

[ eInclusion in ]

# Slovakia

Slovensko



ICT & Ageing

Geographic Digital Divide

eAccessibility

# eInclusion

Cultural Diversity

Inclusive eGovernment

Digital Literacy & Competences

Country Profile

History

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### Disclaimer:

This document is not intended to be exhaustive. Its purpose is to give an overview of the general eInclusion status in Slovakia. Even though every care has been taken to ensure accuracy, the information herein should be treated as indicative and no responsibility for errors can be assumed. Neither the European Commission, nor any person acting on its behalf can be held responsible for the use that could be made of the information provided.

## Country Profile

### Basic data and indicators

#### Basic Data

**Population (1 000):** 5 424.9 inhabitants (2010)

**GDP at market prices:** 63 331.4 million Euro (2009)

**GDP per inhabitant in PPS (Purchasing Power Standards, EU-27 = 100):** 72.0 (2009)

**GDP growth rate:** -4.7 % (2009)

**Inflation rate:** 0.9 % (2009)

**Unemployment rate:** 12.0 % (2009)

**Government debt/GDP:** 35.7 % (2009)

**Public balance (government deficit or surplus/GDP):** -6.8 % (2009)

*Source: Eurostat*

**Area:** 48 845 km<sup>2</sup>

**Capital city:** Bratislava

**Official EU language:** Slovak

**Currency:** Euro

*Source: Europa website*

#### Information Society Indicators

**Percentage of households with Internet access:** 62 % (2009)

**Percentage of households with broadband connection:** 42 % (2009)

**Percentage of individuals regularly using the Internet:** 66 % (2009)

**Percentage of individuals using the Internet for uploading self-created content:** 4 % (2008)

**Percentage of individuals using the Internet for reading online newspapers/magazines:** 35 % (2009)

**Percentage of individuals using the Internet for finding information about goods and services:** 3 % (2009)

**Percentage of individuals using the Internet for seeking health-related information:** 25 % (2008)

**Percentage of individuals using the Internet for looking for a job or sending a job application:** 13 % (2008)

**Percentage of individuals using the Internet for doing an online course:** 1 % (2009)

**Percentage of individuals using the Internet for seeking information with the purpose of learning:** 15 % (2009)

**Percentage of individuals using the Internet for interaction with public authorities:** obtaining information 26.0 %, downloading forms 19.2 %, returning filled forms 13.3 % (2009)

Source: [Eurostat](#)

*Editorial notice: Statistical indicators referenced in this section reflect those of Eurostat at the time the Edition is being prepared.*

## eInclusion History

### Main developments and key milestones (in reverse chronological order)

For the latest developments, see: [ePractice news for eInclusion](#)

### Recent News

#### October 2009

In October a Survey on the satisfaction with eGovernment services was realised. Increased satisfaction with eGovernment services is one of the objectives of the [Information Society Strategy for 2009-2013](#). The Ministry of Finance has run a research project aimed to obtain detailed information on real needs and the use of electronic public services. Interesting results have been introduced on the actual use of eGovernment services in Slovakia from the perspective of citizens and business sector.

#### September 2009

Two national projects were funded by the IP Education aimed at the modernisation of education in primary and secondary schools. Both projects were carried out to approximately 3 000 elementary and secondary schools outside the Bratislava region. They mainly aimed to develop **digital literacy** and the use of modern teaching techniques when teaching specific subjects. In September 2009, the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Education Ján Mikolaj visited a regular school in Prague Spring to convey computer technology. All computer technology in this project was to be used for training teachers. This was the largest information technology project delivery in Slovakia.

#### July 2009

On the basis of the 'Operational Programme for the Information Society', among other activities, emphasis was laid upon improving broadband internet access. That aimed at increasing broadband internet penetration, facilitating broadband internet access for all citizens, and developing regional and local broadband networks, in areas not to be used by commercial operators.

### News 2008 and before

#### 2008

- ▶ The '[National Reform Programme of the Slovak Republic for 2008–2010](#)' was approved by the Government of Slovakia in *October 2008*. Legal measures of this document aimed, among other, to create the preconditions for a fast and sustainable economic growth, an increased social mobility, a strengthened social coherency, a reduced influence of demographical evolution and a better adaptation of the economy to changes in terms of national currency absence. This document comprises action plans for the information society targeting eGovernment, the implementation of eRegister services and their connectivity and accessibility, as well as eProcurement and **broadband infrastructure support**.
- ▶ A [new system of 'digital education'](#) was being tested in eight elementary and secondary schools in the Slovakian capital, Bratislava. The pilot project, called 'Digital Curriculum', was meant to provide teachers with a database of 70 000 multimedia screens containing lesson plans for biology, maths, chemistry, physics and geography. The project was intended to initially run for eight months, including a preliminary training period for teachers. A user guide was planned to be provided in order to help those less familiar with computer technology, as well as a selection of pedagogical tools for

teachers and pupils. Teachers from the different schools were to work together on the project, whose results were to be fully evaluated in *September 2008*.

