

# THE URBAN DEVELOPMENT POLICY OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC BY 2030

Short version



**MINISTRY**  
OF TRANSPORT  
AND CONSTRUCTION  
OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

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DEVELOPMENT POLICY  
OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC  
BY 2030**

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also necessary to apply mechanisms that enable effective engagement of partners from different levels of government, private sector and civil society in the entire cycle of urban development. Joining resources, local capabilities and knowledge is the basis for establishing common solutions and achieving acceptable and sustainable results.

Well-functioning cities or towns and their wider functional areas, capable of flexible response to changing global conditions, are indispensable for achieving sustainable development of society as a whole. The Government of the Slovak Republic therefore commits the development of cities which play a significant role in the economy and the development of the society. In order to promote sustainable urban development, a set of specific measures is proposed in the national Urban Policy.

This short version of The Urban Development Policy of the Slovak Republic by 2030 is the English extract from the document which was adopted by Government Resolution no. 5/2018 of January 10, 2018. It introduces the main issues, principles, and priority tasks. It was prepared by the Ministry of Transport and Construction of the Slovak Republic, authorized to prepare and implement National Urban Policy as the central state administration body.

The full version of the document is available on <https://www.mindop.sk/uploads/media/dc4765f0d90557fb2f4eeced9bdf13c78f58f128.pdf>.

## Slovak Cities and Towns

Within the common harmonized definition adopted by the European Commission and the OECD in 2011, the city is defined ensuring that: there is a link to the political level; that at least 50 % of city the population lives in an urban centre; and that at least 75 % of the population of the urban centre lives in a city. Based on such definition, there are only 10 cities in Slovakia. It is often mentioned that Slovakia is among the least urbanized EU countries.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, small and medium-sized towns with a centre with between 5 000 and 50 000 inhabitants or even suburbs are not yet defined in a harmonised manner. But they cannot easily be considered to be just rural areas. The Slovak language does not distinguish between city and town but in English version it is more correct to refer to cities and towns or in general as to urban settlements or urban areas.

According to the legislation in force, it is possible to declare municipality as a city or town even the settlement with less than 5 000 inhabitants if it is an economic, administrative and cultural centre or tourism centre, or a spa area or provides services for the inhabitants of the surrounding municipalities or it has a secured transport connection with the surrounding municipalities or at least part of the built-up area within territory is of urban character. In the beginning of the reform process it was possible to declare municipality as urban one even if it doesn't meet such conditions but based only on fact that such status came from the history.

