

Slovakia - Human Rights Scorecard ¹

Slovakia, formally the Slovak Republic, is a central European country known for its dramatic natural landscape and many castles. It is bordered by the Czech Republic and Austria to the west, Poland to the north, Ukraine to the east and Hungary to the south. Slovakia was established as an independent state in 1993 after negotiations in the early 1990s led to a peaceful split from the Czech Republic. The two countries had been fused since the breakup of Austria-Hungary after World War I.²

Official language: Slovak

Ethnic groups: 85.7% Slovak; 10.6% Hungarian; 1.6% Roma (Gypsy); 1% Czech; 0.3% Ruthenian; 0.3% Ukrainian; 0.1% German; 0.1% Polish; 0.3% Other

Government: Parliamentary Republic

- President: Andrej Kiska
- Prime Minister: Robert Fico

Death penalty: Abolitionist for all crimes

Population: 5.4 million

Life expectancy: 76.1 years

Under-5 mortality: 7 per 1000

Adult literacy: No data



Section 1: Respect for the Integrity of the Person

Respect for the integrity of the individual is the most fundamental of human rights groupings. It guarantees protection of the person to ensure the right to life, and freedom from torture. It also prevents arbitrary detention, and disappearances, and ensures the right to a free and fair trial when accused.

Freedom from arbitrary or unlawful deprivation of life



Respected³

There are no reports that the government or its agents commit arbitrary or unlawful killings.

Freedom from disappearance



Respected⁴

There are no reports of politically-motivated disappearances.

Freedom from torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment



Partially respected⁵

The constitution prohibits torture and inhuman practices although the government does not always respect these provisions. Multiple NGO's have reported mistreatment of Romanis (Roma) in police custody. There are credible allegations of further physical mistreatment in prison facilities.

Freedom from arbitrary arrest or detention



Respected⁶

The constitution prohibits arbitrary arrest. Generally the government respects these prohibitions.

Freedom from denial of fair public trial



Partially respected⁷

The law provides for an independent judiciary, but Slovakia struggles with alleged corruption, inefficiency, and lack of integrity, transparency, and accountability. The Constitutional Court has taken steps to increase fairness and transparency.

Freedom from arbitrary interference with privacy, family, home or correspondence



Respected⁸

The government mostly respects laws that prohibit undue interference with privacy. There were a few reports regarding unwarranted violations of Romani privacy and property.

Section 2: Respect for Civil Liberties

Civil liberties are a basic category of internationally recognized human rights. They include the freedoms of expression, assembly, association, education, and religion. These are inalienable rights which should not be breached by government, and should ensure the rights of all, including women and minority groups.

Freedom of speech and press (*Reporters Without Borders Press Freedom Index*)⁹



Score: 13.26, Rank: 12 / 179 – Largely free, diverse, and independent¹⁰

Slovakia currently holds the heaviest penalty in Europe for defamation. Censorship was tightened in 2014 by placing further restrictions on journalists.

Freedom from academic censorship



Respected¹¹

There are no reports of any form of academic censorship.

Freedom of peaceful assembly and association



Partially respected¹²

Police strategically acted to ensure that the leader of a far-right anti-refugee group could not attend protests. In addition, they have barred protestors from entering certain locations.

Freedom of religion



Partially respected¹³

The constitution guarantees freedom of religious belief. However, the government has taken steps to deprive certain religious groups of economic functions, which in turn limits their ability to practice their religion.

Protection of refugees and stateless persons



Partially respected¹⁴

Far-right anti-immigration rallies have been widespread in Slovakia. While the law provides for the granting of asylum or refugee status, the government only accepted the minimal amount of refugees required by the EU, with the stipulation that they be Christians.

Overall protection of civil liberties (*FreedomHouse Civil Liberties Index*)^{15 16}



1 / 7 – Free¹⁷

The constitution and law provide for freedom of speech and press, and are generally respected by the government.