## 2006

- ▶ In *September 2006*, the Slovak Government planned to offer a grant of SKK 234 (€ 6) to all permanent residents in Slovakia to support wider Internet access. This was an extension of an existing scheme in order to promote Internet use by young people (aged 15 to 25) and was due to come into effect in October.
- ▶ In *February 2006*, the Slovak Ministry of Transport, Post and Telecommunications (MTPT) (*Ministerstvo dopravy, pôšt a telekomunikácií SR*) announced plans to launch a programme in April 2006; this initiative aimed at increasing the use of **high-speed Internet** across the country.

## 2005

In *April 2005*, the Government approved a '[National Strategy for Broadband Access in the Slovak Republic](#)' (*Národná stratégia pre širokopásmový prístup v SR*). The Strategy aimed to reach the level of the top leading European countries in terms of **broadband** availability and penetration in the next 5 to 8 years. Identified priorities comprised local loop unbundling in the fixed line market, effective use of national frequency spectrum and wider use of the state-owned communication infrastructure.

## eInclusion Strategy

### Main strategic objectives and principles

#### National Strategy for eInclusion

In December 2008, the Government of the Slovak Republic approved **the National Strategy for eInclusion of Slovakia** based on the priority areas of the Riga Declaration. In accordance with EU priorities, this document appeals to the public administration, the Government and the third sector organisation to find solutions for eInclusion and to implement them. The possible solutions for maximal inclusion of the people threatened by digital exclusion were assorted into five elementary fields. This document informs about the state of eInclusion in Slovakia and a proof of the willingness and necessity to find solutions for eInclusion of people with a social disability.

On 1 July 2009, the Government of Slovakia acknowledged the document: '**Update of National Strategy for eInclusion of Slovakia**'. This document summarised and assessed the most important conclusions and admitted priorities of the eInclusion ministerial conference in Vienna, 2008. Moreover, this document informed of eInclusion activities in Slovakia, which have been put into practice by government bodies since December 2008.

The adoption of a separate document on eInclusion in Slovakia was mainly driven by the need to clearly define the measures and steps aimed at ensuring eInclusion of certain endangered citizen groups.

#### Information Society Strategy 2009-2013

In October 2009, the Slovak Government approved a new strategic paper on [Information Society Strategy 2009 to 2013](#). In this document, the Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic (*Ministerstvo financií SR*), in collaboration with the Government Plenipotentiary for Information Society (*Úrad splnomocnenca vlády SR pre informačnú spoločnosť*) presents an updated strategy on the building of Information Society in Slovakia.

The new strategy replaces the original Information Society Strategy with the Action Plan, taking on board the new trends in ICT development and the partial achievements of the recent years, focusing on those areas where the progress achieved has failed to meet expectations.

This updated strategy aims to address new areas and directions of information and communication technologies also attempting to clarify and update existing strategic documents.

The key development areas and priorities of the Slovak Republic defined by the new Information Society Strategy for 2009-2013, are the following:

- ▶ building broadband connection;
- ▶ information security and standards;
- ▶ eGovernment, eHealth;
- ▶ digital literacy and eEducation;
- ▶ reducing energy consumption; and,
- ▶ increasing energy efficiency.

The priorities of the information society for the period 2007-2013 are clearly declared in the [Operational Programme Information Society](#) ('OPIS'). OPIS is a reference document to be used as a basis for the provision of EU financial assistance for projects concerning the creation and development of public administration information systems' infrastructure and broadband Internet connection. OPIS will support the broadband connection infrastructure in areas where the market has failed to cover.

## Broadband Access Strategies

### National Strategy for the Broadband Access

The [National Strategy for the Broadband Access](#) to Services of the Information Society in the Slovak Republic (*Národná stratégia pre širokopásmový prístup v SR*) has defined the objectives and procedures of its development (until the year 2008), as well as concrete measures for its support. The Strategy has taken into account the requirement for broad accessibility to all population groups, the business sector and the public administration, including promotion of access to Information Society (IS services) services in rural and remote areas. It has evaluated the current situation in the Slovak Republic (SR) and has identified possibilities for improvement, while observing the principle of technological neutrality without violating the competition rules, so as to render the SR able to achieve the level of developed European countries within the next 5 to 8 years.