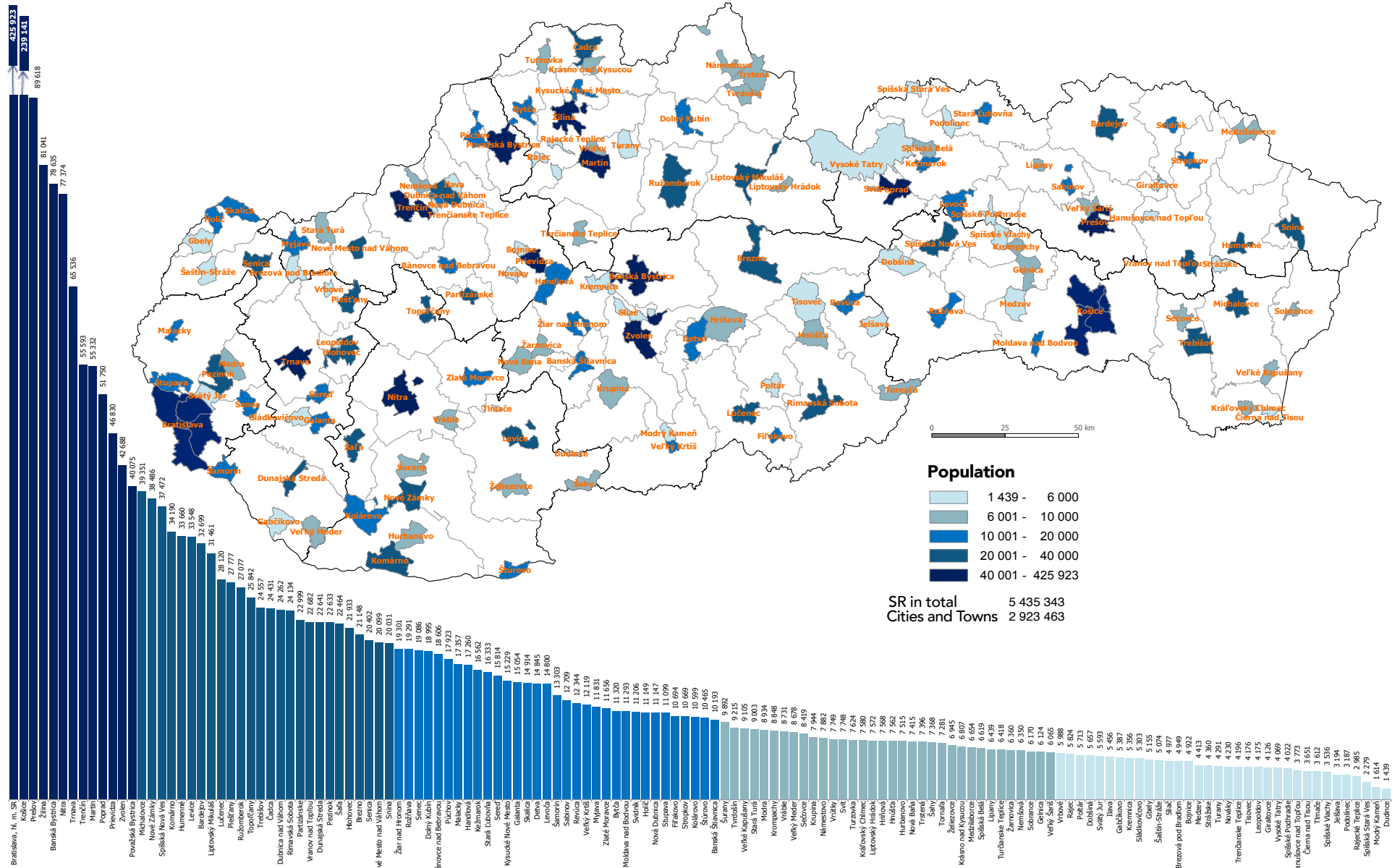
For the purposes of the national Urban Policy, a municipality with an urban status is considered to be a city or a town. Several experts disagree that it is a correct to distinguish between urban and rural areas just using their administrative status. Such a simplified dual division is not sufficient for the examining complex socio-economic development processes.

**The Slovak language does not distinguish between city and town but in English version it is more correct to refer to cities and towns or in general as to urban settlements or urban areas.**

<sup>1</sup> DIJKSTRA, L, POELMAN, H.: Regional focus: Cities in Europe – the new OECD\_EC definition



# Cities of the SR according to the number of inhabitants and size groups as of 31 December 2016<sup>2</sup>



2 Source: Statistical Office of the SR

There is a total of 140 cities and towns in the SR, which is less than 5 % of the total number of all 2 890 local municipalities. The population of cities and towns is more than 54 % of the whole country. The two largest cities of the SR – Bratislava and Košice, are under a special law which defines also their city districts that are viewed in many ways as separate municipalities in the system of municipal governance. The quantitative proportion of rural and urban population in the Slovak Republic is relatively balanced. Out of the total number of cities and towns, 23 have less than 5 000 inhabitants. Among the largest cities with a population of more than 50 000, it is possible to include 10 Slovak cities, of which 8, including the capital, is also the seat of the self-governing region, thus fulfilling the function of centres of self-governing regions.

