0.833	0.872	0.914*

Source: Trade Data Monitor (HS code: 22); Bureau of Fiscal Service, U.S. Department of the Treasury

*) as of March 31, 2020

Food Preparations

Unit: USD thousands

	2017	2018	2019	2020 (Estimated)
Total Imports	342,350	372,901	390,324	437,000
Imports from the US	5,789	6,614	6,743	8,300
Exchange Rates	0.949	0.833	0.872	0.914*

Source: Trade Data Monitor (HS code: 21); Bureau of Fiscal Service, U.S. Department of the Treasury

*) as of March 31, 2020

Fish, Crustaceans & Aquatic Invertebrates

Unit: USD thousands

	2017	2018	2019	2020 (Estimated)
Total Imports	60,424	69,397	68,574	60,300
Imports from the US	6,350	7,481	6,288	5,600
Exchange Rates	0.833	0.872	0.890	0.914*

Source: Trade Data Monitor (HS code: 03); Bureau of Fiscal Service, U.S. Department of the Treasury

*) as of March 31, 2020

Resources

[United States Department of Agricultural \(USDA\) Mission to the European Union](#)

[Foreign Agricultural Service Europe](#)

Contact: HlavackovaM@state.gov

Customs, Regulations and Standards

General overview of Customs, Regulations and Standards applicable in EU can be found in European Union market overview, chapter Customs, Regulations & Standards, at the following [website](#).

Trade Barriers

To report existing or new trade barriers and get assistance in removing them, contact either the [Trade Compliance Center](#) or the [U.S. Mission to the European Union](#).

Information on agricultural trade barriers can be found at the following website: [Foreign Agricultural Service](#).

For information on existing trade barriers, please see the [National Trade Estimate Report on Foreign Trade Barriers](#) published by USTR. A licensing system is Slovakia's primary non-tariff barrier. The Ministry of Economy is authorized to issue import and export permits or licenses for sensitive goods with the objective of protecting the domestic market. The licensing procedure is governed by Regulation No. 15/1998 and amended Regulation No. 163/1999, which describe the conditions for issuing official authorization for the import/export of goods and services. These regulations also include individual lists of products subject to licensing procedures. There are four specific licensing regimes:

- 1) Extremely dangerous poisons, hazardous chemical substances, pesticides and additive chemical substances are subject to non-automatic licenses that may be issued upon written application of the Slovak importer/exporter of the goods. The licenses are not transferable. The licensing procedure for certain hazardous chemical substances and pesticides is governed by Regulation No. 67/2010.
- 2) Narcotics, psychotropic substances, precursors and additive chemical substances are also subject to non-automatic licenses that may be issued upon written application of the Slovak importer/exporter of these goods. The licenses are not transferable. The licensing procedure for drug precursors is governed by Regulation No. 331/2005.
- 3) Dual-use goods and technologies that can be used in military as well as civilian applications (Wassenaar system). The licensing procedure is governed by Regulation No. 21/2007.
- 4) Weapons, ammunition, explosives and related items.

Import Tariffs

Includes information on average tariff rates and types that U.S. firms should be aware of when exporting to the market.

When products enter the EU, they need to be declared to customs according to their classification in the Combined Nomenclature (CN). All products entering the EU are classified under a tariff code that carries information on:

- duty rates and other levies on imports and exports
- any applicable protective measures (e.g. anti-dumping)
- external trade statistics
- import and export formalities and other non-tariff requirements.

The EU classification system consists of three integrated components. The [Harmonized System](#) (HS) which is a nomenclature developed by the [World Customs Organization](#) (WCO) comprising about 5,000 commodity groups, organized in a hierarchical structure by sections, chapters (2 digits), headings (4 digits) and subheadings (6 digits). The [Combined Nomenclature](#) (CN) which adds EU specific codes and information to become the EU's eight-digit coding system (in other words HS codes with further EU specific subdivisions). The CN both serves the EU's common customs tariff and provides [statistics for trade](#) inside the EU and between the EU and the rest of the world. The third component is the [Integrated Tariff](#) (TARIC) which provides information on all trade policy and tariff measures applicable to specific goods in the EU (e.g. temporary suspension of duties, antidumping duties, etc). It comprises the eight-digit code of the combined nomenclature plus two additional digits (TARIC subheadings).

The CN document is updated and published every year, and the latest version can be found on the [European Commission's website](#).

U.S. exporters should consult “The Integrated Tariff of the Community”, referred to as TARIC (Tarif Intégré de la Communauté), to identify the various rules which apply to specific products being imported into the customs territory of the EU. To determine if a license is required for a particular product, check the [TARIC](#).

The TARIC can be searched by country of origin, Harmonized System (HS) Code, and product description on the interactive website of the Directorate-General for Taxation and the Customs Union. The online TARIC is updated daily.

Import Requirements and Documentation

Includes import documentation and other requirements for both the U.S. exporter and foreign importer.

The TARIC (Tarif Intégré de la Communauté) described above is also available to help determine if a license is required for a particular product. Moreover, the European Commission maintains an [EU Trade Helpdesk](#) where information can be found using HS codes to determine potential requirements, tariffs, import rules, and taxes among other information. Be aware that the EU Trade Helpdesk does not provide information for exports from the United States to the EU, but an approximation of key requirements can be found in the Canada country page.

For information relevant to member state import licenses, please consult the relevant [EU Member States' Country Commercial Guides](#).

Slovakia’s import requirements are fully harmonized with the European Union (EU) Laws and Regulations. For more information please visit the [EU Trade Helpdesk](#).

Alternatively, search the [EU CCG Import Requirements and Documentation website](#).

Import Documentation

The Single Administrative Document

The official model for written declarations to customs is the Single Administrative Document (SAD). This form describes goods and their movement around the world and is essential for trade outside the EU or trade of non-EU goods. Goods brought into the EU customs territory are, from the time of their entry, subject to customs supervision until customs formalities are completed. Goods are covered by a Summary Declaration which is filed once the items have been presented to customs officials. The customs authorities may, however, allow a period for filing the Declaration which cannot be extended beyond the first working day following the day on which the goods are presented to customs. Information on import/export forms is contained in [Commission Delegated Regulation \(EU\) No. 2015/2446](#). More information on the SAD can be found at [Single Administration Document](#).

The EU Customs Union and the Move to Use of an Electronic System

In 2013, the EU adopted [The Union Customs Code \(UCC\)](#) which is the main legal framework for ongoing actions to modernize EU customs. Its substantive provisions went into effect in May 2016. Its goals are to 1) provide a comprehensive framework for customs rules and procedures in the EU customs territory and 2) create a paperless and fully automated customs union system.

While customs rules are the same across the EU, member states’ customs authorities have not always applied them in a consistent manner. The UCC forms the basis for structural and administrative changes to customs policy, procedures, and implementation aimed at harmonizing the application of EU customs rules.

In addition, the UCC mandates a move to an all-electronic customs system. The system was originally due to be in place by the end of 2020. While some systems are currently in place or expected to be in place by the December 2020, but timeframes have been extended for some provisions until 2022 and 2025 (see Chapter 1 Article 278 UCC Consolidated Version).

Economic Operator Registration and Identification (EORI)

Since July 1, 2009, all companies established outside of the EU are required to have an EORI number if they wish to lodge a customs declaration or an Entry/Exit Summary declaration. All U.S. companies should use this number for their customs clearances. The company must request an EORI number from the customs authorities of the specific member state to which the company first exports. Member state customs authorities may request additional documents to be submitted alongside a formal request for an EORI number. Once a company has received an EORI number, it can use it for exports to any of the 27 EU Member States. There is no single format for the EORI number. Once an operator holds an EORI number s/he can request the Authorized Economic Operator (AEO: see below under “MRA”) status, which can give quicker access to certain simplified customs procedures.

More information about the EORI number can be found at [Economic Operator Identification and Registration](#).

U.S. – EU Customs Cooperation: Since 1997, the United States and the EU have had a Customs Mutual Assistance Agreement (CMAA) on customs cooperation for matters relating to the application of customs laws. For additional information, please see [Agreements with the United States](#).

More information is available at [EU CCG Import Requirements and Documentation](#).

Labeling and Marking Requirements

Overview of the different labeling and marking requirements, including any restrictive advertising or labeling practices and where to get more information.

There is a broad array of EU legislation pertaining to the marking, labeling, and packaging of products, with neither an “umbrella” law covering all goods nor any central directory containing information on marking, labeling, and packaging requirements. This overview is meant to provide the reader with a general introduction to the multitude of marking, labeling, and packaging requirements and marketing tools to be found in the EU.

The first step in investigating the marking, labeling, and packaging legislation that might apply to a product entering the EU is to draw a distinction between what is mandatory and what is voluntary. Decisions related to mandatory marking, labeling, and/or packaging requirements may sometimes be left to individual Member States. Furthermore, voluntary marks and/or labels are used as marketing tools in some EU Member States. This report is focused primarily on the mandatory marks and labels seen most often on consumer products and packaging, which are typically related to public safety, health and/or environmental concerns. It also includes a brief overview of a few mandatory packaging requirements, as well as more common voluntary marks and/or labels used in EU markets.