The Strategy is tied up with the National Policy for Electronic Communications (*Národná politika pre elektronické komunikácie*), adopted in 2003, the Strategy of the Informatisation of Society in the SR Conditions and the Action Plan together with tasks ensuing from the membership of the Slovak Republic in the European Union, international treaties and international organisations. Identified priorities include a local loop unbundling in the fixed line market, digital TV, effective use of national frequency spectrum and a wider use of the state owned communication infrastructure.

**Measurable benefits** resulting from the broadband access include:

- ▶ easier and faster information searching – information is broadly accessible without location and time limitation;
- ▶ support of lifelong education without geographic and social barriers;
- ▶ simplification of the mutual contact between citizens, enterprises, business companies, public administration and other organisations;
- ▶ creation of new possibilities on the labour market (e. g. tele-working);
- ▶ more effective management of enterprises, especially small and medium-sized that leads to the increase of efficiency and hence competitiveness;
- ▶ new possibilities of entertainment and cultural life;
- ▶ improvement of the quality of life of the population living in rural and remote areas, including support to the development of remote areas by stimulation of travelling and tourism.

#### **Objectives:**

The main objective of the Strategy was to achieve the level of developed European countries in this area within the next 5 to 8 years.

Supporting the development of broadband access has been decisive for progressing towards a knowledge-based economy that was to lead to sustainable growth through the strengthening of competitiveness. The success of the broadband access implementation and its further development and widespread use have been the key to the future prosperity of the SR economy.

The provision of broadband access services were also to contribute to creating a new situation on the market, to motivate for higher labour productivity and added-value creation, as well as for a highly effective public administration, hence improving SR citizens' quality of life.

To enable a high pace of the Slovak economic growth that would approximate it with the most developed EU countries, it has been deemed necessary for the transmission rate to achieve at least 2 Mbit/s symmetrically. That was necessary due to the fact that such rates would allow much wider use of the possibilities offered by the multimedia application and services, such as video conference, video at request, on-line eLearning, among others.

To fulfil the main strategic objective, it was necessary to attain the goals specified in the National Policy for Electronic Communications (*Národná politika pre elektronické komunikácie*), in compliance with the timetable set.

## Strategy of the Informatisation of Society in the SR Conditions and the Action Plan

The Strategy of the Informatisation of Society in the SR Conditions and the Action Plan was adopted in 2004. For transforming Slovakia into a dynamic knowledge based economy, it is necessary to ensure information literacy for every citizen, their access to the Internet and that they can enjoy the benefits of the Information Society. The fulfilment of the Action Plan was evaluated annually by the Government, and its tasks were regularly updated.

The area of human resources and education for the needs of Information Society has formed one of the pillars in the strategy for the informatisation of the society. It has therefore been a subject of the horizontal priorities in the operational programmes Education and Employment and Social Inclusion; it was to be supported by EU Structural Funds covering the period of 2007-2013. The main aim has been to ensure that the development of eGovernment and the increase in the Internet penetration is accompanied by measures that would increase digital literacy and IT skills by modernising IT-oriented education and by promoting lifelong learning in this area.

## 3rd Priority Axis: 'Improving access to broadband Internet' Operational Programme 'Information Society' (OPIS)

Broadband penetration in the Slovak Republic ranks among the worst of all EU-27 countries. In order to bring broadband Internet penetration on par with the advanced EU Member States, Slovakia defined the **third priority axis** entitled —Improving access to broadband Internet within the **Operational Programme 'Information Society' (OPIS)**. By means of indirect tools, the priority axis will foster sustainable development of broadband access networks in territories deemed unattractive by commercial providers, thus increasing the quality of competitive environment in the telecommunications market. This effort is aimed at making broadband Internet accessible to all citizens, whereas the strategy of the commercial operators is to cover areas with the highest density of the population, or with the highest concentration of business activities.

The third priority axis will therefore target the least advanced territories of the Slovak Republic. The number of Internet broadband connections will be increased on a case-by-case basis. Investments into access networks from the funds allocated for the OPIS should be, for the most part, undertaken at the regional and local administration levels, as their construction can be substantially accelerated in this manner. However, it will also be necessary to address further issues related to the extension and operation of optical networks and the provision of broadband services as such. The implementation of this measure will therefore be based on a feasibility study that is to be incorporated in the specific project packages offered to municipalities, network operators and providers of broadband services from the resources of this priority axis. As the key outcome of the feasibility study, solutions will be prepared for specific territories.

