

SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Alojz Nociar, August 2005

1. The country

Slovak Republic, or Slovakia, in the Slovak language called “Slovensko”, is a republic, which became an independent state by January 1st 1993, when former Czechoslovakia ceased to exist. This event had happened three years after the fall of the totalitarian regimes in Eastern Europe. Czechoslovakia was divided peacefully by a parliamentary decision, through which the Czech and Slovak parts of former state became two independent states. Slovakia has three constitutional officials – the president as the head of state, prime minister as the head of the government, and the chairman of the National council as the head of the parliament. The president is directly elected for five-year term, and 150 deputies of the National council are directly elected by the Slovak population for four-year term.

After the downfall of the Grand Moravia Empire in the late 9th century Slovakia belonged for centuries to the Hungarian part of the Austria-Hungary. This was true until the end of World War I, when the Czechs and the Slovaks formed a common state Czechoslovakia in 1918. In the period from 1918 to 1938 industrialization began to take place in agricultural Slovakia. This occurred together with new institutions building, progress and enrichment of scientific and cultural life, e.g. Comenius University was founded in Bratislava, and literature or theatre started to flourish. After the end of World War II further extensive industrialization of Slovakia took place from 1945 to 1989. Unfortunately one-sided orientation to heavy and military industry caused many problems in restructuring and growth of unemployment rates during nineties. Anyhow, after more than 15 years of smooth democratic development nowadays Slovakia is a member country of the EU and also a member of the NATO.

The Slovak Republic has an area of 49 thousands km². Overall number of inhabitants is 5.4 million and the average population density is 110 inhabitants per km². Life expectancy for males is 70 years and for females 78 years. The capital and at the same time the largest city is Bratislava with 450 thousands inhabitants. More than a half of the Slovak population (58%) live in urban areas. The Slovak Republic is divided into eight regions, governed via state administration of higher territorial units and self-governments as well.

The Slovakian population is predominantly of Slovak origin (86%), and it belongs to the family of Slavonic nations. The rest of citizens is of Hungarian (close to 10%), Roma (2,5%), Czech (0,8%), Ruthenian and Ukraine nationalities (0,7%). Official language is Slovak. Rights of minorities are guaranteed by the constitution and national laws or international treaties. According to 2001 census about 69 % of the Slovak population are Roman Catholics, 7 % are Protestants, 5 % are of Greek Catholic and Orthodox church religion, 13 % are atheists and remaining 6 % are either unknown or various small religious beliefs.

Until the middle of the 20th century, the Slovak economy was predominantly agricultural and trade was predominantly with the Czech part of Czechoslovakia and neighbouring countries. After the World War II the country's economy base has been gradually transformed from agricultural to industrial. Manufacturing accounts for approximately 36 per cent of the gross domestic product, while agriculture accounts for about 10 per cent. In recent years GNP per capita was 3 650 US \$ in 1999; and 3 950 US \$ in 2002. Unemployment had grown gradually during nineties and it was 18,1 % in 2004 (Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic).

2. Alcohol consumption

The tradition to drink home-made alcohol beverages was always strong in Slovakia, before all production and drinking of various sorts of spirits containing from 40 to 60 % of alcohol by volume. No home beer production existed, as all sorts of beers were produced by brewing industry. Types of home-made spirits included “slivovica” (plum brandy), which is the most wide-spread sort in Slovakia, as well as special spirit “borovička” (juniper brandy), which is produced by regular distilleries. Less popular are “čerešňovica” (cherry brandy), marhuľovica (apricot brandy), “hruškovica” (pear brandy) and “jablčkovica” (apple brandy). Apart from wines produced by alcohol industry there was and still is also production of home-made wines. Therefore it is very difficult to determine real amount of per capita consumption, and not to take into account at least rough estimation of unrecorded consumption. However, older sources had indicated per capita consumption below from 3 to 5 litres of 100 % spirit before 1960, with low proportion of beer and relatively equal proportions of wine and spirit.