Section 3: Respect for Political Rights

Political rights ensure all members of society are able to influence the political process. The assessment of political rights includes an examination of the electoral process and the selection of representatives, the political empowerment of the general public, the tolerance of dissent, the accountability of government, etc..

Overall protection of political rights (*FreedomHouse Political Rights Index*)¹⁸



1/ 7 – Free¹⁹

Slovakia is home to a competitive multiparty system. However, political corruption remains a problem.

Section 4: Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government

The civil, political, economic and social rights exercised within a country are often modulated by the degree of transparency and freedom from corruption. Various international metrics assess transparency and corruption, including the OECD anti-bribery convention, the Bribe Payers Index, and the Open Budget Index.

Transparency and freedom from corruption (*Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index*)²⁰



Score: 51%, Rank: 50 / 175 – Some corruption²¹

Corruption is particularly common in public procurement and the healthcare sector. According to Transparency International, many state-owned companies do not publish even basic information, such as annual reports.

Section 5: Governmental Response to Criticism

This section deals specifically with the response heads of state have to civil society or international human rights reports.

Governmental attitudes vis-à-vis independent investigations of alleged human rights violations



Partially respected²²

Human rights organizations operate without government restriction. Generally, the government is cooperative although such NGOs are often viewed with suspicion. There were attempts by the government to obstruct attempts to raise awareness around Romani abuses.

Section 6: Discrimination and Societal Abuses

Legal and social discriminatory practices related to sex, race, creed or sexual orientation, are violations of human rights. Countries with strong civil liberty traditions should have a fair legal system that ensures the rule of law, allows free economic activity, and ensures equality of opportunity for all.

Rights of women (World Economic Forum Gender Gap Index)²³



Score: 67.5%, Rank: 97 / 142 – Very unequal rights²⁴

Despite equal legal status, women face discrimination. There is a 19.8% gender pay gap, with women holding only 22% of management positions. Sexual harassment and rape remain common; police often face criticism for failing to enforce the law around these issues.

Rights of Children (KidsRights Index Overall Score)²⁵



Score: 93.8%, Rank: 6 / 165 – Protected²⁶

Slovakia is one of the top ten countries in the world for protection of children's rights.

Rights of persons with disabilities



Partially respected²⁷

While there are laws in place to prevent discrimination against anyone with a disability, access to buildings and proper education is not fully respected. NGOs reported limited resources for persons with mental disabilities.

Rights of national/racial/ethnic minorities (e.g. discrimination, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism etc.)



Largely disrespected²⁸

Discrimination against Roma and non-European individuals is common. Acts of anti-Semitism are common. Far-right organizations praise the WWII-era fascist state that deported thousands of Jews to Nazi death camps. Anti-Roma and anti-Islam groups have been also rising in popularity.

Freedom from abuse and discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity



Largely disrespected^{29 30}

Slovakia does not recognize same-sex unions and defines marriage as a union exclusively between a man and a woman. The influence of the far-right recently caused the country to attempt a referendum that would ban adoption to same-sex couples, and limit sex education.

Section 7: Workers' Rights

Workers' rights are a group of legal rights relating to labour relations between workers and their employers. At their core are things like the ability to negotiate pay, benefits, terms of employment, and safe working conditions. These rights often devolve from the right to unionize and access to collective bargaining.

Rights to freedom of association and to collective bargaining



Respected³¹

All workers have the right to form and join unions, with the exception of the armed forces. Aside from workers in essential services, civil workers may strike.

Freedom from forced or compulsory labour



Partially respected³²

The law prohibits forced labour. While police are obligated to investigate forced labour allegations, such cases often go ignored. Many immigrants have been forced to work in the country. Roma are particularly susceptible to human trafficking.

Freedom from forced labour for children, and a minimum age of employment



Partially respected³³

The minimum age of employment is 15, with strict working hours put in place for high school students. Child labour investigations were generally adequate. However, the police have failed to thoroughly investigate allegations of child exploitation in Roma communities.