## eCommunications Policy

### National Electronic Communications Policy 2009 - 2013

The [National Electronic Communications Policy 2009-2013](#) (*Národná politika pre elektronické komunikácie na roky 2009 - 2013*) was based on the results achieved by the fulfilment of the National Policy 1 objectives set until the year 2008, taking into account the main objectives of the Initiative i2010 – European Information Society for Growth and Employment 2, as well as important strategic documents of entities involved, within the scope of their competences, in building the SR Information Society.

The objectives of the National Electronic Communications Policy 2009 – 2013, with outlook until the year 2015, have aimed to satisfy the needs of the Slovak economy, to fulfil the requirements of physical and legal entities and implement the objectives set by the State through wide accessible quality, reliable and secure electronic communication services within the scope corresponding to the developed EU Member States.

The **core topics** of the electronic communications policy with outlook until the year 2015 are: digital dividend, broadband access and next generation networks.

The **priority areas** upon which the Policy lays emphasis, are:

- ▶ convergence of information and communication technologies (ICT) and media;
- ▶ harmonisation of the regulatory framework and development of competition;
- ▶ effective use of frequency spectrum;
- ▶ protection of privacy and security of electronic communications;
- ▶ crisis management and critical infrastructure;
- ▶ international cooperation; and,
- ▶ development of innovative services using ICT.

## eInclusion Legal Framework

### Main legal texts impacting on the development of eInclusion

#### eAccessibility Legislation

##### Act on Public Administration Information Systems

The [Act on Public Administration Information Systems](#) (No. 275/2006 - 20 April 2006) provides a framework for the development of information systems for public authorities. The Act on Public Administration Information Systems (No. 275/2006) has set an obligation on all central and local government institutions to **ensure web accessibility** in line with the [Web Accessibility Initiative](#) (WAI). A regulation lays down the conditions for the publication of information in a way that enables remote access in compliance with the rules of WAI. On 1 October 2008, the Edict about Standards for Information Systems of Public Administration, No. MF/013261/2008-132 came into force.

#### eCommunications Legislation

##### Act on Electronic Communications

The [Act on Electronic Communications](#) (No. 610/2003), which entered into force on 1 January 2004, transposes to Slovak Law the European Union's New Regulatory Framework for electronic communications: Directive No. [2002/58/EC](#) on Privacy and Electronic Communication, Authorisation Directive No. [2002/20/EC](#), Access Directive No. [2002/19/EC](#), Universal Service Directive No. [2002/22/EC](#) and Framework Directive No. [2002/21/EC](#). Act on Electronic Communications (No. 610/2003) defines providing and financing a universal service. Under this law, the disabled people have access to the publicly available telephone service at the same level of quality as the access enjoyed by all other end-users, based in particular upon, specially provided terminal equipment, or additional services.

#### Rights of Persons with Disabilities

##### Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

Slovakia signed the [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) in 2007. One of the convention principles comprises the full and effective participation and inclusion in the society of persons with disabilities. Slovakia undertakes a general obligation to **provide accessible information** to persons with disabilities about mobility aids, devices and assistive technologies, including new technologies as well as other forms of assistance, support services and facilities.

## eInclusion Actors

### Main roles and responsibilities

#### National eInclusion

##### Policy/Strategy

###### **Ministry of Finance** (*Ministerstvo financií*)

The Ministry of Finance is the central body of the State Administration for the iInformation Society.

###### **Ministry of Transport, Posts and Telecommunications, Department of Telecommunications** (*Ministerstvo dopravy, pôšt a telekomunikácií*)

The Ministry of Transport, Posts and Telecommunications prepares and evaluates the strategy for promoting the development of new telecommunications services (UMTS, broadband access, etc).

##### Coordination

###### **Ministry of Finance** (*Ministerstvo financií*)

The Ministry of Finance is in charge of coordinating activities in the field of Information Society and ICT.

###### **The Government Plenipotentiary for the Information Society** (*Úrad splnomocnenca vlády SR pre informačnú spoločnosť*)

The Plenipotentiary is an advisory body of the Government of the Slovak Republic responsible for coordinating the tasks of Information Society.

##### Implementation

###### **Ministry of Transport, Posts and Telecommunications, Department of Telecommunications** (*Ministerstvo dopravy, pôšt a telekomunikácií*)

The Ministry of Transport, Posts and Telecommunications is responsible for the implementation of the broadband strategy.

##### Support

###### **Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family** (*Ministerstva práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny*)

The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family is responsible for the social protection and support of the vulnerable groups.

###### **Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports** (*Ministerstvo školstva, vedy, výskumu a športu*)

The Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports is responsible for research and development.