Changes in the political and economic regime after 1989 and the process of transformation were also significantly reflected in the urban development. The transformation process was very complicated and complex and included all spheres. An important

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part of the political changes was a reform of the public administration. The main objective of the reform was to end the centralist model of the public administration and to transfer responsibilities and tasks to the territorial self-governments – decentralisation process. Changes have also been reflected in the economic, social and spatial structure of urban settlements. The change occurred in the structure of property ownership, real estate prices changed substantially, some municipalities changed their administrative boundaries, many industrial enterprises disappeared, and housing construction almost stopped. At the same time, the process of both residential and commercial suburbanization was activated, mainly driven by rising real estate prices in the built-up area of urban settlements. Severe changes have also occurred in the reproductive behaviour of the population, birth rate has

fallen sharply, and mortality has fallen, causing population to age. An increasing number of seniors in urban areas will create a strong demand for services for this target group. We can expect the need to increase the capacity and scope of social services, optimally based on principles of deinstitutionalisation.

Urban development is closely related to the key processes of the development of society, and it is natural that it reflects trends such as: changes in the value system of the population, decentralization, deregulation, civil society development, globalization and integration, the use of modern technologies and the transformation of society and economy to a knowledge-based one, a change of the dominance of production sectors, the nature of work, etc. Production and consumption activities are concentrated in the cities. They are considered to be key in generating, applying and spreading innovations

used in the most diverse areas of social and economic life. Many general characteristics of global but especially European urban processes can also be applied to Slovak urban areas. The urban settlements provide many services for broader catchment areas on a daily basis, especially job opportunities and education. They also provide health, cultural and sports facilities and many opportunities for spending leisure time.

The current urban development in Slovakia is in the final phase of the suburbanization, associated with the temporary population decrease in core cities, albeit with a continued concentration of population in suburbs or neighbouring municipalities but mainly still within functional urban areas. It is possible to assume that, just like the developed countries of Western Europe, Slovakia will also enter the selective re-urbanization phase, i.e. the process of population concentration in selected urban type settlements, motivated by the availability of employment opportunities and, above all, quality of services. The process of urbanization is not currently understood as a process of increasing the number of inhabitants in settlements with the status of a city, but the process of transforming the population into an urban one, especially through the life style.

Among Slovak cities, however, there are also cities located in the lagging regions (especially in the south of Central Slovakia and the north of Eastern Slovakia), which show signs that can be attributed to the phenomenon of urban shrinkage.<sup>3</sup> These towns, due to the unfavourable demographic structure, the lack of job opportunities, the greater concentration of a socially problematic population and the difficult accessibility, are not only losing population, but they are also aging. Paradoxically, these areas often have a valuable natural and cultural heritage. Possible solutions depend, to a large extent, on local leaders and their active approach, whether from the public or the private sector.

<sup>3</sup> The term „urban shrinkage“ is linked to the population decline in cities and other associated phenomena such as the gradual aging of population, the emigration of young and more skilled people, the rise in unemployment, a change in the age and social structure of the population, the stopping of immigration, the stagnation and falling of real estate prices.



# Vision and Principles of National Urban Development

The national Urban Policy is a framework document for urban development. The preparatory process included a broad working group, established a permanent exchange of information, ideas and opinions useful for the sustainable urban development. The process led to shape the vision of urban development in Slovakia, to propose generally beneficial and applicable principles and a comprehensive set of measures that will improve conditions for urban development. It has also contributed to the wider public debate on urban development.

The most general aim of the document is to highlight the importance of urban development for the overall national development. At the same time, the document emphasizes the complexity of sustainable urban development concept, points to the processes that need to be taken into account in order to make cities and towns in Slovakia more sustainable, resilient to external influences and provide conditions for a high-quality of life.

The specific goal of the Urban Policy is to define the vision of the ideal state of Slovakia's urban areas and propose the principles that should be followed.

The specific objective of the document is to propose measures that could support more systematic approach to urban development, to identify collaborating actors and their tasks.

The national Urban Policy, as the document approved by the Government of the Slovak Republic, is in the first instance directed to the central state administration bodies, especially those having responsibilities with great impact on self-government performance. The Urban Policy aims to link with the ongoing reform processes and activities in order to allow synergistic effects in favour of urban development. Another ambition is to strengthen cross-sectoral coordination and thus to bring added value also to other sectoral partners.

