



## ADVICE & TIPS – SLOVAKIA



- *Typical problems encountered:* It is difficult for EU graduates to find work in Slovakia as the country produces plenty of high quality graduates each year and Slovak language ability is required in most jobs. The most promising job opportunities for UK graduates are in teaching English as a foreign language or on placement with an international firm.
- *How to improve your chances:* Your chances of finding a job could be improved by waiting a few years after graduation and acquiring professional skills and experience. Learning Slovak before you go to Slovakia is another option and you may find information on courses at your local educational establishments, although it is not widely taught. Unless you are working as an English teacher or in an English-speaking international professional environment it is essential to have good Slovak language ability to have a realistic chance of getting a job. It is useful to have an understanding of German or Russian as these languages are spoken in business. Apart from teaching English, it may be possible to work for some non-governmental organisations (NGOs) using English as the main language.
- *Language requirements:* Slovak language ability is needed to study at Slovak universities, although this can be learned during the course. This is not the case for courses taught in English.

As Slovakia is a small country personal contacts play a key role. And the best way of finding a job is through personal contacts. Applicants are often approached by phone first and secondly invited for a personal interview.

### The Application Letter

In general a letter of application should create enough interest to make the potential employer want to look at your application in more detail and hopefully invite you for an interview. Your application letter, however, should not provide too much information about experience and qualifications; this will be provided in your CV.

Application letters usually accompany a CV for managerial positions, but whether an application letter is required, is always specified in the job advertisement.

References are always given separately and only on the employer's request. The application letter should be no longer than one, maximum two pages.

### The Curriculum Vitae

The key focus of your CV should be to persuade the employer to invite you for an interview. Therefore your CV is a marketing tool, which should be adapted to the market in which you intend to use it.

In Slovakia employers are looking for a functional, concise and market attractive CV. This entails that you should not limit your CV to education and work experience but also mention other skills and competencies. The CV should be about one to two pages long depending on the applicant's experience.

The CV should be convincing, but it is important that you don't exaggerate your qualifications.

## The Application Procedure

Making career decisions can be challenging and sometimes graduates struggle to know where to begin. Looking at vacancies is a common starting point but many vacancies are never advertised, so looking at job adverts will only ever give you a biased and partial picture of the graduate labour market in the Slovakia. If you are unsure which career will suit you, you would be better to spend some time thinking about yourself. Become better acquainted with yourself; be aware of your skills, interests and what motivates you. Think about the skills you wish to use at work, your feelings about further study, which working environments appeal to you, the sort of lifestyle you want and so on.

In total there will be one to three interviews depending on the position one is applying for. On-line applications are becoming slowly more common, however currently it are mainly the large multinational firms that use them.

## Where can I work?

- Major industries: vehicle manufacturing, engineering, food and drink, energy and telecommunications.
- Recent growth areas: passenger car manufacture, which has attracted major investment from international car producers. Slovakia is now the world's top car manufacturer in terms of the number of vehicles produced per inhabitant. There has also been substantial growth in electronics industries, particularly the production of flat screen televisions. Slovakia has underdeveloped infrastructure in comparison with Western Europe, so there is substantial growth in construction, energy, IT and telecommunications while the infrastructure is upgraded. The growth of foreign investment has increased demand for professional services such as law, accountancy and consultancy. This has increased the availability of professional jobs in local firms and in offices established by international consultancy firms, particularly in Bratislava.
- Industries in decline: metals manufacture, and some areas of engineering, textiles and agriculture.
- Shortage occupations: information technology, and professional-level jobs in engineering, energy and telecommunications.
- Major companies: The top 10 companies in Slovakia by sales are: Volkswagen Slovakia (car manufacture), Slovnaft (oil refining), Samsung Electronics, US Steel Kosice, SPP (gas distribution), Kia Motors (car manufacture), Peugeot-Citroen Slovakia (car manufacture), Slovak Electricity, Tesco Stores and Sony Slovakia.
- Major cities: Bratislava (the capital), Kosice, Zilina, Presov, Nitra and Banska Bystrica.

## What's it like working in Slovakia?

- Average working hours: may not exceed 40 hours per week. Depending on the type of work, normal working hours may range from 37.5 to 40 hours a week. Working overtime is not customary and employees are entitled to compensation for working overtime, on top of their normal wage. Slovaks start their day early and most small local shops are open from 6.30am. Offices and banks open from 9am to 5 or 6pm. The growth of 24-hour supermarkets has changed weekend retail opening hours, with more small stores abandoning the traditional Saturday afternoon and Sunday closure.

- Holidays: 15 public holidays, including Labour Day (1 May) and Slovak National Uprising Day (29 August). Basic leave entitlement is at least four weeks in a calendar year, although it is more for some professions, e.g. teaching.
- Tax rates: there is a flat tax of 19% on all types of income.
- Working practices and customs: These are not significantly different from other European countries. Business dress tends to vary with the culture of the organisation. Suits are standard in the financial sector, but in other industries suits may be required for high level meetings, visits to clients, etc., with a less formal dress code for the office.