## eInclusion Who's Who

### Main eInclusion decision-makers and executives

#### Ministers responsible for eInclusion



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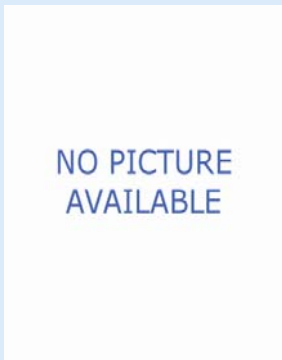
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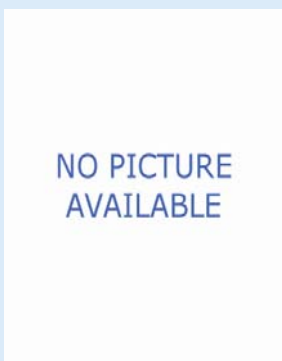
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## eInclusion Areas

### Riga Declaration Priorities

#### ICT & Ageing

##### Status in ICT & Ageing

More than 12 % of the Slovakian population is aged 65 or over. In compliance with demographic progression, the percentage of the elderly will increase twofold by the year 2032 which means that ICT will play an even more significant part in the life of the elderly, meeting their needs and maximising the potential of that group of people at home and at work.

##### Actions to support ICT & Ageing

Projects to promote **digital literacy** and digital content have been implemented with the intention to ensure educational activities on gaining better digital skills for groups at risk of exclusion for example unemployed women, Romans, physically disabled people, seniors, or to create digital content in order to enhance the readiness for broader groups of population to live within the Information Society.

#### Geographic Digital Divide

##### Status of Common Access to Electronic Content and Services

According to a survey by the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic covering the reference period 2007 for surveys on information and communication technology in households, it was found that almost 767 000 Internet connections were active by the end of that year (46 % households). The availability of **broadband** Internet was very low especially in the mountainous areas of Slovakia where connectivity was limited to backbone network routes in the valleys of rivers and rural settlements with low population density.

##### **Current situation in the Slovak Republic and trends of the future development**

Information access through the Internet and information usage in the Slovak Republic can currently be found dissatisfactory in comparison with that of developed EU Member States.

The number of broadband connections per 100 inhabitants in the Slovak Republic was approx. 0.7 (November 2004). For comparison, in the EU Member States, the number of broadband connections per 100 inhabitants was 6.1 (January 2004) and 7.3 in OECD countries (December 2003). Broadband penetration rate was also low (0.4 in 2004) compared to those of the most EU Member States.

Those issues regarding Internet accessibility and use of information have occurred not because of the physical unavailability of the low-rate access to the Internet, but rather because of the low purchasing power of the population, i.e. the cost of a PC or of an Internet connection, users' low motivation to install such access, among other reasons. This low motivation is due to insufficient information literacy that discourages, in a larger scale, the use of the Internet and the lack of user-attractive information services.

The main reasons that have contributed to this state were:

- ▶ low level of competition in the area of access infrastructure;
- ▶ insufficient availability of the broadband connection in smaller cities and in the countryside;
- ▶ unfavourable match between price of broadband connection and purchasing power of population;

- ▶ low purchasing power of population in comparison with the cost of a PC;
- ▶ low level of end users awareness;
- ▶ low level of offered services and of the content resulting in not sufficiently motivating users to have this type of access.

At present, the percentage of households which have Internet access at home has increased to 62 % (2009); the percentage of households which have broadband access has also increased to 42 % (2009).

The following technologies of broadband access are currently available in the Slovak Republic:

- ▶ xDSL (especially ADSL) – allowing the broadband access via classic telephone connection;
- ▶ cable modem – allowing the broadband access through the infrastructure of cable TV distribution systems;
- ▶ fixed wireless access (FWA) – allowing the broadband access through the radio transmission system;
- ▶ satellite access – allowing the broadband access through a satellite;
- ▶ optic cable networks – allowing practically unlimited capacity and reliability, and high quality of transmission;
- ▶ prospective third generation (3G) mobile networks – allowing the broadband access through a mobile phone;
- ▶ prospective interactive digital TV networks – allowing the broadband access through a set-top box.

The year 2003 can be regarded as a **milestone**. In that year, the number of broadband connections started to grow significantly, particularly thanks to the accessibility of ADSL technology.

Even though the progress in the implementation of ADSL connections is visible, it is impossible to expect that xDSL technologies will provide for full availability of broadband access due to economic and technical reasons. The application of xDSL technologies is profitable only in locations with sufficient concentration of potential applicants. Regarding the technical aspect, it is impossible to apply these technologies to all subscriber lines.