Before World War II, drinking of alcohol beverages was considered to be a male privilege, but gradually also women started to emancipate and especially after 1989 they were drinking in public or in various drinking environments. This was true before all for adolescent girls and young women in their twenties. Beer and spirits are the most favoured drinks for males, and wine for women. Alcohol abuse and dependence among women is characterised by different drinking style – secret drinking, and distinctive personality traits, as found in several studies (Nociar 1994, 1995; Maxianová 1999).

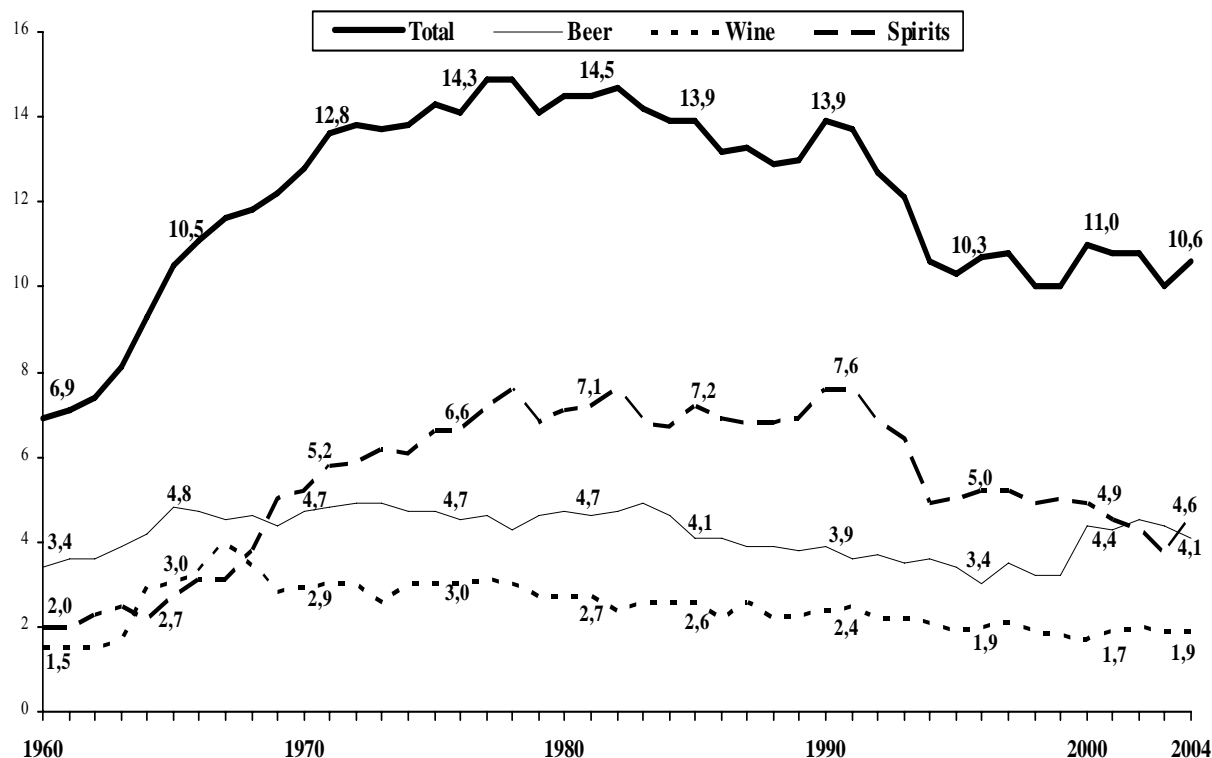
From fifties there was quite high per capita alcohol consumption in Slovakia, which had more then doubled during 20 years within the whole population: from 4,7 litres of 100% spirit in 1960 to 10,7 litres in 1980, with absolute peak of 10,9 litres in 1982. This caused growth of alcohol dependent people numbers, with consequences for whole society (car accidents, criminality, divorces), and for societal sectors as well, but before all for health care (cirrhosis mortality, alcohol poisoning, alcoholic psychoses, and other alcohol attributable diseases). Alcohol consumption increase was constant in the period from 1960 to 1980, with small drop from 10,2 to 9,5 litres in 1986 – 1989 (during the Gorbachev inspired anti-alcohol campaign), but since 1990 the officially recorded consumption was gradually decreasing (see Picture 1).