It is also important to distinguish between marks and labels. A mark is a symbol and/or pictogram that appears on a product or its respective packaging. These range in scope from signs of danger to indications of methods of proper recycling and disposal. The intention of such marks is to provide market surveillance authorities, importers, distributors and end-users with information concerning safety, health, energy efficiency and/or environmental issues relating to a product. Labels, on the other hand, appear in the form of written text or numerical statements, which may be required but are not necessarily universally recognizable. Labels typically indicate more specific information about a product, such as measurements, or an indication of materials that may be found in the product (such as in textiles or batteries).

Examples of products requiring mandatory marks & labels: automotive, cosmetics, dangerous substances, electrical & electronic equipment, energy efficiency, explosive atmosphere, food related, footwear, household appliances, maritime, measuring instruments, noise emissions, pricing, pyrotechnics, recycling - separate collection, tires, textiles, units of measurement and wood packaging.

Examples of voluntary marks and labels: cup/fork symbol (material in contact with food), ‘e’ Mark, Eco-Label, Green Dot, Recycling Marks.

Products made in Slovakia or imported into Slovakia must be labeled with the [CE mark](#) (the letters "CE" are the abbreviation of French phrase "Conformité Européene" which literally means "European Conformity". The term initially used was "EC Mark" and was officially replaced by "CE Marking" in the Directive 93/68/EEC in 1993), an EU designation indicating compliance with health, safety, and environmental protection standards for products sold within the European Economic Area (EEA). All electrical equipment should have, in addition to the CE mark, an "Energy Efficiency" label. Under the 1995 State Language Law, companies are required to mark contents of domestically produced or imported goods, product manuals, product guarantees, and other consumer-related information in the Slovak language.

Manufacturers should be mindful that, in addition to the EU's mandatory and voluntary schemes, national voluntary labeling systems might still apply. These systems may be highly appreciated by consumers, and thus, become unavoidable for marketing purposes.

Manufacturers are advised to take note that all labels require metric units ([EU Metric Directive 80/181/EEC](#)), although dual labeling is also acceptable. The use of language on labels has been the subject of a Commission Communication, which encourages multilingual information, while preserving the right of member states to require the use of the language of the country of consumption.

In the same sphere as the EU Metric Directive, the EU pre-packaging legislation ([Directive 76/211/EEC](#)) specifies permissible ranges of nominal quantities, container capacities and the weights or volumes of prepackaged products. It guarantees that certain liquids and other substances have been packed by weight or volume in accordance with the directives. While compliance is not mandatory, free movement throughout the EU is guaranteed for prepackaged products that do comply with the provisions of the directive. Containers with an e-mark also bear an indication of the weight or volume of the product. The packer (or importer, if the container is produced outside the EU) is responsible for ensuring that the containers meet the directive's requirements. More information can be found [here](#).

U.S. Export Controls

The United States imposes export controls to protect national security interests and promote foreign policy objectives related to dual-use goods through implementation of the Export Administration Regulations (EAR). The Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS) is comprised of two elements: Export Administration (EA), which is responsible for processing license applications, counselling exporters, and drafting and publishing changes to the [Export Administration Regulations](#); and Export Enforcement (EE), which is responsible for the enforcement of the EAR. BIS works closely with U.S. embassies, foreign governments, industry, and trade associations to ensure that exports from the United States are secure and comply with the EAR. BIS officials conduct site visits, known as End-Use Checks (EUCs), globally with end-users, consignees, and/or other parties to transactions involving items subject to the EAR to verify compliance.

An EUC is an on-site verification of a non-U.S. party to a transaction to determine whether the party is a reliable recipient of U.S. items. EUCs are conducted as part of BIS's licensing process, as well as its compliance program, to determine if items were exported in accordance with a valid BIS authorization or otherwise consistent with the EAR. Specifically, an EUC verifies the *bona fides* of transactions subject to the EAR, to include: confirming the legitimacy and reliability of the end use and end user; monitoring compliance with license conditions; and ensuring items are used, re-exported or transferred (in-country) in accordance with the EAR. These checks might be completed prior to the export of items pursuant to a BIS export license in the form of a Pre-License Check (PLC), or following an export from the U.S. during a Post-Shipment Verification (PSV).

BIS officials rely on EUCs to safeguard items subject to the EAR from diversion to unauthorized end uses/users. The verification of a foreign party's reliability facilitates future trade, including pursuant to BIS license reviews. If BIS is unable to verify the reliability of the company or is prevented from accomplishing an EUC, the company may receive, for example, more regulatory scrutiny during license application reviews or be designated on BIS's Unverified List or Entity List, as applicable.

BIS has developed a list of “red flags”, or warning signs, and compiled “[Know Your Customer](#)” guidance intended to aid exporters in identifying possible violations of the EAR. Both of these resources are publicly available, and their dissemination to industry members is highly encouraged to help promote EAR compliance.

BIS also provides a variety of training sessions to U.S. exporters throughout the year. These sessions range from one to two-day seminars that focus on the basics of exporting to coverage of more advanced, industry specific topics. Interested parties can check a [list of upcoming seminars and webinars](#) or reference BIS provided [online training](#).

BIS and the EAR regulate transactions involving the export of “dual-use” U.S. goods, services, and technologies. For advice and regulatory requirements, exporters should consult the other U.S. Government agencies which regulate more specialized items. For example, the U.S. Department of State’s Directorate of Defense Trade Controls has authority over defense articles and services, or munitions. A list of other agencies involved in export control can be found on the [BIS website](#) or in Supplement No. 3 to Part 730 of the EAR.

The EAR is available on the [BIS website](#) and on the [e-CFR](#) (Electronic Code of Federal Regulations) and is updated as needed.

The [Consolidated Screening List](#) (CSL) is a list of parties for which the United States Government maintains restrictions on certain exports, reexports or transfers of items. The CSL consolidates eleven export screening lists of the Departments of Commerce, State and the Treasury into a single data feed as an aid to industry in conducting electronic screens of parties to regulated transactions. Exporters are encouraged to classify their items prior to export, as well as consult the CSL to determine if any parties to the transaction may be subject to specific license requirements.

Temporary Entry

Discusses requirements for products entering the country/economy temporarily, including information on warranty and non-warranty items entering the country/economy for repair.

Please see the [ATA Carnet Customs](#) website for specific information on the procedures used for temporary importation, transit, and temporary admission of goods designed for specific purposes, duty-free and tax-free (such as professional equipment for presentations or trade fairs).

For information on this topic please consult the Commerce Department’s [EU Member States' Country Commercial Guides](#).

Slovakia's Commercial Code allows a full or partial exemption from import duties for customs warehousing, active inward processing, temporary use and temporary imports. The exemption from import duties is allowed for the commercial use of foreign goods, which will remain the property of the importing foreign entity. For example, a person or company that imports goods temporarily doesn’t pay the import charges until it is reprocessed and re-exported or officially cleared by the Customs Office for free and permanent circulation and use in the country. The period allowed for temporary importation is set by the [Customs Office](#).

Slovakia is a signatory of international customs agreements on ATA and TIR carnets, which allow for the temporary import or transit of goods without the obligation to secure the partial exemption described above and without import duties or charges in the country of transit or destination. [The Slovak Chamber of Commerce and Industry](#) (SOPK) is the national guarantee organization and executive body for ATA carnets. The [Czech and Slovak Association for International Automobile Transportation](#) (Cesmad Slovakia) holds the same responsibilities for TIR carnets.

Prohibited and Restricted Imports

Includes a list of goods that are prohibited from being exported to the country or are otherwise restricted.

The [Tarif Intégré de la Communauté](#) (TARIC) is designed to show various rules applying to specific products being imported into the customs territory of the EU or, in some cases, when exported from it. To determine if a product is prohibited or subject to restriction, check the TARIC for the following codes:

- CITES Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species
- PROHI Import Suspension
- RSTR Import Restriction

For information on how to access the TARIC, see the [Taxation Customs and Tariffs](#).

Customs Regulations

Includes customs regulations and contact information for this country's customs office.

Customs Valuation – Most customs duties and value added tax (VAT) are expressed as a percentage of the value of goods being declared for importation. Thus, it is necessary to maintain a standard set of rules for establishing the goods' value, which will then serve for calculating the customs' duties.

Given the magnitude of EU imports every year, it is important that the value of such commerce is accurately measured for the purposes of:

- economic and commercial policy analysis;
- application of commercial policy measures;
- proper collection of import duties and taxes; and
- import and export statistics.

These objectives are met using a single instrument - the rules on customs value.

The EU applies an internationally accepted concept of “[customs value](#)”.

The value of imported goods is one of three 'elements of taxation' that provides the basis for assessment of the customs debt, which is the technical term for the amount of duty that has to be paid, the other two are origin of the goods and the customs tariff.

Key Link: [Customs Procedures and Customs and Taxation Union Directorate \(TAXUD\)](#)

As of January 2021, almost all packages from non-EU countries will fall under customs procedures due to EU regulations aimed at equalizing market conditions and ending the advantaged import of consignments from outside Europe. Some goods may even fall under the antidumping custom duty, making a cheap item overpriced, after customs and taxes are included. Information about Slovak Customs procedures and contact information for Slovak Customs authorities can be found at the following website. Information about electronic customs procedures can be found here.

For information on this topic please consult the [Commerce Department's Country Commercial Guides on EU member states](#).