The cable modem technology provides sound possibilities of implementation of the broadband access; the number of broadband cable connections to the Internet in the Slovak Republic is however low. Most of them are located in the capital of the Slovak Republic. This occurs because of the low technical level of cable television networks that have initially been designed for the distribution of TV programmes only. In the Slovak Republic, this technology can ensure the broadband access only within a limited scope. The development is possible only through high investments, modernising existing and new infrastructure.

At present, the broadband access via satellite networks does not play an important part in household connections. With regard to its price and other parameters, it is predominantly used by large and medium-sized enterprises in areas where other possibilities of broadband access are very limited, or simply absent.

#### Actions to support Common Access to Electronic Content and Services

##### **Grant Financial support via Operational programme 'Information Society' (OPIS)**

Development and support for sustainable use of broadband access infrastructure. The objective of the OPIS is to provide access to broadband Internet for all citizens. The least developed parts of Slovakia, i.e. areas that are unattractive to commercial operators to operate in, will be in the centre of interest. 790 000 households in more than 2 300 municipalities would have to connect in Convergence Objective regions. An investment, exceeding € 113 million, in this initiative has been planned.

## Project Internet for education

This project started in 2006. The primary target of the project was to support 40 000 households, to increase broadband access and further improve information literacy. A grant was awarded to applicants for two years.

## eAccessibility

### Status of eAccessibility

The **Act on Public administration information systems (No. 275/2006)** has set out guidelines on web content accessibility as government bodies need to address accessibility problems that (may) prevent vulnerable groups, such as the elderly and the disabled, from fully using ICTs and thus play a more active part in the Information Society with the help of ICTs.

On June 2008, based on [Act No. 275/2006 on public administration information systems](#), an obligation took place on all central and local government institutions to ensure web accessibility needs in line with [Web Accessibility Initiative \(WAI\)](#). A regulation lays down the conditions for publications of information enabling remote access in compliance with the rules of WAI. WAI develops strategies, guidelines and resources to make the Web accessible to people with disabilities.

Since 2005, annual webpage monitoring of central and local governments and of certain enterprises, has been carried out. The percentage of infringed rules on the accessibility guidelines, in 2007, was reported to reach 29 % in the monitored web pages.

### Actions towards eAccessibility

#### The Access Centre

It was established in 2000 and is located at the Technical University 'Košice'. It also serves for two other Universities in Košice, the University of 'Pavel Jozef Šafárik' in Košice and the University of Veterinary medicine in Košice. The mission of the Access Centre is to ensure that all students with disabilities have equal access to educational opportunities at universities and that they can freely and actively participate in all areas of university life. The Head of the Access Center, Professor Dušan Šimšík is the national contact point for the [European Design for All eAccessibility Network \(EDeAN\)](#).

#### Project 'Blindfriendly.sk'

The target of the project is to increase the access to information and services in all the areas of information communication technologies (Internet, telecommunications, mobile communications, etc.) for disabled people. The first step in the field of Internet availability is to show the principles of a barrier-free web and draw designers' attention to these principles. The designers are allowed to use the 'Blindfriendly' logo after satisfying certain criteria. Meeting the regulation principles of 'Blind Friendly' helps not only blind and partially visually impaired people, but also all people with disabilities, for example, those who are not able to use the mouse. The 'Blind Friendly' initiative of the Slovak 'Blind and Partially Sighted' union provides an unofficial certification scheme, as well as an advisory service to public and private organisations.

#### Project 'Gold Crest'

The objective of the project is to support the implementation of ICT in Slovak local governments, award excellent projects, promote the exchange of best practices and assess the effort of local governments to effectively exploit the benefits of ICT in order to build up quality and accessible services in the cities and villages of Slovakia.

## National Programme of 'Development of Living Conditions of Citizens with Disabilities in All Areas of Life'

In 2001, the National Programme of 'Development of Living Conditions of Citizens with Disabilities in All Areas of Life' referred to the responsibility to introduce legislation in order to design and maintain public websites in such a way that are accessible to citizens with disabilities and furthermore defined this as a vital duty for public administration organisations.

### Digital Library for sightless people

The project 'Digital Library' is designed to offer a service to blind users; they have been able to listen to audio books via the Internet since January 2007. Audio books are artistically narrated and are available to blind users via multi-channel delivery, for instance: the Internet, mobile phones and mp3 players. WMA DRM 10 system ensures protection from illegal distribution according to the Copyright law.