As far as unrecorded consumption is concerned, no systematic studies or survey were carried out so far. However, there were police reports on dismantled illegal distilleries using 100 % spirit to produce beverages with false stamps, and customs' reports on seizures of smuggled alcohol both on the borders and in-country. These signs of untaxed and unrecorded alcohol consumption, together with home-made and consumed wines and spirits, would suggest rough estimation of unrecorded consumption of three sorts of alcohol beverages somewhere between 20 to 40 %. This estimation was supported by empirical evidence from representative school surveys among 15 – 16 to 18 – 19 years old students (ESPAD 1995), from whom 20,1 % admitted drinking of home-made wine and 12,8 % admitted drinking of home-made spirits.

Hence it might be assumed that estimation of average home-made production and unrecorded consumption might be as high as one third of officially recorded numbers on consumption per capita. This amount concerns most of all spirits and wines consumed by 15+ year olds in Slovakia, i.e. without beer, which is not produced at home. It means that in 1990 instead of officially registered 13,9 litres per capita among 15+ year olds it would be 18,5 litres per capita; in 2000 instead of 11,0 litres it would be 14,7 litres per capita (and in 2002, instead of 10,8 – 14,4 litres, but certainly not overestimated 20 litres, as stated is some publications).

It is estimated that roughly up to 5 % of Slovakian population does not drink at all (they are either natural abstainers or abstaining alcoholics), around 60 % are alcohol consumers without problems, 30 % are hazardous, risky or problem drinkers, and the rest of 5 % are alcohol dependent persons. ESPAD questions concerning lifetime prevalence of any alcohol among 16 to 18 years old secondary school students had shown 4,2 % of abstainers in 1995, but only 3,5 % in 1999 and 2,0 % in 2003 (percentages of lifetime drunkenness had grown accordingly – from 60,6 % in 1995 through 66,7 % in 1999 to finally 79,4 % in 2003).

Overall officially registered per capita consumption is displayed in the following picture:



Picture 1. Recorded adult per capita consumption (age 15+): Slovak Republic from 1960 till 2004

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The numbers of non-consumers among Slovak citizens aged 18 to 65 were estimated via biannual population surveys from 1996 till 2004. These estimations were counted separately for three sorts of alcohol beverages (see tables 1,2,3).

Table 1. Drinking of beer within a sample of adult Slovak population (data in %)

Year	Daily drinking	2–3 times per week	Drinking only occasionally	Do not drink at all
1996	9	16	41	34
1998	7	16	41	36
2000	8	17	43	32
2002	7	14	45	34
2004	8	15	42	35

Source: Institute for Public Opinion Research . Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic, Bratislava 2004.

Group of non-consumers of beer consisted from approximately one third of adult population. Among daily consumers were most frequently males, workers, respondents with elementary education and unemployed. On the other side, among non consumers were predominantly women, people aged 60 and more, and those from site from 2 to 10 thousands of inhabitants.

Drinking of wine is not so frequent in Slovakia as drinking of beer, which fact is documented by data in the next table from the interval of eight years.

Table 2. Drinking of wine within a sample of adult Slovak population (data in %)

Year	Daily drinking	2–3 times per week	Drinking only occasionally	Do not drink at all
1996	1	8	67	24
1998	1	6	70	23
2000	1	7	69	23
2002	1	6	69	24
2004	2	8	64	26

Source: Institute for Public Opinion Research . Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic, Bratislava 2004.

Non-consumers of wine represented approximately one fourth of adult population. Among daily consumers were most frequently citizens in the category of „other“ nationality, but other socio-demographic groups did not differ from whole-slovakian average. Non-consumers were mainly among people aged 60 and more, with elementary education, and among students.

Table 3. Drinking of spirits within a sample of adult Slovak population (data in %)

Year	Daily drinking	2–3 times per week	Drinking only occasionally	Do not drink at all
1996	2	9	61	28
1998	2	7	59	32
2000	1	7	61	31
2002	2	6	61	31
2004	2	7	56	35

Source: Institute for Public Opinion Research . Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic, Bratislava 2004.