Standards for Trade

Describes the country's standards landscape, identifies the national standards and accreditation bodies, and lists the main national testing organization(s) and conformity assessment bodies.

Overview

Products tested and certified in the United States to American regulations and standards are likely to have to be retested and re-certified to EU requirements as a result of the EU's different approach to the protection of the health and safety of consumers and the environment. Where products are not regulated by specific EU technical legislation, they are always subject to the EU's General Product Safety Directive as well as to possible additional national requirements.

European Union legislation and standards created under the New Approach are harmonized across the member states and European Economic Area countries to allow for the free flow of goods. A feature of the New Approach is CE marking.

The concept of New Approach legislation is slowly disappearing as the New Legislative Framework (NLF), which entered into force in January 2010, was put in place to serve as a blueprint for existing and future CE marking legislation. Existing legislation has been reviewed to bring it in line with the NLF concepts, which means that, as of 2016, new requirements are being addressed and new reference numbers are to be used on declarations of conformity. For more information, please see the [NLF website](#). While harmonization of EU legislation can facilitate access to the EU Single Market, manufacturers should be aware that regulations (mandatory) and technical standards (voluntary) might also function as barriers to trade if U.S. standards are different from those of the European Union.

Agricultural Standards

The establishment of harmonized EU rules and standards in the food sector has been ongoing for several decades, and in January 2002 the EU passed a law establishing general principles for EU food. This regulation introduced mandatory traceability throughout the feed and food chain as of Jan 1, 2005. For specific information on agricultural standards, please refer to the [Foreign Agricultural Service's website](#).

There are also export guides to import regulations and standards available on the Foreign Agricultural Service's website: [FAIRS Export Certificate Report](#).

Standards

EU standards setting is a process based on consensus initiated by industry or mandated by the European Commission and carried out by independent standards bodies, acting at the national, European or international level. There is strong encouragement for non-governmental organizations, such as environmental and consumer groups, to actively participate in European standardization.

Many standards in the EU are adopted from international standards bodies such as the International Standards Organization (ISO). The drafting of specific EU standards is handled by three European standards organizations:

1. European Committee for Electro-technical Standardization ([CENELEC](#))
2. European Telecommunications Standards Institute ([ETSI](#))
3. European Committee for Standardization, handling all other standards ([CEN](#))

Standards are created or modified by experts in Technical Committees or Working Groups. The members of CEN and CENELEC are the national standards bodies of the member states, which have "mirror committees" that monitor and delegate experts to participate in ongoing European standardization. CEN and CENELEC standards are sold by the individual member states standards bodies. ETSI is different in that it allows direct participation in its technical committees from non-EU companies that have interests in Europe and provides some of its individual standards at no charge on its website. In addition to the three standards developing organizations, the European Commission plays an important role in standardization through its funding of the participation in the standardization process of small- and medium-sized companies and non-governmental organizations, such as environmental and consumer groups. The Commission also provides money to the standards bodies when it mandates standards development to the European Standards Organization for harmonized standards that will be linked to EU technical legislation. Mandates – or requests for standards - can be checked [online](#).

Given the EU's vigorous promotion of its regulatory and standards system as well as its generous funding for its development, the EU's standards regime is wide and deep - extending well beyond the EU's political borders to include affiliate members (countries which are hopeful of becoming full members in the future) such as Belarus, Israel, and Morocco, among others. Another category, called "[companion standardization body](#)" includes the standards organization of Mongolia, Kazakhstan and Australia, which are not likely to become a CEN member or affiliate for political and geographical reasons.

To know what CEN and CENELEC have in the pipeline for future standardization, it is best to visit their [websites](#). Other than their respective annual work plans, CEN's "what we do" page provides an overview of standards activities

by subject. Both CEN and CENELEC offer the possibility to search their respective database. [ETSI's portal](#) links to ongoing activities.

The European Standardization system and strategy was reviewed in 2011 and 2012. The new standards regulation 1025, adopted in November 2012, clarifies the relationship between regulations and standards and confirms the role of the three European standards bodies in developing EN harmonized standards. The emphasis is also on referencing international standards where possible. The European standards bodies have been encouraged to improve efficiency in terms of delivery and to look for ways to include more societal stakeholders in [European standardization](#).

Testing, Inspection and Certification

Conformity Assessment is a mandatory step for the manufacturer in the process of complying with specific EU harmonized legislation. The purpose of conformity assessment is to ensure consistency of compliance during all stages, from design to production, to facilitate acceptance of the final product. EU product legislation gives manufacturers some choice regarding conformity assessment, depending on the level of risk involved in the use of their product. These range from self-certification, type examination, and production quality control system, to a full quality assurance system. Conformity assessment bodies in individual Member States are listed in the [New Approach Notification and Designated Organizations \(NANDO\) information system](#). The only exceptions to this EU-domiciled rule are U.S.-based organizations and test labs for products covered under [U.S.-EU mutual recognition agreements \(MRAs\)](#) for certain types of marine equipment, products under the Electromagnetic Compatibility MRA, and the Radio Equipment MRA. To promote market acceptance of the final product, there are a number of voluntary conformity assessment programs. CEN's certification system is known as the Keymark. Neither CENELEC nor ETSI offer conformity assessment services.

More information on testing can be found at [Slovak Office of Standards, Metrology and Testing](#) and at [Slovak Institute for Technical Standardization](#).

Publication of Technical Regulations

The Official Journal is the official publication of the European Union. It is published daily on the internet and consists of two series covering adopted legislation as well as case law, studies by committees, and more, which can be found [here](#). It also lists the [standards reference numbers](#) linked to legislation.

National technical regulations are published on the [Commission's website](#) to allow other countries and interested parties to comment.

Contact Information

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National Institute of Standard & Technology
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CENELEC- European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardization
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B – 1040 Brussels, Belgium
Tel: (+32) 2 519 68 71
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ETSI- European Telecommunications Standards Institute
Route des Lucioles 65
Sophia Antipolis
F-06560 Valbonne, France
Tel: (+33) 4 92 94 42 00
Fax: (+33) 4 93 65 47 16

Members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) are required under the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT Agreement) to notify to the WTO proposed technical regulations and conformity assessment procedures that could affect trade. Notify U.S. (www.nist.gov/notifyus) is a free, web-based e-mail registration service that captures and makes available for review and comment key information on draft regulations and conformity assessment procedures. Users receive customized e-mail alerts when new notifications are added by selected country or countries and industry sector(s) of interest and can also request full texts of regulations. This service and its associated website are managed and operated by the USA WTO TBT Inquiry Point housed within the National Institute of Standards and Technology, part of the U.S. Department of Commerce.

Trade Agreements

Describes bilateral and multilateral trade agreements that this country is party to, including with the United States. Includes websites and other resources where U.S. companies can get more information on how to take advantage of these agreements.

For a list of trade agreements with the EU and its member states, as well as concise explanations, please visit this [website](#) or [EU Trade Agreements](#).

U.S. – EU Trade Negotiations

In July 2018, President Trump and European Commission President Juncker issued a joint statement in Washington announcing the formation of an Executive Working Group to reduce transatlantic barriers to trade, including the elimination non-auto industrial tariffs and non-tariff barriers. In October 2018, U.S. Trade Representative officially notified Congress that the Administration intended to start negotiations following the completion of necessary domestic procedures. This began a congressionally-mandated 90-day consultation period under [Trade Promotion Authority](#) prior to the launch of negotiations and resulted in the publication of the report “[United States-European Union Negotiations Summary of Specific Negotiating Objectives, January 2019](#)” which lay out the goals and objectives of [U.S. negotiations with the EU](#).

Licensing Requirements for Professional Services

Includes license requirements for key professional services that are open to U.S. service providers.

The recognition of skills and qualifications acquired by EU citizens in EU Member States, including the corresponding recognition procedures and charges are, corresponding with article 165 of the TFEU, the responsibility of Member States. Similarly, recognition of skills and qualifications earned in third countries is also a national responsibility.

If an individual with a foreign qualification was recognized in a member state and now wants to move to another EU country and has worked for at least 3 years in the EU country that has first recognized the qualifications, that individual can apply for professional recognition in another EU country under [the rules that apply to professionals that have received their qualification from an EU country](#).

To prove the necessary experience to exercise a profession, a certificate issued by the EU country that first recognized your qualifications may be needed. This applies to both EU citizens and non-EU citizens.

However, the European Commission takes initiative to facilitate recognition procedures. For example:

- Recognition of professional qualifications obtained in one Member State for the purposes of access and pursuit of regulated professions in another Member State is subject to Directive 2005/36.
- Recognition of qualifications for academic purposes in the higher education sector, including school-leaving certificates is subject to the Lisbon Recognition Convention. The ENIC-NARIC network provides advice on (cross-border) recognition of these qualifications.

Recognition in other cases is assessed and granted (or denied) by the receiving educational provider or employer. An understanding of the level, content, and quality is needed for them to be able to recognize skills and qualifications. The Commission is currently exploring possibilities on how to better support these recognition decisions.

The “Your Europe” website maintains a webpage dedicated to help citizens identify what the regulated professions are and what document are needed for their recognition in each Member State. Please see: [Recognition of Professional Qualification](#).

Selling US Products and Services

Distribution & Sales Channels

Discusses the distribution network within the country from how products enter to final destination, including reliability and condition of distribution mechanisms, major distribution centers, ports, etc.