## Digital Literacy and Competences

### Status on Digital Literacy and Competences

Digital literacy in the Slovak Republic constitutes one of the pillars in the strategy of the computerisation of SR society. The [operational programmes on Education, Informatisation of society, and Employment and social inclusion](#)', supported by the EU Structural Funds for the period 2007-2013, aim to ensure that the development of eGovernment and the increase of Internet penetration are closely linked to measures which will increase digital literacy and improve IT skills through modernising IT-oriented education and by promoting lifelong learning in this area.

Digital literacy reached 0,37 in 2007 (1 = max) with the potential to further increase. Certain population groups, i.e. the younger, the well educated and the urban population are constantly studying and becoming digitally literate. Other groups i.e. the elderly, the less educated and the socially and economically less wealthy lag behind despite the progress made.

Indicatively, 51 % of the population use the Internet while 77 % of the inhabitants of small villages (up to 2 000 inhabitants) do not have access to the Internet.

### Actions towards stimulating Digital Literacy and Competences

#### Digital 'Štúrovstvo' at schools

This project was implemented during 2005-2006. It aimed to increase the digital literacy of the population through setting up education centers in elementary and secondary schools. Access to the Internet and to electronic eGovernment services was guaranteed in these centres where citizens were assisted by trainers, when needed. The project enabled a full exploitation of ICT outside school hours (a 24 hour Internet connection, mainly broadband, PCs, printers, scanners and digital cameras). Besides students, it has also attracted other social groups like seniors, disabled people and unemployed who were interested in improving their education through enhancing their digital skills. 829 elementary schools were involved in the project and affected approx. 70 000 people in Slovakia.

#### Digital skills' education for public administration officials – preparation for ECDL certification

This national project was launched in 2006 with the aim to provide eLearning for officials in the Bratislava region in order to prepare them for the ECDL certification.

#### Projects promoting digital literacy and digital content

They were implemented during the period 2005-2006 and intended to ensure educational activities in order to improve digital skills for groups at risk of exclusion (namely, unemployed women, the disabled, the elderly), or to create digital content that would enhance the capability of such groups to use the Information Society.

### 'Grandparents & grandchildren' initiative

The 'Grandparents & Grandchildren' initiative is about adult digital literacy and is aimed to promote and facilitate the digital active citizenship of the elderly. The project's scope is to foster a process of involvement of the local stakeholders in supporting low-cost training initiatives in order to allow elderly people to gain full citizenship in the digital society.

The most original aspect of this initiative is that the teachers of the elderly are young students who have volunteered and act as 'grandchildren' assisting, on an one to one basis, their 'grandparents' in acquiring the very basic skills of internet browsing and e-mail messaging. The project strongly encourages the intergenerational dialogue, as well as linguistic diversity and local cultural issues. The project through the use of technology fosters citizenship, personal growth and mutual understanding.

## eInclusion and Cultural Diversity

### Status on eInclusion and Cultural Diversity

The cultural minorities in Slovakia are: Hungarian 9.7 %, Romani 1.7 %, Czech 0.8 %, which consist of 12.2 % of the population in Slovakia (*Source: Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic, 2001*).

The Slovak Republic Government Office is tasked with securing equal opportunities for language and cultural minorities, as well as groups of special needs in order to enable them to participate in cultural activities and to express their creativity.

The digitisation of and provision of access to cultural heritage through Information Society directly depends on establishing broadband connections, increasing digital literacy and developing eEducation.

Until today, the availability of cultural heritage in digital form has been limited in terms of scope and time; it has only been available in certain locations and complicated to search for. Its greater availability will carry immense potential for the development of Information Society – particularly, in view of supporting education systems, science and research, tourism, among other fields.

### Actions towards eInclusion and Cultural Diversity

Slovakia joined the initiative 'European year of equal opportunities for all' in 2007. Numerous interesting projects have been implemented under this initiative. Two examples of planned projects for Slovakia are the following:

- ▶ 'We are here – The days of otherness' aims at making persons with different sexual orientation more visible as part of the Slovak and European society.
- ▶ A project of the non-governmental organisation 'People against Racism' plans to verify, through field testing, whether the state authorities, territorial self-government authorities, and interest associations, but also natural persons and legal entities, comply with their obligations imposed by the anti-discrimination law.

## Inclusive eGovernment

### Status on Inclusive eGovernment

Statistics:

Percentage of individuals using the Internet for seeking health-related information: 30 % (2009)

Percentage of individuals using the Internet for finding information about goods or services: 50 % (2009)

Percentage of individuals using the Internet for interaction with the public authorities: 31 % (2009)

Percentage of individuals using the Internet for downloading official forms: 87 % (2009)

Percentage of individuals using the Internet for information from public authorities' web sites: 86 % (2009)

Percentage of individuals using the Internet for returning filled in forms to public authorities: 13 % (2009)

*Source: Eurostat*

#### Actions towards Inclusive eGovernment

The building of the Central Portal of Public Administration with electronic services is one of the most significant parts in the development of the Information Society. The objective of this project, operational since 1 July 2009, is to create Internet access to public administration services for all, facilitate the provision of information for citizens, entrepreneurs and public administration bodies, and simplify the process of providing those services.