Right to acceptable conditions of work



Respected³⁴

There is a minimum wage of 380 euros/month. The law mandates a maximum workweek of 48 hours, with the exception of workers in the health sector. The law ensures vacation time, breaks, and overtime pay. Health and safety standards are generally enforced.

Right to employment



14.18% - Extreme unemployment³⁵

The unemployment rate in Slovakia has remained stagnant and is much higher than it should be.

¹ A hybrid human rights and freedoms model, leveraging both legal principles and intuitive classifications, has been used for this human rights assessment. The CJPME Foundation has sought to integrate as many independent sources and metrics into its summary analysis as possible. In many cases, for qualitative material pertaining to the respect for a particular right in a country, the CJPME Foundation has drawn on material from Human Rights Watch and the US State Department country reports. Human Rights Watch (HRW) publishes a World Report which assesses the respect for human rights in each country. HRW uses a methodology of local reporting and interviewing, combined with research and analysis to assess the level of respect of human rights. The U.S State Department keeps an updated publication on the state of human rights internationally. Their system of research and accountability draws from the research of official US State Department officials, as well as local civil-society and international human rights organizations.

² Commonly-known information on the country is drawn from various Internet sources, including Google country pages, and Amnesty International. For death penalty see: "Death sentences and executions in 2013." Amnesty International. Accessed June 22, 2016. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/act50/001/2014/en/>.

³ "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2015 Slovakia." U.S Department of State. Accessed June 22, 2016. <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/253111.pdf>.

⁴ Ibid. U.S Department of State. For purposes of the present analysis, a "disappearance" is different than simple arbitrary detention because a "disappearance" is considered permanent.

⁵ Ibid. U.S Department of State.

⁶ Ibid. U.S Department of State.

⁷ Ibid. U.S Department of State.

⁸ Ibid. U.S Department of State.

⁹ The Press Freedom Index published by Reporters Without Borders ranks the level of freedom of information in 180 countries. This is determined through the polling of local NGOs and freedom of expression civil society organizations across the globe. This index is also determined by local correspondents and follow-up work done on reports of infringement to press freedom where ever it takes place. Their methodology looks at six different indicators: 1) Media pluralism, 2) Media independence, 3) Media atmosphere and self-censorship, 4) the Law around media, 5) Media transparency, and 6) Media infrastructure. The score from these six indicators is combined with a rating for the violence against journalists in the country to create an overall score. The CJPME Foundation classifies the Press Freedom Index as follows: 0 – 14.99 (16 countries), Largely free, diverse and independent; 15 – 24.99 (37 countries), Mostly free, diverse and independent; 25 – 29.99 (31 countries), Partially free, diverse and independent; 30 – 39.99 (39 countries), Partially controlled, limited or intimidated; 40 & higher (57 countries), Highly controlled, limited or intimidated.

¹⁰ "World Press Freedom Index." Reporters Without Borders: For Freedom of Information. Accessed June 22, 2016. <https://rsf.org/en/slovakia>.

¹¹ "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2015 Slovakia." U.S Department of State. Accessed June 22, 2016. <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/253111.pdf>.

¹² Ibid. U.S Department of State.

¹³ "Slovak Republic." International Religious Freedom Report for 2014. Accessed June 22, 2016. <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/238644.pdf>.

¹⁴ "Slovakia 2015/2016." Amnesty International. Accessed June 22nd, 2016. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/europe-and-central-asia/slovakia/report-slovakia/>.

¹⁵ Freedom House is an internationally recognized NGO based in the U.S which documents and rates the quality of democratic practice in a given country. Freedom House splits its grading system between the two areas of civil and political rights in a country. On each scale, the Freedom House rating is 1-2.5 (free), 3-5.5 (partly free) and 6-7 (not free).

¹⁶ Freedom House's Civil Liberties index measures things such as a) freedom of expression and belief, b) associational and organizational rights, c) the rule of law, and d) personal autonomy and individual rights. Freedom House rates countries as 1-2.5 (free), 3-5.5 (partly free) and 6-7 (not free). Accessed June 22nd, 2016. <https://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world-2014/methodology#.VldwWzHF98F>

¹⁷ "Slovakia." Freedom in the World 2016: Slovakia. Accessed June 22, 2016. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/freedom-world-2016>.