Use of spirits is less frequent compared to wine and beer drinking. Group of non-consumers of spirits consisted from 35% respondents in 2004. This was a little bit more then before, and there were also less occasional consumers. Daily consumers and those drinking 2-3 times per week are approximately the same frequent as in previous years. Drinking of spirits 2-3 times per week is typical for males, citizens of Hungarian nationality, workers and unemployed. Among non-consumers were mostly females, people aged 60 and more, respondents with elementary education, and students.

3. Alcohol production and trade

Slovakia was traditionally wine producing and consuming country, and this tradition is still relatively strong, with some sorts of wines being especially valued, e.g. Slovak strong wine “Tokajské”, accepted in the EU as a special sort apart from Hungarian “Tokai”. However, during nineties viniculture

During the period after the 2nd World War processes of internationalisation of drinking took place and strong beer producing industry and distilleries were developed. Today there are three big breweries in Slovakia: Heineken, Šariš and Topvar, which together with smaller ones (e.g. Stein or Steiger) created the Slovak Association on Beer and Malt Producers. Brief overview of alcohol production and trade is summarised in the next tables:

Table 4. Overview of spirit production/trade in Slovakia (in litres of absolute alcohol)

Type/Year	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Spirit (raw)	15 065 000	17 236 358	11 383 266	7 742 971	5 583 808	1 635 615
Spirit (refined)	14 110 000	14 319 380	13 379 458	14 705 285	13 417 670	12 034 868
Import	4 728 000	3 373 662	3 932 334	1 296 529	1 547 258	5 083 350
Export	0	0	0	0	106	891 978
Spirits (40%+)	41 877 000	38 116 793	36 562 210	33 649 734	29 045 798	36 535 725
Import	61 000	73 000	70 901	49 035	30 012	8 240
Export	396	369 841	467 668	377 337	541 485	880 806

Table 5. Overview of wine production/trade in Slovakia (amounts in hectolitres)

Type/Year	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Wine production	429 000	415 000	562 045	696 873	532 490	412 447
Export	68 000	56 000	75 399	67 957	62 321	38 276
Import	122 000	190 000	n.a.	n.a.	89 370	124 496

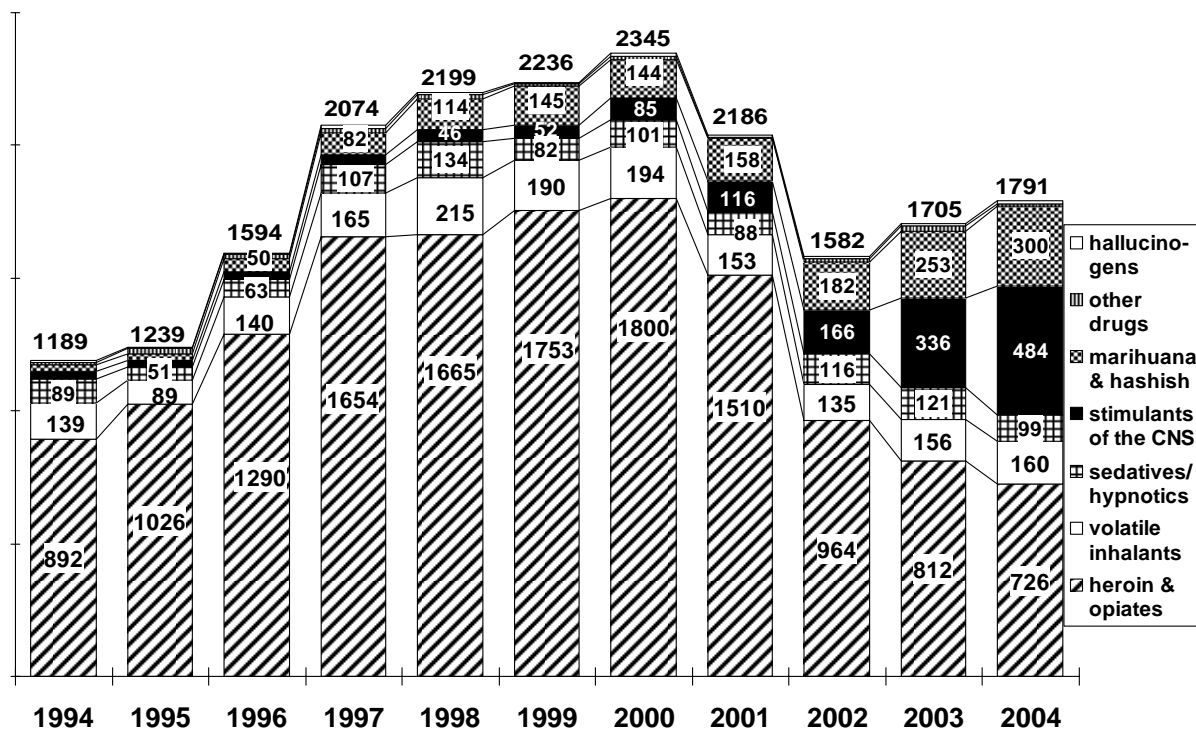
Table 6. Overview of beer production/trade in Slovakia (amounts in hectolitres)