Citizens will be able to communicate with the State and the Public Administration through the [Central Public Administration Portal \(CPAP\)](#), seven days a week, at any time of the day. Electronic services and simple information have already been available; for instance, services contain instructions on how to find a solution to certain situations in life, or on how to contact several relevant institutions.

One of the objectives of the portal is to provide a technical infrastructure to be used by public administrations for building single-point-of-access processes, through which citizens will be able to receive services, simplifying all the pertinent technical tasks.

## The Future of eInclusion

### Research in Practice & Future Challenges

#### Research in Practice

The **Seventh Framework Programme** (FP7) comprises, under its umbrella, EU research initiatives that play a vital part in attaining the objectives of growth, competitiveness and employment. The broad objectives of FP7 have been grouped into four categories: **Cooperation**, **Ideas**, **People** and **Capacities**. eInclusion aspects hold a prominent place in this programme, which has been operational since 2007 and will expire in 2013.

Approximately €400 million have been allocated to FP7's **Challenge 7: 'ICT for Independent Living, Inclusion and Governance'**, one of the seven 'Challenges' of the **ICT Work Programme 2009 – 2010** under FP7. The aim of 'Challenge 7' is to create ICT products, through research and development, which will foster independent and active living among Europe's ageing population, improving living standards and mitigating ICT complexity in order to encourage groups with special needs to uptake and use ICT tools and technologies to their benefit.

'Challenge 7' set three objectives:

Objective ICT-2009.7.1: **ICT & Ageing**

- ▶ Service robotics for ageing well;
- ▶ Open Systems Reference Architectures, Standards and ICT Platforms for Ageing Well;
- ▶ RTD roadmaps and stakeholder coordination.

Objective ICT-2009.7.2: **Accessible and Assistive ICT**

- ▶ Embedded Accessibility of Future ICT;
- ▶ ICT restoring and augmenting human capabilities compensating for people with reduced motor functions or disabilities;
- ▶ RTD research agendas & coordination of constituencies.

Objective ICT-2009.7.3: **ICT for Governance and Policy Modelling**

- ▶ Governance and Participation Toolbox;
- ▶ Policy Modelling, Simulation and Visualisation;
- ▶ Roadmapping and Networking for 'participation, governance and policy modelling'.

Slovakia is involved in the following FP7 project:

**Self mobility improvement in the elderly by counteracting falls** (SMILING)

**Research area:** ICT-2007.7.1 ICT and ageing

**Project start date:** [2008-01-01]

**Project web site:** <http://www.smilingproject.eu/>

#### National Projects

##### National Research and Development Programmes

In the period 2002-2005, the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports of the Slovak Republic (*Ministerstvo školstva, vedy, výskumu a športu*) prepared the 'National Research and Development Programmes'. The State programmes were divided into **horizontal state programmes** aimed at a

planned improvement of standards in selected economic and social areas in the Slovak Republic; and **thematic state programmes** aimed at the development of human resources and their mobility, building a technical and institutional R&D infrastructure, and an international scientific and technological cooperation.

#### **National Research and Development Programme: Building an Information Society**

In the area of ICT, the 'National Research and Development Programme: Building an Information Society' was implemented. The priority areas were the tools and methods for the information society building, the informatisation of education, knowledge management and intelligent interfaces, a digital state, regional and public administration, information, as well as communication infrastructure and components.

### **Future Challenges**

The following constitute the future eInclusion most prominent challenges of the Government of Slovakia:

- ▶ a better coordinated approach among governmental bodies and institutions;
- ▶ a more consistent implementation of strategies;
- ▶ setting eInclusion as a national priority.

### **European Commission - eInclusion Practice**

eInclusion practice ([epractice.eu](http://epractice.eu)) is an information and exchange service for European professionals.

The eInclusion factsheets are one of the [epractice.eu](http://epractice.eu) services. The factsheets present an overview of the eInclusion status and progress in the European countries.

The eInclusion factsheets are produced and updated once a year.

The eInclusion practice is an initiative of the Directorate General for the Information Society and Media, European Commission.

Production/Publishing: ePractice Editorial Team, EUROPEAN DYNAMICS S.A.