¹⁸ See footnote about the Freedom House organization above. The Freedom House Political Rights assessment looks at a) the electoral process, b) political pluralism and participation, and c) the functioning of government. Accessed June 22, 2016 <https://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world-2014/methodology#.VldwWzHF98F>

¹⁹ "Slovakia." Freedom in the World 2014: Slovakia. Accessed June 22, 2016. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2015/slovakia>.

²⁰ Transparency International (TI) publishes a "Corruption Perceptions Index" annually, which is based on independent research and polling. The main categories of corruption are broken down within the index to provide particulars on issues including things such as perceptions of corruption, control of corruption, and financial secrecy. A country receives a score on 100; the higher the score, the less corrupt the society. The CJPME foundation has classified them into categories as follows: 80-100 (11 countries): Very limited corruption; 60-79 (27 countries): Limited corruption; 40-59 (41 countries): Some corruption; 20-39 (80 countries): Highly corrupt;

0-19 (15 countries): Extremely corrupt

²¹ "Slovakia." Transparency International. Accessed June 22, 2016. <http://www.transparency.org/cpi2015>

²² "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2015 Slovakia." U.S Department of State. Accessed June 22, 2016.

<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/253111.pdf>.

²³ This metric is based on the World Economic Forum's Gender Gap Index. 0.00 denotes inequality between the sexes, and 1.00 denotes fully equality between the sexes. This index looks at four subdomains: economic participation and opportunity; educational attainment; health and survival; and political empowerment. Each country is given a percentage score; the higher the percentage, the better the protections. The CJPME Foundation classed the percentages as follows: 80-100% (5 countries): Almost equal rights; 70-79% (60 countries): Somewhat unequal rights; 0-69% (77 countries): Very unequal rights

²⁴ "Slovakia." World Economic Forum. Accessed June 22, 2016. <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2015/economies/#economy=SVK>.

²⁵ This metric is based on the KidsRights Index Overall Score. This index has five subdomains: life expectancy and maternal mortality; health; education; protection; and child rights environment. Each country is given a percentage score; the higher the percentage, the better the protections. KidsRights classes the countries according to these percentages, and the CJPME Foundation has given each class a term as follows: 70-100% (77 countries): Protected; 60-70% (29 countries): Somewhat protected; 45-50% (33 countries): Slightly vulnerable; 30-45% (12 countries): Highly vulnerable; Lower than 30% (11 countries): Extremely vulnerable

²⁶ "The KidsRights Index: Overall Ranking." The KidsRights Index. Accessed June 22, 2016. <http://www.kidsrightsindex.org/>

²⁷ "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2015 Slovakia." U.S Department of State. Accessed June 22, 2016.

<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/253111.pdf>.

²⁸ Ibid. U.S Department of State.

²⁹ "ILGA World Map." International Lesbian Gay and Intersex Association. Accessed June 22, 2016. <http://ilga.org/>. See also Ibid. Amnesty International.

³⁰ ILGA, the International, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association, was founded in 1978 on the principle of highlighting state sponsored homophobia where it exists around the world. ILGA annually publishes a map with an accompanying report on sexual and gender based harassment, which focuses on both the legal and non-legal acts of state sponsored discrimination.

³¹ "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2015 Slovakia." U.S Department of State. Accessed June 22, 2016.

<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/253111.pdf>.

³² Ibid. U.S Department of State.

³³ Ibid. U.S Department of State.

³⁴ Ibid. U.S Department of State. See also a well-done Wikipedia comparison of wage, income and work week metrics across countries at

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_minimum_wages_by_country

³⁵ "Global Employment Trends." International Labour Organization. Accessed June 22, 2016. http://www.ilo.org/global/research/global-reports/global-employment-trends/2014/WCMS_233936/lang-en/index.htm.