An important target group of the Urban Policy is self-government, focusing mainly on urban municipalities. The document encourages inter-municipal cooperation within

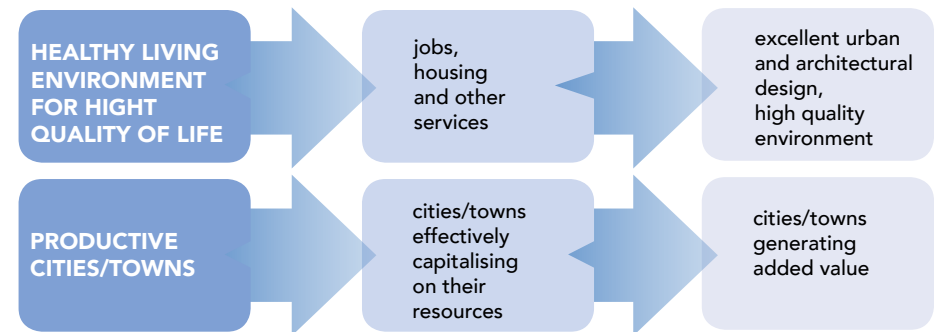
functional urban areas. In case of Slovakia, such cooperation is mainly motivated by more efficient provision of public services, support for the local economy and employment. Despite rural and urban development have different parameters, and the outcome always depends on their capacities, they can complement each other. The main premises should be that all actors are interested in the overall prosperity.

The Urban Policy determines the basic starting points, suggests the direction and approach. It has no ambition to be a strategy, as this would require different type of document, would have to be more specific, and define measurable goals to be reached by the state administration but also by municipalities. From the point of view of the autonomy in decision-making of municipal self-governments this is not possible to be enforced by state power.

In order to secure the sustainable and productive development of cities and towns, the Government of the Slovak Republic in co-operation with the invited representatives of the academic community, self-government representatives, experts from the areas concerned, as well as in communication with the professional public and active partners from the NGO and private sector agreed on the following vision of urban development of Slovakia:

**Urban areas in Slovakia will be managed in such a manner that they will ensure a healthy living environment for high quality of life through provision a diverse range of job opportunities, adequate housing and services as well as environmental protection, high quality of urban and architectural solutions. The productivity of Slovak cities and towns will be based on efficient and sustainable capitalisation of their own resources, and added value generating (see Figure 1).**

Fig. No. 1 – The vision of urban development of SR

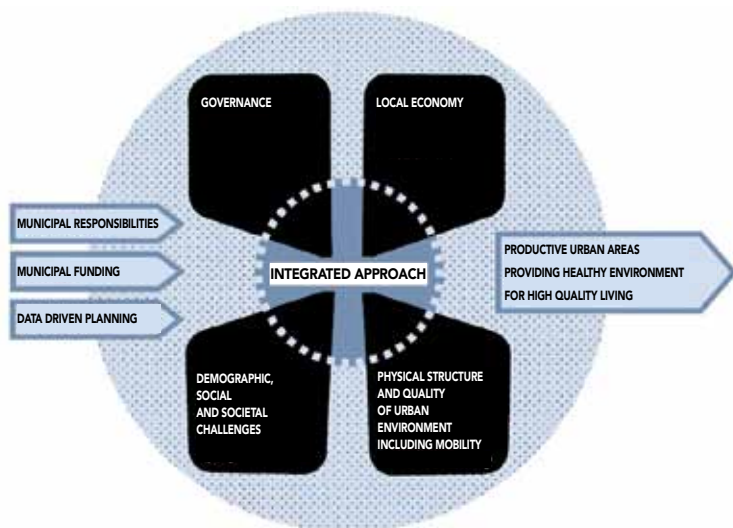




In relation to the vision, the basic principles of sustainable urban development specific for Slovakia were formulated, which should be optimally followed by all actors in planning and implementing urban measures and interventions:

- **strategic decision-making** – based on responsible utilisation and valorisation of available resources (material, human, financial) with the best possible development of their potential. It will respond to local needs and global trends, planned goals and measures will be prioritised according hierarchy, implementation continuously monitored, evaluated and updated;
- **integrated approach** – development will be based on an integrated horizontal (cross sectoral and economic, social, environmental and cultural), as well as vertical inter-connection and co-operation between actors, including the private and civil sectors;
- **comprehensive development of functional urban areas** – development will be based on intensive cooperation beyond administrative boundaries of self-governments, using multi-level governance, mutual coordination of individual activities and measures and the mutual exchange of information and positive examples.

**It is believed that if municipal responsibilities, and funding frameworks are well defined, urban areas plan their development on the basis of correct data while applying an integrated approach which includes good governance, favourable conditions for a functioning economy and which takes into account knowledge of demographic, environmental, social and societal challenges while applying the requirements for a good quality physical structure and urban environment, including efficient and sustainable urban mobility, it is possible to achieve productive cities and towns that provide a healthy environment for high quality living.**



## Priority tasks

In order to achieve progress over the medium term, the national Urban Policy identified areas which requires changes and specified the list of priority tasks including deadlines, responsibilities, and cooperation of involved actors. Those are considered to be the first steps of more systematic approach towards optimal targeted development of urban areas in Slovakia.

The proposed changes fall into two areas:

- **strengthening the role of urban development in the context of regional development, partnership and cooperation**
- **structural changes in the functioning of cities**

### ***Strengthening the role of urban development in the context of regional development, partnership and cooperation***

The development of cities and towns cannot be abstracted from the development of the broader region. The city or town most often is the core of functional urban area, centre of the economic, social and cultural life of the inhabitants of the wider territory. The national Urban Policy respects the existing legislative environment in which all municipalities, irrespective of their size and regardless of whether they are of a rural or urban nature, have the same responsibilities. However, it is necessary to look for ways to differentiate their tasks and search for objective criteria for such transformation.

The processes of decentralization have also brought the need of better, more precise and interdependent coordination of sectoral policies and approaches. It is now the priority to initiate and strengthen existing links between policies, as well as various levels of government. It also quite often happen that sectoral approach is applied by various ministries, and strategic or conceptual documents contradict. The dynamic social and economic development projected into the urban environment requires an interdisciplinary and multidimensional approach. It is therefore important to enable better coordination and synergic effects between policies.

The national Urban Policy has the ambition to engage in the ongoing processes of the improvement of the state management. That aims to build the strategic planning intervention logic across the central state administration bodies, to improve a link to the financing system, taking into account the factual, spatial and temporal interconnection of sectoral strategies and concepts. At the same time, it is important to strengthen the cooperation of territorial self-government bodies.



# Measures:

1



Prepare an overview of the services provided by urban municipal authorities, local state administration and self-governing regions with an emphasis on their interconnection and cooperation. Part of the overview will be dedicated to the capital city of Bratislava and the city of Košice, with an emphasis on their position and the relationships with the city districts.

**Deadline:** 31.12. 2018

**Responsible authority:** Ministry of Transport and Construction of the Slovak Republic  
**Cooperation:** Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic, Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic, Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic, Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic, Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic, Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic, Association of Towns and Municipalities of the Slovak republic, The Union of Towns and Cities of Slovakia, the capital city of SR, Bratislava, the city of Košice, K8, SK 8

2



Participate actively in the process of implementation of the strategic planning and management system in the state administration and to support the synergies between state policies and strategic objectives of territorial self-government, including securing support for urban development within the framework of the National Infrastructure Plan. (Ministry of Transport and Construction of the Slovak Republic, Office of the Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic for investment and Informatisation, Office of the Government of the Slovak Republic, Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic) + cooperation of superordinate authorities of self-government (Association of Towns and Municipalities of the Slovak republic, The Union of Towns and Cities of Slovakia, SK 8, K 8).