Type/Year	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Beer production	4 411 000	4 514 000	4 574 000	4 850 000	4 670 000	4 200 000
Export	107 000	118 000	113 000	122 000	133 000	184 000

Import – for several years between 300 (1999) to 350 (2004) thousands of hectolitres.

4. Administrative structure of alcohol policy

Alcohol policy after 1989 did not exist at national level, before all due to the shift of interest from previously by alcohol problems dominated scene to new problem of illegal drugs, from 1993 outburst of heroin epidemics in the capital of Bratislava. Network of so called Anti-alcohol outpatient facilities was partially changed to the network of the Centres for treatment of drug dependencies. After the year 2000 problem with illicit drugs became less perceived, because numbers of treatment demands went down, namely heroin dependent cases were as frequent as about one half in 2004 compared to 2001. On the other side, more cases of drug dependent clients were using either cannabis or stimulants, before all metamphetamines (see the 2nd picture). Also more and more dependent clients, as well as recreational users, admitted simultaneous use of drugs together with alcohol.



Picture 2. Treatment demand indicator: Numbers of treated drug dependent clients in Slovakia 1994 – 2004.

© Source: ÚZIS © Processing and graphics: NMCD

It's a commonplace, at least at the practical level, that drugs are not always used separately. There are many examples indicating poly-drug use, and frequent use of alcohol with synthetic drugs among youth. There is evidence of this phenomenon among youngsters from nationwide school surveys. For example data from the ESPAD 1995 survey compared to 1999 and 2003 data indicated substantial growth of alcohol with tablets use among secondary school students aged 15 to 18: from 6,3% to 12,1%, and 19,4% in 2003, which is about three times more. At the same time alcohol together with marihuana were used by 14,0% of students in 1999, but in 2003 it was as much as 23,6%.

Because this trend of growing poly-consumption of drugs, and combined use of illicit and licit drugs was found also among secondary school students in series of school surveys carried out from 1994 to 2003, and because alcohol had begun to be defined as a problem for the society, WHO European Alcohol Action Plan was used as the master-plan for the Slovak National Action Plan for Problems related to Alcohol (NAPPA). NAPPA was approved by the Slovak government's resolution passed in August 2002.

5. Licensing policy

Separate or special license for sale of alcohol beverages in regular stores and magazines was not required, but outlets and alcohol production were implemented by these means. Before accession of Slovakia to the EU there was license system defined by the Regulation of the Ministry of Economy nr. 15/1998 Coll. about conditions of official permission for import and export of goods and services. This was not fully compatible with the license system applicable in the EU (now the Council Regulation nr. 3719/88/EEC is applicable).

6. Restrictions of availability

There are virtually no restrictions concerning availability of alcohol beverages in Slovakia. This is true in general, with exception of occasionally applied measures during some events, like visits of important politicians, or sport events, namely important football matches, which might cause possible harms. However, no regular restriction policy is applied, e.g. there is official legal age of 18 years for purchasing alcohol, but it is not effectively enforced, or by 1989 the general restriction of hours for selling alcohol beverages (by 10 a.m. only) was definitely cancelled.