Bratislava is located in the southwestern corner of Slovakia and has the largest metropolitan population in the country, making it the most important retail market with the best-developed distribution networks. The cities of Kosice, Trnava, Trencin, Zilina, Poprad, and Nitra are the major manufacturing areas in Slovakia and are also important retail markets.

The Slovak retail sector is composed of private networks of retail and wholesale businesses. The trend in Western-style retailing, which offers a wide variety of products, has been greatly influenced by the operations of foreign companies such as Tesco. Currently, Tesco operates 151 outlets in Slovakia and employs more than 10,000 people. The breakdown includes Tesco department stores, hypermarkets and supermarkets, upscale “galleries,” and a number of small-size retail stores called Tesco Express. Tesco also operates gasoline stations and provides mobile phone and financial services. In 2018 Tesco’s sales reached EUR 1.43 billion (USD 1.61 billion).

The second largest retailer in 2018 was Lidl, which belongs to the Schwarz Group along with Kaufland. Lidl had sales of EUR 1.23 billion (USD 1,39 billion) in 2018. It operates about 144 stores throughout Slovakia, with more than 5,000 employees.

Kaufland, the third largest retail chain in 2018, operates 67 stores and employs about 6,100 people in Slovakia. In 2018 Kaufland’s sales reached EUR 1.1 billion (USD 1,24 billion).

The 2018 gross sales of the fourth largest retailer, Billa, which is part of the German retail chain Rewe, reached EUR 607 million (USD 686 million) . With 150 stores and about 4,500 employees, Billa is an important employer in Slovakia. Billa operates smaller supermarkets and hypermarkets in shopping centers and downtown areas.

Metro Cash & Carry is Slovakia’s fifth largest retailer. Metro’s six large hypermarkets sell products and operate on a similar business model as Costco and Sam’s Club chains in the United States. In 2019 the company had sales of EUR 444 million (USD 502 million). The company has about 1,250 employees.

Other international retail chains in Slovakia include Hornbach, OBI, Bauhaus, Drogerie Markt (DM), IKEA, and XXXLutz. Major Slovak retailers include COOP Jednota, Terno and Kraj. The expansion of large retail chains has caused smaller businesses to consolidate or liquidate, laying the groundwork for franchising opportunities.

Slovakia has two major ports on the Danube river, in Bratislava and Komarno. Both ports are operated by the [Slovak Shipping and Ports company](#).

Using an Agent to Sell US Products and Services

Includes typical use of agents and distributors and how to find a good partner, e.g., whether use of an agent or distributor is legally required.

U.S. companies wishing to use distribution, franchising and agency arrangements need to ensure that the agreements they put into place are in accordance with European Union (EU) and Slovak national laws. The Slovak Commercial Code closely follows EU legislation and recognizes agents, commissioned merchants, and brokers not bound by contract.

There are many agents and distributors in Slovakia competing to represent companies in a vibrant business environment. Numerous Slovak agents, distributors, and trading companies have excellent business savvy, capital resources, and experienced personnel.

The U.S. Commercial Service offers its Gold Key Matching Service (GKS) and International Partner Search Service (IPS), and International Partner Search Plus Virtual Introductions to U.S. companies seeking potential business partners or representatives in Slovakia. The IPS provides U.S. firms with a shortlist of pre-screened Slovak contacts

that have expressed an interest in representing a U.S. firm after reviewing the American company's product information. The IPS Plus Virtual Introductions is the same as the IPS, but also includes virtual introductions via teleconference to the identified contacts (within 30 days of final service delivery). The GKS takes this a step further by arranging one-on-one business appointments with Slovak contacts when a representative from the U.S. firm visits Slovakia. Other customized contact-making services and market research are also available through the U.S. Commercial Service.

Due to the worldwide outbreak of COVID-19, U.S. Commercial Service Bratislava currently only offers virtual matchmaking services. For more information about the conditions in Slovakia as well as how the U.S. Commercial Service can assist you in expanding your sales to the Slovak market, please contact the U.S. Commercial Service's Global Markets office closest to you. The nearest Global Markets office can be located through the following [website](#) or contact the U.S. Commercial Service in Bratislava directly.

Establishing an Office

Includes steps involved in establishing a local office.

The Slovak Commercial Code provides for the establishment of branch offices, joint stock companies, simple joint stock companies, limited liability companies (LLCs), limited or unlimited partnerships, cooperatives, silent partnerships, and associations. All companies must register their names with the Slovak Commercial Register. The following procedures and documents are required for company registration:

- (a) Lease contract for premises, or any approval of the owner of the premises.
- (b) Approval of the office/company's location by local authorities.
- (c) Depositing a minimum share capital of EUR 5,000 (approximately USD 5,650) in a bank account by one or more shareholders.
- (d) Trade authorization from the local trade authority.
- (e) Satisfaction of minimum capital requirements is required. (This does not apply to the OECD Member states and EU citizens.)

The most common option for foreign companies is the limited liability company (LLC). It is the simplest to establish, permits 100 percent foreign ownership, and allows full repatriation of after-tax profits.

The following rules apply to Limited Liability Companies in Slovakia:

- (a) Between 1 and 50 shareholders may form a limited liability company, and the total basic capital must be at least EUR 5,000 (USD 5,650) with a minimum participant deposit of EUR 750 (approximately USD 850) each.
- (b) A supervisory board is not required but may be established.
- (c) An official appraiser must value non-monetary contributions, and for certain contributions, two appraisers are required.

A Simple Joint Stock Company is tailored for start-ups because it allows easy entry and exit of potential investors into and out of the company. A Simple Joint Stock Company has less strict incorporation and winding up rules; it can be founded with minimum registered capital of EUR 1 (about USD 1.13) and exit possibilities well recognized under common law, such as drag along, tag along and shootout rights.

The forms for local office registration and all steps involved in establishing a local office are available on the [Slovak Ministry of Justice's website](#).

The process of registering a company with the Slovak Commercial Register takes approximately five days.

Franchising

Discusses opportunities for U.S. franchisers and legal requirements in the market.

Franchising in Slovakia is growing and includes hotels, fast food operations, gasoline stations and business services. There is no Slovak legislation specific to franchising. Franchising agreements are treated as commercial contracts and are regulated by the Slovak Commercial Code. U.S. franchises in Slovakia are still limited but include, for example, McDonald's, Domino's Pizza, Kentucky Fried Chicken, Subway, Marriott, Century 21, Remax, BNI, and FitCurves. Franchisers should be prepared to adjust franchise royalties and other mandatory payments to reflect the size of Slovakia's small market and to offer creative financial options, as the financial resources of some of Slovakia's most promising entrepreneurs could be limited.

[The Slovak Franchise Association](#) (SFA) supports the development of franchising in Slovakia for existing members as well as for companies planning to implement franchising in the future. The goal of the SFA is to build optimal franchising conditions for both franchisers and franchisees.

Direct Marketing

Discusses the state of direct marketing and what channels are available for companies to use direct marketing.

The main format used in direct selling in Slovakia is person-to-person direct selling. Party-plan direct selling is not as popular. Rising demand has been reported in the category of healthy and organic products such as food and drinks. Wellness products and organic cosmetics are also favored. For many years, Avon has been a leader in direct selling in Slovakia. Other direct marketing firms include: Just, Herbalife, Oriflame, Mary Kay, and Yves Rocher.

Joint Ventures/Licensing

Discusses the legal requirements/options for joint venture/licensing in this market.

The Slovak Commercial Code permits joint ventures and licensing. However, licensing is less common in Slovakia than it is in some other European countries. There is no specific legislation regulating joint ventures in Slovakia and there is no such legal term in Slovak law, though the law allows for the setting up and operation of various joint venture schemes and structures such as contractual joint ventures and equity joint ventures.

Express Delivery

Discusses the prevalence and reliability of express delivery firms within the country, time from large U.S. cities, and relevant customs procedures, including de minimis amounts.

Major global organizations such as DHL, FedEx, UPS and others operate in Slovakia and offer express delivery services. Transit times vary but for packages shipped from the United States to Slovakia, the average time is 2-4 days, including the customs clearance process. Shipments from countries that are not part of the EU with a value of up to EUR 22 (about USD 25.00) are exempted from customs duty and VAT. Shipments with a value of up to EUR 150 (about USD 170.00) are exempted from customs duty except for perfumes and eau de toilette, alcoholic beverages, and tobacco and tobacco products purchased in e-shops. Customs procedures and requirements are standard and can be found on the [Slovak Customs Office website](#).

Due Diligence

Provides advice on how to perform due diligence and in what areas it is necessary for a U.S. company. Includes information on the U.S. Commercial Service International Company Profile service.

The Bratislava office of the U.S. Commercial Service can assist U.S. companies in evaluating potential business partners. The International Company Profile Service (ICP) helps U.S. companies evaluate potential business partners by providing a detailed report on Slovak companies which have been personally visited by a Commercial Specialist or Commercial Officer of the U.S. Commercial Service. Through the ICP, clients can request answers to detailed

questions about Slovak companies on a variety of issues and receive expert advice from our commercial staff about the relative strength of the firm in its market and its reliability, among other things. For more information please contact office.bratislava@trade.gov.

eCommerce

Describes how widely eCommerce is used, the primary sectors that sell through eCommerce, and how much product/service in each sector is sold through eCommerce versus brick-and-mortar retail. Includes what a company needs to know to take advantage of eCommerce in the local market and, reputable, prominent B2B websites.