**Deadline:** ongoing

3



Establish a „Platform for the Development of Slovak Cities and Towns“, with the main aim to provide platform for professional discussion on the principles and practical applications of integrated urban development and management.

**Deadline:** 30. 06. 2018

**Responsible authority:** Ministry of Transport and Construction of the Slovak Republic

4



Link different existing platforms, providing access to information, support tools and examples of best practice in urban development.

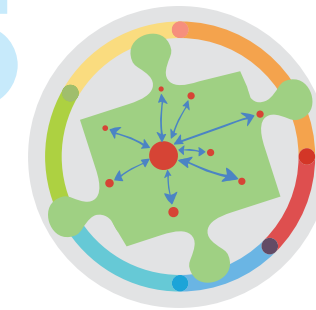
**Deadline:** 31. 12. 2020

**Responsible authority:**

Ministry of Transport and Construction of the Slovak Republic

**Cooperation:** Office of the Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic for investment and Informatisation

5



Elaborate pilot analysis of existing cooperation of a selected range of urban settlements and their surroundings (urban functional area), explore positive externalities coming from such cooperation for municipalities and inhabitants in the given territory, with the possibility to propose the modification of the existing structure and relations within the territory.

**Deadline:** 31. 12. 2019

**Responsible authority:**

Office of the Government of the Slovak Republic

**Cooperation:** Ministry of Transport and Construction of the Slovak Republic, Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic, Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic

6



Support formation and development of territorial cooperative structures consisting of urban municipalities and their neighbouring municipalities and preparation of joint integrated planning and strategic documents.

**Deadline:** ongoing

**Responsible authority:**

Office of the Government of the Slovak Republic

**Cooperation:** Ministry of Transport and Construction of the Slovak Republic

7



Integrate urban development into the regional development strategy as component of regional and territorial development policy, including the identification of specific objectives and tools to support the development of cities, towns and functional urban areas.

**Deadline:** 30. 6. 2019

**Responsible authority:**

Office of the Government of the Slovak Republic

**Cooperation:** Ministry of Transport and Construction of the Slovak Republic

8



Include support for the sustainable integrated development of cities, towns and functional urban areas among the national priorities in the negotiations on the preparation of the future EU Cohesion Policy.

**Deadline:** continuously until the Partnership

Agreement is approved after 2020

**Responsible authority:**

Office of the Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic for investment and Informatisation  
– Central Coordination Body

**Cooperation:** Office of the Government of the Slovak Republic, Ministry of Transport and Construction of the Slovak Republic

### **Structural changes in the functioning of cities and towns**

It is very important for sustainable urban development to explore related processes and early identify trends and problems. The crucial condition is to have access to reliable information and statistical data. The ongoing reform of statistical data collection system is good opportunity to improve quality of data needed for sustainable urban development. The aim is to optimize processes and to introduce new methodological framework and IT tools, to reduce the administrative burden of the population and other respondents.

In the next programming period after 2020, it is likely that funding for development projects from the European Structural and Cohesion Funds will drop. Therefore, it will

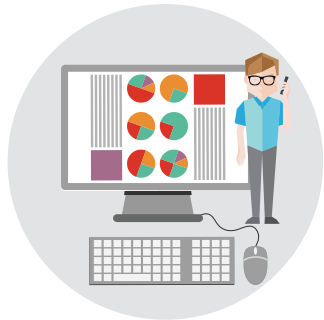
be necessary to look for ways to replace at least some of this anticipated deficit with national, municipal and other resources. Previous and existing possibilities to use these resources to cover the modernization debts at the local level have been and are limited. Therefore it is necessary to introduce new models of multi-source and hybrid funding of the urban development. Another debate must be conducted about efficiency of public spending.

Important aspect of the development of Slovak urban areas is the threat of raising social inequality and the associated spatial segregation and separation resulting from the social status of individual groups of the population. Several positive examples show that one approach to prevent social segregation is to promote a healthy social mix, take into account the needs of different actors in urban life, applying the principles of universal design, urban regeneration, and the involvement of civil society in urban communities. In this regards, unused, abandoned or neglected areas within built up areas have great potential to be regenerated. Such interventions would also heavily contribute to prevent urban sprawl and will cause intensification of inner-city structures.