7. Alcohol taxation and prices

Until 31. 12. 2003 the percentage of VAT was 14. From 1.1.2004 there is an unitary tax 19%. As for excise duty for spirits – in Slovakia it is 250,- Sk (around 6,5 €) per one litre of absolute alcohol (100% spirit). Excise duty for beer is 250,- Sk (around 6,5 €) per hectolitre. For wines there is a zero tax for silent wine, 2400,- Sk (around 62 €) per hectolitre for sparkling wine and intermediate products, and 1700,- Sk (around 44 €) per hectolitre for sparkling wine containing up to 8,5% of alcohol.

8. Alcohol advertising and sponsorship

Alcohol advertising is partially regulated by the law on advertisement. It is allowed for beer (billboards, mass-media), restricted for wine and spirits, e.g. only after 10 p.m. in the TV. Sponsorship is not explicitly banned in respect to sport events, as well as for names of whole season competitions. For example football and ice hockey leagues used names of tobacco or alcohol products (Mars Super-league; Bažant league, etc.), or there were sponsorships for the teams taking part in the world championships, etc.

9. Restrictions on alcohol consumption in specific situations

The Slovak approach to alcohol consumption is very permissive one, and except of zero tolerance of alcohol blood concentration, no other stringent measures are applied in practice. This is true especially for 18 year limit of serving and purchasing of alcohol to minors and adolescents, which is not really enforced. In recently passed new Penal Act and Penal Code there will be financial fines for transgressions related to age years limit, or for serving of alcohol to minors. This new legislation will be in fore by January 1st 2006.

10. Education and information

There were several partial activities, mainly in the educational sector, where the Ministry of Education implemented nation-wide drug prevention, including alcohol, in five main areas: (a) Upbringing and education in the pre-school age within the school system, as well as extracurricular and leisure activities; (b) protection of children against socially pathological phenomena; (c) specialized psychological and counselling care; (d) co-operation with families; (e) re-education and social re-integration. These tasks were carried out through nation-wide networks of methodological centres, centres of educational and psychological prevention, pedagogic and psychological counselling centres, centres for leisure activities, children and youth associations and organizations. Properly trained prevention coordinators have been put into schools to act in school counselling and prevention of drug dependencies.

Preventive education and information in a broad sense is contained in the following tuition subjects: Biology; Ethics; Civic Education within the school curricula. Apart from these there was also nation-wide dissemination of PC preventive (computer assisted instruction) on both legal and illegal drugs, i.e. one programme module contained solely alcohol topic. Except of school based education and prevention there is also mass media involvement, either TV and radio, or newspapers or magazines; however, this is not really systematic approach, at least on the whole society level.

11. Public support for alcohol policy

Minimal at factual level. Awareness of alcohol problems impact appears to be quite low in the society as a whole.

Some example might be taken from three repeated surveys among teachers and prevention coordinators at primary and secondary schools in 1994, 1998 and 2002: when asked whether they would support anti-drug, anti-tobacco and anti-alcohol programs at their school, nearly 90% of them declared “yes” in 1994. When a wording was slightly changed as to take part personally, percentage of “yes” was lowered to about 60. And typically, the lowest percentage has occurred in the case of taking part personally in the anti-alcohol prevention program.

12. NGOs

There are several NGOs, which are active mainly in alcohol prevention and aftercare. Also in Slovakia they are several groups of Anonymous Alcoholics and Al-anon group. Two main associations of former or abstaining alcoholics are: Abstainers’ association of Slovakia; and Civic association Provital. These two civic organisations represents the former network of so called network of Socio-therapeutic clubs, which were functioning along anti-alcoholic out-patient centres before the year 1989. After reform of the health care sector this network was no more supported by the health authorities, and instead of that they have received some support from the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, or the Anti-drug Fund.

13. Summary

Slovakia is among European countries with still relatively high level of alcohol consumption. Alcohol policy measures on national level were elaborated in the text of the National Action

Plan for Problems related to Alcohol, but this officially accepted and approved document was not really implemented in practice, because requested finances were never allocated.

14. Literature

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