Overview

eCommerce has been a fast-growing segment over the past several years. The most commonly purchased products by individual consumers and companies are consumer goods, electronics, software, voice, data and TV services, household appliances, furniture, hobbies, music, video on demand, cosmetics, toys, airline tickets, holiday trips, tickets for cultural events, and clothes. U.S. providers of online services, such as video on demand, software, games, and music, should make an effort to penetrate the Slovak market for those products and offer fee-based services to consumers who already have fiber optic and broadband Internet connections at home. Many younger Slovaks speak English, and the general population is interested in American entertainment products. Many consumers have already purchased fiber optic connections and are receptive to cutting-edge technology.

Assesment of Current Buyer Behavior in Market

Online shopping is an increasingly common way of purchasing goods in Slovakia. In 2019 there were about 12,600 e-shops that generated sales of EUR 1.36 billion (USD 1.54 billion). The traditionally strongest season is Christmas, followed by Black Friday. In 2019, about 62 percent of all Slovaks used their mobile devices when purchasing online, so a functioning mobile version of the site is important. The e-commerce market's largest segment is Electronics & Media, which makes up almost half of the market share. Category Hobby ranked second, followed by Clothing, Food and Drinks and the segment of Toys and Kids. Slovaks prefer to choose from several delivery options. Brick and mortar collect stores are becoming more popular due to the physical collection of goods offered for free. Current user penetration is 72.6 percent and is expected to hit 80 percent in 2021.

Local eCommerce Sales Rules & Regulations

Slovakia is a part of the European Union. The European Commission breaks down online barriers so the people may enjoy full access to all goods and services offered online by businesses in the EU. If a U.S. company located in any of the EU country offers online products to another country within the EU the following rules should apply:

- the revised Payment Services Directive and new rules on cross-border parcel delivery services that are already in force;
- rules to stop unjustified geo-blocking;
- revised consumer protection rules that will enter into force in 2020;
- new VAT rules for online sales of goods and services that will enter into force in 2021

For background information, please visit [New EU Rules on eCommerce](#).

Local eCommerce Business Service Provider Ecosystem

Regional events focusing on eCommerce include:

- [Creative Summit Online](#);
- [B2B eCommerce Forum](#);

- [Reshoper](#).

To learn more about promoting digital services to U.S. businesses, see [eCommerce BSP](#) that is currently aggregating the U.S. based ecosystem of service providers.

Domestic eCommerce (B2C)

There are currently 3.2 million eCommerce users in Slovakia, with an additional 400,000 Slovaks expected to be shopping online by 2021. These 3.6 million eCommerce users will represent 78 percent of the total population. The average user spends USD 231 online per year, which will grow to USD 297 by 2021. 98 percent of 16-24-year-olds log on daily. Products most likely to be sold on social media include real estate, insurance, and consumer goods.

Cross-Border eCommerce

Cross-border eCommerce is common. The most popular eshops for Slovaks are eBay, Amazon UK and Amazon DE, Alibaba and AliExpress. Several local eshops including mall.sk, alza.sk and tpd.sk are popular in neighboring countries.

B2B eCommerce

This is the second fastest growing segment of eCommerce. Local companies offer products and services to business clients. Companies usually start with purchase of office supplies and then look for other products and services to increase their efficiency and lower operational, transportation and storage costs.

Popular local eCommerce Sites

Alza.Sk; Mall.sk; Nay.sk; Martinus.sk; Bonprix.sk; Hej.sk; DrMax.sk; Datacomp.sk; progamingshop.sk; Andreashop.sk.

Online Payment

The most common payments are done by electronic debit and credit cards because it is safe and there are no additional surcharges. Another popular payment method is 'pay on delivery' that usually includes a USD 1-2 surcharge for purchases under USD 100 - 200.

Mobile eCommerce

Mobile eCommerce grew in popularity thanks to increased numbers of local eCommerce applications. The majority of local websites have implemented Accelerated Mobile Pages to ease reading on mobile devices.

Digital Marketing

Many local companies that are using digital marketing have implemented Machine Learning to better target potential customers.

Major Buying Holidays

The major buying holidays are Christmas, Black Friday, Valentine's Day, and Easter.

Social Media

YouTube and TikTok are already overtaking television in Slovakia as the most watched video content providers among younger audiences. Younger and middle-aged populations often get their news from social media channels. Hoaxes are a growing problem, which can impact public opinion, and spread quickly via multiple social media channels.

Selling Factors & Techniques

Identifies common practices a company needs to be aware of when selling in this market.

Overview

Slovak law permits 24-hour and Sunday shopping, but requires stores to be closed on public holidays. Many smaller retail shops confine their hours to 9:00 am to 6:00 pm weekdays, 9:00 am to noon on Saturdays, and are closed on Sundays. Grocery stores in larger towns are open 7 days a week. Stores located in shopping malls are open Monday to Sunday from 10:00 am to 9:00 pm.

Slovakia's disposable income is lower than the EU average, making price a key competitive factor. Slovaks prefer to buy domestic products, especially groceries, if there is a price advantage. The importance of quality is gradually catching on with Slovak consumers as more foreign brand names begin to appear and more new products are launched.

Slovak retailers, especially those in cities, understand the benefits of promotion techniques used by U.S. and international retailers. Consumer campaigns with special offers and discounts are common in chain stores, and the use of some promotion techniques, such as coupons and small gifts, is not regulated by law.

The Ministry of Finance does, however, regulate consumer lotteries (sweepstakes) conducted by Slovak and foreign firms alike. The following requirements apply to lotteries held by companies:

- The company must be registered with the Slovak Commercial Register.
- Taxes cannot be charged to consumer participants.

Products made in Slovakia or imported into Slovakia must be labeled with the CE mark. All electrical equipment should have, in addition to the CE mark, an "Energy Efficiency" label. Under the 1995 State Language Law, companies are required to mark contents of domestically produced or imported goods, product manuals, product guarantees, and other consumer-related information in the Slovak language.

Trade Promotion & Advertising

Includes web links to local trade fair or trade show authorities and local newspapers, trade publications, radio/TV/cable information and BSP, FUSE and Single company promotion services

The major Slovak convention centers are located in three Slovak cities: [Bratislava](#), [Nitra](#) and [Trencin](#).

Many companies, both Slovak and foreign, specialize in advertising, and they vary considerably in quality. Internet, newspaper, radio and television are the most common means of advertising. Private radio stations offer advertising in all metropolitan areas, and billboards are used in cities and along main highways.

Major Slovak-language newspapers and business journals include:

[Pravda](#)

[SME](#)

[Hospodarske Noviny](#)

[Profit/Trend](#)

[Novy Cas](#)

[Dennik N](#)

The only English-language newspaper in Slovakia is [The Slovak Spectator](#).

There is one state-owned television station broadcasting on three channels and three privately owned television stations broadcasting on ten channels. Major radio and TV broadcasting stations include:

[Rozhlas a televizia Slovenska](#)

[MARKIZA - SLOVAKIA, s r.o.](#)

[MAC TV s.r.o. \(JOJ\)](#)

TA3

Posters and billboards are commonly used to advertise in Slovakia and are found in post offices, public transportation, outdoor kiosks, and along public walking and driving routes. There is minimal formal consumer protection, but local companies are advised to use ethical principles in advertising strategies, or run the risk of a backlash from Slovak consumers who tend to be well-informed about unethical advertising.

The U.S. Commercial Service offers its Business Service Provider (BSP), Featured U.S. Exporters (FUSE) or Single Company Promotion (SCP) services to U.S. companies seeking potential business partners in Slovakia. BSP is an online program to help U.S. exporters identify professional export service providers to support them in the assessment, financing or completion of an export transaction. FUSE provides U.S. companies with an opportunity to enhance their international marketing efforts through improved search engine optimization. SCP helps U.S. companies with promotional services increasing the awareness of their product/service in a specific market. However, due to the COVID-19 situation worldwide, U.S. Commercial Service Bratislava offers only virtual matchmaking services. For more information about the conditions in Slovakia as well as how the U.S. Commercial Service can assist you in expanding your sales to the Slovak market through covid crisis, please contact the U.S. Commercial Service's Global Markets office closest to you. The nearest Global Markets office can be located through the following [website](#) or contact the U.S. Commercial Service in Bratislava directly.

Pricing

Discusses pricing formula and other fees, value-added tax (VAT), etc.

The minimum monthly salary for 2020 in Slovakia is EUR 580 (USD 655) per month and the average salary is about EUR 1,163 (USD 1,314) per month. Price remains a key and sensitive factor for consumers. There is, however, a sizeable segment of the population with significantly higher earning power. There is a gap between prices in urban areas and those in rural areas. Most food prices remain below EU levels.

The VAT rate in Slovakia is 20 percent. There is also a reduced VAT rate of 10 percent, mainly for groceries, medicines, books, and accommodation services. VAT is charged on assets and services consumed in Slovakia as well as on imports into Slovakia. In many cases, exports are not subject to VAT. Similarly financial and banking services, educational services and the rental of real estate, other than new properties, are exempt from VAT. All taxpayers whose revenue exceeds EUR 49,790 (USD 56,263) over the preceding 12 calendar months must register for VAT with the tax authorities.

