

Pavel Vízdal,
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
of the Slovak Republic to Ukraine

THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC: neighborly relations and cooperation with Ukraine

The Slovak Republic has traditionally valued its relations with neighbouring countries. Since its inception in 1993, after a peaceful split from the Czech Republic, our diplomacy has pursued its primary mission: to build, foster, and maintain friendly and mutually beneficial relations with our neighbours. From the onset, our foreign policy has always been based on the premise that, in today's world, diplomacy and international relations begin in one's immediate surroundings. There are many examples of how this is demonstrated in practice, but it all begins with the principled position of each law-abiding state like Slovakia and Ukraine: showing respect for each other's sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity. Our position has been consistent and unflinching — we have always respected Ukraine's political independence within its internationally recognised borders.

The evolution of our diplomatic ties began in earnest when Ukraine — as one of the first countries to do so — recognised Slovakia as an independent state on the very day it was officially established, 1 January 1993. We have promptly opened our Embassy in Kyiv and consulate in Uzhhorod, while Ukraine established its Embassy in Bratislava and, later, a consulate in Prešov in eastern Slovakia. Our presidents and members of the Slovak governments have regularly visited their counterparts across the border, with the first-ever presidential meeting taking place in Kyiv in June 1993, when Slovak President Michal Kováč met with Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk and signed a foundational treaty on good neighbourly relations and cooperation. Since then, our high-level political contacts have continued to deepen and intensified significantly over the past year. There have been numerous meetings between our prime ministers, and the

Slovak and Ukrainian governments met three times in various formats in 2024 alone — a unique level of engagement in our region. Since then, we have also established a strong network of intergovernmental commissions to facilitate bilateral cooperation in specific areas. The most recent meeting of the Intergovernmental Commission for Economic Cooperation took place in Košice in November 2024, co-chaired by Deputy Prime Minister of Slovakia responsible for the recovery and resilience plan, Peter Kmec, and Ukraine's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economy, Yuliia Svyrydenko. Importantly, the commission's meeting was complemented by a Slovak-Ukrainian Business Forum organised to strengthen commercial ties between our countries.

In terms of economic and trade cooperation, Ukraine is a significant business partner for our country. In 2024, it ranked 13th among our most important export partners with exports totalling €1.75 billion — almost 2% of all goods exported from Slovakia. Similarly, Ukraine ranked 15th among our top import partners with total imports to Slovakia exceeding €830 million, equivalent to 1% of all goods imported into the country. The overall trade turnover between our countries amounted to €2.58 billion in 2024. Among the main commodities exported from Slovakia to Ukraine were critical goods such as cars, electrical apparatus for wire telephony or telegraphy, tyres, transport vehicles, oils, and various types of weaponry and munitions. The most important commodity exported to Ukraine last year was electricity.

From our perspective, this is significant. Since its formation almost two years ago, the Slovak Government has decided to calibrate its aid to Ukraine to better tailor it to our actual capabilities and capacities, while striving to provide the highest added value where it is most needed. As such, our efforts have primarily focused on humanitarian and development aid and, perhaps most importantly, energy. We understand that, especially in times of war, an uninterrupted flow of energy is critical for maintaining defence efforts while sustaining the economy. In this respect, Slovakia has provided Ukraine with emergency electricity supplies and is ready to increase import volumes when Ukraine's energy grid becomes overloaded. Furthermore, we have channelled our bilateral cooperation into a project aimed at increasing the transmission capacity of the electricity interconnector between Veľké Kapušany and Mukachevo. This is one of three of the

so-called flagship projects agreed upon at the joint session of the Slovak and Ukrainian governments in April 2024.

Moreover, Slovakia has achieved a major milestone with the EU's positive opinion granted on 7 March 2025, approving €101 million for the EU Support to Ukraine — Slovakia Energy Security and Grid Stability Investment Programme under the Ukraine Investment Framework. This marks the official launch of Slovakia's support for Ukraine's strategic industry. Implemented by the Slovak Agency for International Development Cooperation and Eximbanka SR, the programme will enhance Ukraine's energy resilience by modernising power generation, transmission lines, and substations, thereby advancing EU green objectives, regional stability, and supporting Ukraine's integration into the European energy market.

This clearly demonstrates where our bilateral relations could progress if we maintain the current positive momentum. It also builds on the successful projects and initiatives our countries have undertaken. Undoubtedly, the most significant of such projects to date was the Slovak establishment of the Reverse Gas Flow in 2014 in the context of the gas crisis in Europe that same year. It was officially opened by the then Prime Ministers Robert Fico and Arsenii Yatseniuk to bolster Ukraine's energy security. The collaboration involved the adaptation of the Vojany–Uzhhorod pipeline to facilitate gas flow from Slovakia to Ukraine. By September 2014, the pipeline had achieved an annual capacity of up to 30 billion cubic metres, making a significant step in reducing Ukraine's dependence on Russian gas. And while we understand the need for diversification and independence, we have always called for openness and predictability in energy cooperation, particularly with regard to gas transit, which is a vital issue for Slovakia.

What we have always advocated under all circumstances and in any conditions is open and honest dialogue. We believe that neighbours should talk to each other to iron out differences, while recognising that our positions on some issues may never fully align. But this is what normal and healthy relations look like — consulting on topics where our perspectives differ and cooperating where we can deliver value and results. We particularly appreciate neighbourly relationships that are based precisely on delivering tangible benefits for our citizens. Improving the lives of Ukrainian citizens and raising the living standards in your country will undoubtedly raise the living standards in Slovakia, as Europe is an interlinked, interdependent space that we have shared

and will continue to share for centuries. One more example of such result-driven cooperation our countries can achieve is the so-called Carpathian Initiative we have established together with Poland. This is a particularly noteworthy platform aimed at strengthening cooperation between cross-border regions in Slovakia, Ukraine and Poland, attracting investments to implement concrete projects, and helping Ukraine on its path towards European integration. Here, Slovakia's practical, pragmatic, and principled positions converge perfectly: an independent, sovereign, and democratic Ukraine, firmly entrenched in the European Union after fulfilling the required accession criteria, is a strategic national interest of the Slovak Republic. Ukraine belongs to Europe, it belongs to our democratic club of countries, and we not only respect its will to become an EU Member State but are also prepared to actively assist Ukraine on this path.

Slovakia supports Ukraine. We share the importance of planning for Ukraine's future after the war ends, when Ukraine begins the process of successful and safe recovery.

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