Adverse effects of climate change become very serious problem also for Slovak urban areas. They have negative impacts on built up environment - buildings, networks, transport infrastructure, public spaces; the natural component of the urban environment - natural elements and greenery or green infrastructure; water management, agriculture, forestry but also population health. The effects of climate change will also be reflected in an increased urban consumption of energy for cooling in an urbanized environment, which will increase the demands for energy infrastructure to ensure a safe and reliable energy supply. It is necessary that urban authorities apply a systemic approach to adaptation to climate change. It is necessary to take into account at very early stage of urban planning a regulation. It is also important to evaluate the vulnerability of the territory and the potential risks and consequences of climate change in all key areas, without which it is not possible to propose adaptation measures at the local level. Preparedness and adequate adaptation of urban areas to the adverse impacts of climate change will contribute to reducing or at least partially eliminating the risk of deterioration of the health of the population, which is one of the possible consequences of climate change.

# Measures:

1



Assess the availability of existing data needed for urban development and, if necessary, to expand, adjust or modify sets of data collected by National Statistical System and in other sources. (Ministry of Transport and Construction of the Slovak Republic, Office of the Government of the Slovak Republic, Office of the Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic for investment and Informatisation, Association of Towns and Municipalities of the Slovak republic, The Union of Towns and Cities of Slovakia)  
+ cooperation of Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic.  
**Deadline:** 31.12. 2018

4



Promote the improvement of urban accessibility by increasing the preference of public passenger transport (rail, motor) and by promoting non-motorised transport, building cycling routes and other cycling infrastructure.  
**Deadline:** ongoing  
**Responsible authority:** Ministry of Transport and Construction of the Slovak Republic  
**Cooperation:** Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of the Slovak Republic

2



Analyse the possibility of introducing a pilot support tool to fund urban development and analyse the possibilities of expanding support from the State Housing Development Fund for revolving financing of projects in the area of urban development.  
**Deadline:** 31. 12. 2019  
**Responsible authority:** Ministry of Transport and Construction of the Slovak Republic  
**Cooperation:** Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic, Office of the Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic for investment and Informatisation

5



Encourage urban authorities to adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change and support inclusion of adaptation measures into urban planning.  
**Deadline:** ongoing  
**Responsible authority:** Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic  
**Cooperation:** Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic

3



Analyse obstacles to re-use and revitalisation of unused, abandoned and neglected areas in urban areas and propose support measures.  
**Deadline:** 30. 06. 2019  
**Responsible authority:** Ministry of Transport and Construction of the Slovak Republic, Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic  
**Cooperation:** Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic, Association of Towns and Municipalities of the Slovak republic, The Union of Towns and Cities of Slovakia, K 8, SK 8

6



Promote biodiversity protection in urban areas and their surroundings (protecting and creating green infrastructure, linking activities to protect biodiversity and human health, etc.).  
**Deadline:** ongoing  
**Responsible authority:** Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic  
**Cooperation:** Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic

# Conclusion

The Urban Development Policy of the Slovak Republic by 2030 is the first national conceptual document directly addressing the urban development matters. The priority tasks cover two main areas in which it is necessary to apply systemic changes: co-operation and coordination among various actors and structural changes including the most serious challenges such as data, environmental protection, urban mobility and funding.

The progress in implementation will be monitored and regularly reported to the ministry, the Government of the Slovak republic and above all to the stake holders – the members of the Platform for Development of Slovak Cities and Towns. Along with this specialised studies will be procured, public events organised and general publicity secured.

The implementation of the national Urban Policy as adopted, is just a the first stage of strengthening of integrated sustainable urban development of the functional urban areas in Slovakia. In order to get the solid results it is necessary to invest concentrated attention to all aspects of development processes and provide long-term support to urban and their neighbouring municipalities.





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