Sales Service/Customer Support

Describes customary sales and customer support services.

All entities, Slovak and foreign, must provide two-year warranties and after-sales service, especially for electronic products. There is currently no law requiring a company registered in Slovakia to provide this service itself, but it must be able to arrange service for customers either within Slovakia or abroad.

Local Professional Services

Provides references to local service providers and other professional associations.

A number of law firms in Slovakia conduct business in English and are familiar with U.S. laws. A few U.S. firms have offices in Slovakia. U.S. companies seeking a list of English-speaking attorneys may contact the U.S.

Commercial Service office in Bratislava at office.bratislava@trade.gov. More information on individual law firms can be obtained from the [Slovak Chamber of Attorneys](#).

Principal Business Associations

Provides references to the principal business associations, indicating which accept U.S. company members. Describes the primary roles of those associations and to what extent they influence government actions.

[The Slovak Chamber of Commerce](#) (SOPK) was established by the Act No. 9/1992 as a public-law institution to support and protect the business interests of its members in Slovakia and abroad. It now has approximately 1,000 Slovak companies as members.

[The American Chamber of Commerce](#) (AmCham) was founded in 1993 in Bratislava as an independent and self-supporting organization, entirely dependent on contributions from its members. Today, it serves as the most active foreign Chamber of Commerce in Slovakia. Currently, its membership includes more than 330 international and Slovak companies, including many of the largest and most important firms in Slovakia. Approximately 23 percent of its members are American companies, about 42 percent are Slovak companies, and about 35 percent are other nationalities.

Limitations on Selling US Products and Services

Provides information on any manufacturing sectors or services where only citizens or a sub-set of the population in that country can own or sell.

There are no specific trade barriers and limitations on selling U.S. products and services in Slovakia.

Trade Financing

Methods of Payment

Discusses the most common methods of payment, such as open account, letter of credit, cash in advance, documentary collections, factoring, etc. Includes credit-rating and collection agencies in this country. Includes primary credit or charge cards used in this country.

Since January 1, 2009 interest rates for commercial financing have been derived from interest rates of the [European Central Bank](#) (ECB).

There are special credit programs available for small and medium enterprises. The availability of credit for SMEs (small and medium-size enterprises) is based on their credit rating.

Large-scale project financing may be obtained from the multilateral lending institutions such as the [European Bank for Reconstruction and Development](#) (EBRD), [International Finance Corporation](#) (IFC), or the [European Investment Bank](#) (EIB).

Methods of payment are similar to those in the United States and other countries and include payments in advance via Swift, letters of credit, bank guarantees, and open terms.

Primary credit or charge cards include Visa, VisaElectron, MasterCard, Maestro and Diners Club.

For more information about the methods of payment or other trade finance options, please read the Trade Finance Guide available at <https://www.trade.gov/trade-finance-guide-quick-reference-us-exporters>.

Banking Systems

Includes special features of this country's banking system and rules/laws that might impact U.S. business.

The Slovak banking system is based upon a European model and is governed by the Slovak Banking Act. Under Slovak law, commercial banks may engage in investment banking and brokerage activities, as well as traditional commercial transactions and lending. These activities are subject to licensing and supervision by the [National Bank of Slovakia](#) (NBS), which controls minimum capital, reserve requirements, and bank supervision. Recent adoption of the Council Regulation (EU) No. 1024/2013 will confer the authorization and supervision of over three quarters of the banks located in Slovakia to the ECB.

Foreign banks can establish representative offices or full-fledged branches. Representative offices are limited to offering advice and informing clients of the services of the parent bank. Branches may handle any transactions authorized by the parent bank. Foreign banks must agree to take over the assets and liabilities, effectively guaranteeing the financial health of the branch. Thus far, foreign banks in Slovakia have concentrated on providing international payment services and loans to foreign clients or Slovak companies with extensive export business.

The Inter-Bank Payment System (SIPS) is operated through the National Bank of Slovakia. By law, all banks are obliged to carry out their domestic payment transactions through this center. Security of the Inter-Bank Payment System in Slovakia is based on a high level of data protection during all stages of processing and settlement at National Bank of Slovakia. All participants in the Inter-Bank Payment System Slovakia must have a backup facility for both data transfer and processing.

European Parliament and Council Regulation (EU) No. 260/2012 came into effect on February 1, 2014. This regulation unifies the rules and standards in payment systems. The single EUR Payments Area (SEPA) removes the boundaries for the execution of cashless payments in the Euro zone. All consumers, businesses and other economic operators within the SEPA will therefore be able to send and receive payments in EUR, whether within a country or between countries, under the same basic conditions, rights and obligations, and no matter in which country they hold a payment account. A direct result of the implementation of the SEPA payment instruments will be the replacement of the currently used domestic payment instruments, in particular for credit transfers and direct debits, with common SEPA payment instruments. SEPA payments will be carried out according to the same rules, the same procedures and in accordance with the same standards in all SEPA countries (Iceland, Norway, the European Union countries, plus Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Monaco). IBAN and SWIFT Codes will be used uniformly for payments within and across the SEPA countries.

Foreign Exchange Controls

Includes how foreign exchange is managed and implications for U.S. business.

There are generally no foreign-exchange controls. Slovakia adopted the euro as its national currency on January 1, 2009. For more information please visit this website for [National Bank of Slovakia](#).

US Banks & Local Correspondent Banks

Includes a list of U.S. banks operating in the market; indicates whether Ex-Im Bank offers any country-specific programs.

There is one subsidiary of a U.S. bank with a physical presence in Slovakia:

[Citibank Europe plc](#)

Other banks in Slovakia that have correspondent relationships with U.S. banks include:

[Prima banka Slovensko](#)

-- Deutsche Bank Trust Company Americas, NY

[Tatra Banka](#) (through Tatra Raiffeisen, Austria)

-- Bank of America, N.A., NY

-- The Bank of New York Mellon, NY

-- Standard Chartered Bank New York

[UniCredit Banka](#)

-- JPMorgan Chase Bank, N.A., NY

[Eximbanka SR](#)

-- Cooperation Agreement with the Chase Manhattan Bank of New York

-- Memorandum of Understanding with the Export-Import Bank of the United States

To learn more on country specific programs offered by Slovak Eximbank please link to [Eximbanka SR](#) website.

Protecting Intellectual Property

Introduction

Several general principles are important for effective management of intellectual property (“IP”) rights in the EU. First, it is important to have an overall strategy to protect your IP. Second, IP is protected differently in the EU than in the United States. Third, rights must be registered and enforced in the EU under local laws. Your U.S. trademark and patent registrations will not protect you in the EU. There is no such thing as an “international copyright” that will automatically protect an author’s writings throughout the entire world. Protection against unauthorized use in a particular country depends on the national laws of that country. However, most countries do offer copyright protection to foreign works under certain conditions, and these conditions have been greatly simplified by international copyright treaties and conventions.

Registration of patents and trademarks is on a first-in-time, first-in-right basis, so you should consider applying for trademark and patent protection even before selling your products or services in the EU market. It is vital that companies understand that intellectual property is primarily a private right and that the U.S. government generally, cannot enforce rights for private individuals in EU. It is the responsibility of the rights' holders to register, protect, and enforce their rights where relevant, retaining their own counsel and advisors. Companies may wish to seek advice from local attorneys or IP consultants who are experts in EU law. The U.S. Commercial Service can provide a list of local lawyers upon request.

While the U.S. government stands ready to assist, there is little we can do if rights holders have not taken these fundamental steps necessary to securing and enforcing their IP in a timely fashion. Moreover, in many countries, rights holders who delay enforcing their rights on a mistaken belief that the U.S. government can provide a political resolution to a legal problem may find that their rights have been eroded or abrogated due to legal doctrines such as statutes of limitations, laches, estoppel, or unreasonable delay in prosecuting a law suit. In no instance should U.S. government advice be seen as a substitute for the obligation of a rights holder to promptly pursue its case.

It is always advisable to conduct due diligence on potential partners. Negotiate from the position of your partner and give your partner clear incentives to honor the contract. A good partner is an important ally in protecting IP rights. Consider carefully, however, whether to permit your partner to register your IP rights on your behalf. Doing so may create a risk that your partner will list itself as the IP owner and fail to transfer the rights should the partnership end. Keep an eye on your cost structure and reduce the opportunities (and incentives) of would-be bad actors. Projects and sales in the EU require constant attention. Work with legal counsel familiar with EU laws to create a solid contract that includes non-compete clauses, and confidentiality/non-disclosure provisions.

It is also recommended that small and medium-size companies understand the importance of working together with trade associations and organizations to support efforts to protect IP and stop counterfeiting. There are a number of these organizations, both EU or U.S.-based. These include:

[The U.S. Chamber and local American Chambers of Commerce](#)

[National Association of Manufacturers \(NAM\)](#)

[International Intellectual Property Alliance \(IIPA\)](#)

[International Trademark Association \(INTA\)](#)

[The Coalition Against Counterfeiting and Piracy](#)

[International Anti-Counterfeiting Coalition \(IACC\)](#)

[Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America \(PhRMA\)](#)

[Biotechnology Industry Organization \(BIO\)](#)

[IP Resources](#)

A wealth of information on protecting IP is freely available to U.S. rights holders. Some excellent resources for companies regarding intellectual property include the following:

For information about patent, trademark, or copyright issues -- including enforcement issues in the US and other countries -- call the STOP! Hotline: 1-866-999-HALT or [register here](#).

For more information about registering trademarks and patents (both in the U.S. as well as in foreign countries), contact the US Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) at: 1-800-786-9199.

For more information about registering for copyright protection in the US, contact the US Copyright Office at: 1-202-707-5959.

For information on obtaining and enforcing intellectual property rights and market-specific IP Toolkits visit [StopFakes](#). This site is linked to the USPTO website for registering trademarks and patents (both in the U.S. as well as in foreign countries), the U.S. Customs & Border Protection website to record registered trademarks and copyrighted works (to assist customs in blocking imports of IP-infringing products) and allows you to register for Webinars on protecting IP.

In any foreign market companies should consider several general principles for effective protection of their intellectual property. For background, please link to our article on [Protecting Intellectual Property](#) and [Stopfakes.gov](#) for more resources.

The U.S. Commerce Department has positioned IP attachés in key markets around the world.

IP Attaché Contact for the EU:

Name: Ms. Susan Wilson

Address: U.S. Mission to the EU, Zinnerstraat 13, Rue Zinner, BE 1000, Brussels, Belgium

Telephone: (+32) 2 811 41 00

E-mail: susan.wilson@trade.gov

For more information, contact ITA's Office of Intellectual Property Rights Director, Stevan Mitchell at Stevan.Mitchell@trade.gov.

Selling to the Public Sector

Selling to the Government

Slovakia is a founding member of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and is an original signatory to the World Trade Organization (WTO). The Slovak Government has joined the WTO Agreement on Government Procurement. Government tenders are announced and published on the [Slovak Office for Public Procurement website](#). The state authority is also the primary body to offer training on public procurement. Its responsibilities include

legislative and regulatory authority, drafting and monitoring implementation of the Public Procurement Act, reviewing public procurement documents, conducting oversight and publishing statistics and guidance, updating online portals, and imposing financial penalties in case of Public Procurement Act violations.

The Slovak Office for Public Procurement maintains a [List of Economic Operators](#), which requires companies to register and meet conditions for participation in Slovak public procurement tenders. In order to register, companies must submit several documents issued by Slovak or foreign government authorities; only originals or certified copies may be submitted. If Slovak or foreign government authorities do not issue required documents, then a company may submit self-declarations (affidavits). However, the Slovak Office for Public Procurement does not accept affidavits if U.S. authorities are able to issue official documents containing information companies originally submit as self-declarations. Many of the documents are not commonly requested in the United States and are often not readily obtainable from U.S. authorities. The U.S. Embassy Bratislava and ITA Trade Agreements Negotiations and Compliance Office are actively working with Slovak authorities to come to an agreement on what documents are acceptable.

Slovakia was one of the first Central European countries to adopt an act on public procurement.

Public procurement legislation is frequently amended, and challenges remain to fair competition and eradicating corruption. Corruption is a major challenge in Slovakia. The Ministry of Justice maintains a [Register of Public Sector Partners](#) - a legally established list of public sector partners and beneficial owners. A public sector partner is a natural person or a legal entity that receives cash or a property from the state, local government, and other public sector entities above the statutory limit. In addition, all legal entities that enter into a contract, a framework agreement, or a concession contract under public procurement rules are required to be registered in the Register of Public Sector Partners.

Potential opportunities for U.S. companies include the following sectors: energy, defense, ICT, e-health, and e-government.

U.S. companies bidding on Government tenders may also qualify for U.S. Government advocacy. A unit of the U.S. Commerce Department's International Trade Administration, the Advocacy Center coordinates U.S. Government interagency advocacy efforts on behalf of U.S. exporters bidding on public sector contracts with international governments and government agencies. The Advocacy Center works closely with our network of the U.S. Commercial Service worldwide and inter-agency partners to ensure that exporters of U.S. products and services have the best possible chance of winning government contracts. Advocacy assistance can take many forms but often involves the U.S. Embassy or other U.S. Government agencies expressing support for the U.S. bidders directly to the foreign government. Consult [Advocacy for Foreign Government Contracts](#) for additional information.

Many governments finance public works projects through borrowing from the Multilateral Development Banks.

Financing of Projects

Multilateral Development Banks and Financing Government Sales.

Price, payment terms, and financing can be a significant factor in winning a government contract. Many governments finance public works projects through borrowing from the Multilateral Development Banks (MDB). A helpful guide for working with the MDBs is the [Guide to Doing Business with the Multilateral Development Banks](#). The U.S. Department of Commerce's (USDOC) International Trade Administration (ITA) has a Foreign Commercial Service Officer stationed at each of the five different Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs): the African Development Bank; the Asian Development Bank; the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development; the Inter-American Development Bank; and the World Bank.

Successful companies usually have a "ground game" in the country where the project will be implemented. This often includes relationships with implementing Ministries and local MDB officials, local partners or local presence. Companies need to be able to evaluate opportunities as they know their capabilities, bandwidth and risk

tolerance. Companies are most successful in projects in markets where they already have relevant experience, and willing to put in the time; project development can take 1-3 years.

Learn more by contacting the:

- Commercial Liaison Office to the [European Bank for Reconstruction and Development](#);
- Commercial Liaison Office to the [World Bank](#).

Business Travel

Business Customs

Includes information on acceptable business etiquette, dress, business cards, gifts, etc.

Business practices and etiquette in Slovakia represent a mixture of those used in Western Europe and the United States and those used in Eastern Europe. Decision-making in a company is often restricted to a small number of people, if not just one person. Even relatively minor decisions may require the approval of a high-level official. Appointments should be made well in advance, with re-confirmations made one or two days prior to actual meetings. Business dress is similar to that in Western Europe.

Titles and positions are highly respected and are generally used on business cards. U.S. businesspeople occasionally have difficulty in receiving replies to inquiries and are encouraged to follow-up to ensure contact with the intended recipients. E-mail is the most common way of communicating.

Doing business successfully in Slovakia generally requires the establishment of good personal relationships and a feeling of mutual trust. General social conversation prior to getting down to business is the norm and launching directly into business topics may impede the development of a good personal relationship with the Slovak business partner. After initial meetings, written summaries of goals, objectives, and points of agreement or disagreement should be used to minimize misunderstandings among business parties.

Offers to host business dinners and/or lunches are welcomed as compensation for gifts. If invited to a person's home, you are expected to bring flowers for the hosts. Small gifts are also appreciated, but not expected. It is common to give small presents such as a bottle of wine, cookies or chocolates in the weeks leading up to Christmas.

Travel Advisory

Includes a link to the State Department consular information sheet.

Please check the following [U.S. Department of State website](#) for updated travel advisories.

Visa Requirements

Includes information on what is needed to travel to the country/economy.

Slovak Entry Requirement for U.S. Citizens

Slovakia is a party to the Schengen Agreement. As such, U.S. citizens may enter Slovakia for up to 90 days for tourist or business purposes without a visa issued prior to departure from the United States. U.S. passports should be valid for at least six months beyond the period of stay.

In accordance with the Law of the National Council of Slovakia No. 48/2002 Coll. on the stay of foreigners in Slovakia as later amended by law 558/2005 (effective December 15, 2005), persons intending to stay in Slovakia longer than a total of 90 days during any 6-month period must submit an application for a Temporary Term Residence Permit, either at a Slovak diplomatic or consular mission in the country of their residence Slovak Embassy in Washington, D.C., 3523 International Court, NW, Washington D.C. 20008, telephone: 202-237-1054), or at the alien's police department in the Slovak district of their residency. A permit can be granted for a period of not more than two years, with a possibility of repeated extensions provided that the application for renewal of the permit is submitted no later than 60 days before the expiration of its validity. Please check the [documents](#) needed to accompany an application for a permit, which is to be completed in Slovak.

Meeting the requirements of Slovak law to obtain a long-term stay permit can be a long and difficult process, with health and police checks, among other things, needed to complete the process. Companies and business organizations have criticized Slovak authorities for the length of this process.

U.S. companies seeking long-stay residency permits for their employees should contact the [Slovak Embassy in Washington, D.C.](#), for further application information and detailed instructions. Most U.S. companies engage the services of an attorney with extensive knowledge and experience with Slovak immigration law to guide them through the application process.

U.S. Entry Requirements for Slovak Citizens

Slovaks may travel to the United States under the Visa Waiver Program (VWP). To travel under the VWP, Slovak citizens must have a biometric passport issued by the Slovak Government after January 1, 2008, an electronic travel authorization obtained in advance of the trip through the [Electronic System for Travel Authorization](#) (ESTA), and be staying in the U.S. for 90 days or less for tourism or non-paid business purposes. Visitors seeking to travel to the United States under the VWP can apply directly for travel authorization via this [website](#). The ESTA application website is available in many different languages and includes a "help section" that helps guide VWP travelers through the application process. There is no benefit to utilizing private websites that charge for information about ESTA or to apply for an ESTA on behalf of VWP travelers.

U.S. companies that require the travel of foreign businesspersons to the United States should be advised that security evaluations are handled via an interagency process. Visa applicants should go to the following [State Department Visa website](#).

Currency

Includes the local currency, other currencies commonly accepted and where, credit or debit cards accepted, access to ATMs that accept U.S. ATM networks (and which networks are readily accessible), and acceptability of travelers' checks.

Slovakia joined the Euro-zone on January 1, 2009. The EUR is therefore the official currency. Other currencies are commonly exchanged in banks and at exchange booths on the street.

Payments can be made with a credit or a debit card that holds the Visa, Mastercard, Cirrus Discover symbol. American Express and Diners Club are not as widely accepted, thus it is recommended to ask in advance when using them.

Each bank affiliate has an ATM, and ATMs are plentiful in the cities. (The "ATM Slovakia" applications for Apple and Android can help you find the nearest ATM.) ATMs offer instructions in Slovak and other languages including English. Check the logos on ATMs to determine which card brands are accepted. Prior to your departure, ask your bank if they have a Slovak partner bank, find out what fees are charged when withdrawing cash abroad.

Bratislava is the home of Europe's first Bitcoin ATM. Bitcoin ATM locations can be found through following websites: <https://kryptosvet.sk/bitcoin-automat/> and <https://coinatmradar.com/country/193/bitcoin-atm-slovakia/>. Travelers' checks are not accepted.

As of June 25, 2019, Apple Pay is available in Slovakia supported by these Slovak banks and applications: Boon, Edenred, J&T Banka, Monese, N26, Revolut, Slovenska Sporitelna, Tatra banka mBank and Postova banka (365.bank).

Telecommunications/Electronics

Includes information on internet accessibility, the cellular phone technology in use, which U.S. cell phone services work in this country, the prevalence of Wi-Fi in hotels, what types of voltage and plugs are used, and other technological information of interest to U.S. businesses.

The Slovak telecommunications system is comparable with other EU countries. Internet access in Slovakia is widespread. According to the Slovak Ministry of Telecommunications, there are approximately 1.34 million customers connected to the Internet with fixed access and approximately 7.4 million with mobile access. Internet access is easily available in all cities and towns. Wi-Fi spots are widely available in hotels and public places, including restaurants and coffee houses in several major cities.

Mobile telecommunication and Internet services are provided in the LTE, GPRS/EDGE, UMTS/HSDPA, F-OFDM and UMTS/FDD standards. There are four mobile service providers in Slovakia: Orange, T mobile, O2 and Swan. More than 94 percent of the country is covered by mobile telephone service, with the exception of very remote rural areas. Fixed line services are very reliable. There is one primary fixed-line operator, T-Com, and 57 alternative fixed-line operators. The country code for Slovakia is +421. Direct-dial, VoIP and cellular telephone calls can be made easily throughout the country.

Electric voltage is 220 volts, with a frequency of 50 Hz. Slovakia uses the standard continental European "europlug," with 2 round pins and a socket and plug system.

Transportation

Includes how to get to and from the country/economy as well as the different transportation options and their reliability within this country.

Slovakia's transportation system is well organized but some modes of transport are aging. Commercial air transport is available regularly from Bratislava and Košice, and seasonally from the Žilina, Piešťany and Poprad - Tatry international airports. The country's leading international airport is in [Bratislava](#) with 2.29 million passengers, 28,745 flights and 20,449 tons of cargo. Slovakia does not have a national carrier. Commercial service operators at Bratislava airport can be found [here](#). Since December 2018 there are no flights connecting Bratislava (West) with Košice (East).

Commercial air transportation in Slovakia is hampered by the close proximity (30 miles) of Bratislava to the Vienna International Airport and the availability of long-haul flights from there. Vienna International Airport can be reached by car, taxi or scheduled bus service.

Travelers should check destinations and timetables carefully, as they change frequently. Travel by train within Slovakia is reliable, although coaches are not generally up to the standards of those in Western Europe.

Private Czech companies RegioJet, Leo Express, Arriva and LTE Logistic and Transport Slovakia service specific rail routes and compete with Slovakrail in price and in service (WIFI, free refreshments, food delivery to the seat, mobile bar, free newspapers, and 24-hour free parking).

Automobile travel is another option, although, due to many narrow two-lane roads, travelers often find that driving times can be longer than expected.

Slovakia imposes a "road user fee" for intercity highways and certain other roads, which applies to both citizens and foreigners. Fees vary by length of validity and vehicle type and weight. Since January 2020 it is possible to buy a 365 day highway sticker. E-stickers can be purchased at border crossings, gas stations, and through the internet or mobile applications. Information on highways and stickers can be found [here](#). Vehicles exceeding 3.5 tons (trucks, buses, etc.) are obliged to pay additional tolls on certain highways and motorways. Please check the following [website](#) for fees and a list of roads that require the purchase of an e-sticker. Taxi service is readily available, reliable, safe, and generally inexpensive. Many drivers do not speak English, but some taxi companies have English-speaking dispatchers. Potential difficulties may arise from the confusing system of multiple rates (based on distance, location, use of a highway or a regular road when getting to the destination and how the taxi was called, whether by telephone or at a taxi stand), but taxis are metered. It is advisable to call for a taxi or use UBER, HOPIN, BOLT (formerly Taxify), Blablacar or LIFTAGO applications rather than hail one on the street, as called taxis are typically less expensive and more reliable. All major cities have public bus and tram services that are convenient and inexpensive.

Language

Includes official and accepted business languages spoken in this country/economy.

Slovak is the official language. Slovaks are usually friendly and open to Americans, and English is increasingly used as a business language, especially in Bratislava. German is also widely spoken as a second language. Czech is very well understood. Russian is widely understood by older Slovaks. Hungarian is spoken by about 10 percent of the

population, mainly in southern Slovakia, but is not widely understood in Bratislava. Many Slovak companies have English speakers among their top managers, but U.S. business representatives should be prepared to sometimes do business through interpreters in order to avoid possible misunderstandings.

Health

Includes health and sanitation standards within the country, as well as any potential health risks that businesspeople should be aware of. Includes any mandatory or highly recommended vaccinations.

There have been no major health risks encountered in Slovakia. Updates may be found [here](#).

There are several private medical clinics in Bratislava with English-speaking doctors on staff. Many private dentists use the most recent technologies and equipment. Medicines are easily available at pharmacies conveniently located throughout larger towns and cities. Some provide 24hour service. Pharmacies in smaller cities and towns may be closed during the weekend. Prescriptions are always required. If a U.S. traveler's private health insurance does not cover medical services in Slovakia, it is highly recommended that he or she obtain temporary coverage from a well-known international insurance company. Hygienic standards are comparable to those in Western Europe.

Local Time, Business Hours and Holidays

Includes the local time zone, typical hours of business and a list of holidays in the country/economy.

Slovakia is on CET (Central European Time). As in many European countries, the workweek is Monday through Friday (40 working hours), and Saturday and Sunday are days off for most employees.

The following [holidays](#) will be observed in Slovakia in 2020:

January 1	(Wednesday) Slovakia Day; New Year's Day
January 6	(Monday) Epiphany
April 10	(Friday) Good Friday
April 13	(Monday) Easter Monday
May 1	(Friday) Labor Day
May 8	(Friday) End of World War II
July 5	(Sunday) St. Cyril & St. Methodius Day
August 29	(Saturday) Slovak National Uprising Day
September 1	(Tuesday) Slovak Constitution Day
September 15	(Tuesday) Day of the Virgin Mary of the Seven Sorrows
November 1	(Sunday) All Saints Day
November 17	(Tuesday) Day of the Fight for Freedom & Democracy
December 24	(Thursday) Christmas Eve
December 25	(Friday) Christmas Day
December 26	(Saturday) St. Stephen's Day

Business travelers to the European Union seeking appointments with officials in the U.S. Mission to the European Union in Brussels, Belgium, should contact the Commercial Service in advance. The Commercial Service at the U.S. Mission to the European Union can be reached by telephone at (+32) 2 811 41 00 or e-mail at Office.BrusselsEC@trade.gov. A current directory of staff and locations worldwide may be accessed on the [U.S. Commercial Service website](#).

Temporary Entry of Materials or Personal Belongings

Includes information on what is required for temporary entry.

There are no difficulties or special requirements for bringing personal items such as software, laptops and other belongings into Slovakia on a temporary basis. See “Temporary Entry” above for information on obtaining temporary import approval for commercial goods.

Investment Climate Statement (ICS)

The U.S. Department of State's Investment Climate Statements provide information on the business climates of more than 170 economies and are prepared by economic officers stationed in embassies and posts around the world. They analyze a variety of economies that are or could be markets for U.S. businesses.

Topics include Openness to Investment, Legal and Regulatory systems, Dispute Resolution, Intellectual Property Rights, Transparency, Performance Requirements, State-Owned Enterprises, Responsible Business Conduct, and Corruption.

These statements highlight persistent barriers to further U.S. investment. Addressing these barriers would expand high-quality, private sector-led investment in infrastructure, further women's economic empowerment, and facilitate a healthy business environment for the digital economy. To access the ICS, visit the U.S. Department of State's [Investment Climate Statement](#) website.

Political Environment

For background information on the political and economic environment of Slovakia, please State Department's [Countries & Areas](#) website.