

Guide to Obtaining Slovak Citizenship for Slovaks Living Abroad

About Slovakia

The Slovak Republic, Slovakia for short, is a small country located in the very heart of Europe, literally. Many geographers believe that the geographical center of Europe is situated near the old Church of St. John the Baptist in the village of Kremnické bane. Next to this church is a stone that marks the center of Europe. This is evidenced by a plaque placed in stone with the inscription “Central Europe” and engraved dates of important historical events, such as the Slovak Republic’s establishment date on 1 January 1993.

In addition to its attractive geographical location, Slovakia is proud of its beautiful nature, which is ruled by the smallest alps in the world called the High Tatras. Finally, we cannot forget the rich history, whose memento is mainly a number of castles, such as Spiš Castle, which is the largest and, according to some sources, the most visited castle in Central Europe.

Although history lovers will undoubtedly enjoy themselves in Slovakia, due to its geographical location in the middle of Europe, Slovakia has seen many historical battles, relocations of the most famous civilizations (e.g., Roman Empire, Mongol Empire, Ottoman Empire), and coronations of famous rulers (e.g., Joseph I., Maria Theresa, Ferdinand V.), the most essential thing for every living Slovak will be the recent history in which the Slovak Republic has established itself as a modern state, in many respects reaching the standards of Western countries.

After more than forty years of struggle with communist totalitarianism, Slovakia managed to win this lengthy and frustrating battle. During his time, Slovakia witnessed brutal communist repression in the 1950s, the Warsaw Pact invasion (except Romania) in 1968 into what was then Czechoslovakia, which was a response to the efforts to democratize socialism, and finally, the Velvet Revolution, which overthrew the communist regime in 1989 and established democracy.

The fall of the communist regime foreshadowed a relatively long journey for a newly established fragile democracy among modern, prosperous European countries. This journey began at the very beginning of the Slovak Republic’s independence, when the Slovak Republic joined the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and later, in 2000, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), an intergovernmental organization of the world’s most economically developed countries, which have adopted the principles of democracy and the market economy. However, joining these organizations did not immediately guarantee Slovakia’s integration into the strongest Western structures with strict requirements for their members. The Slovak Republic had to prove to the Western countries in the coming years that it was ready to become a reliable partner, which it succeeded at the beginning of the 21st century when in 2004, it joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union.

The Slovak Republic also acceded to the so-called Schengen Agreement in 2004, which enabled it to officially enter the Schengen area, parts of Europe, and several overseas territories at the end of 2007, where persons and goods can cross borders freely at any point in Schengen Contracting Parties without border control.

Slovakia’s integration into NATO, the European Union, and the Schengen area alone was still not enough for Slovaks and, unlike many other Eastern European countries (e.g., the historically and culturally close Czech Republic), adopted the euro in 2009. Slovakia thus became a safe and economically open country with a stable and strong currency.



holder of a Slovak passport to travel freely within the European Economic Area (including the European Union, Iceland, Norway, and Liechtenstein) and the Schengen area without visa requirements and in the case of the Schengen area without border control. Thanks to this, the Slovak passport was ranked for the year 2022 by Henley & Partners, which annually evaluates the “strength of passports,” in ninth place (together with the Lithuanian passport) out of a total of 199 passports. The holder of a Slovak passport can visit up to 182 countries worldwide.

Who are Slovaks living abroad?

Turbulent historical developments usually lead to a significant emigration rate from the affected area. It was no different in the case of Slovakia. The economic and later political situation in Slovakia at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century was terrible. Economic backwardness, unemployment, national oppression – Hungarianization, have forced thousands of people to radically change their lives and go abroad.

However, at the beginning of the 20th century, emigration did not end. The two world wars, the communist regime, the invasion of Warsaw Pact troops, and the vision of a better life in the West contributed to further waves of emigration, leading to a mass exodus of hundreds of thousands of Slovaks in the last two centuries.

People migrated mainly to the USA, but later also to Canada and other countries. They have started families in these countries or have already come to them with their families. Many returned to Slovakia with the money earned, but most have settled permanently in their new homes.

Generations of descendants who followed their Slovak ancestors became citizens of the states their ancestors came. However, many of these descendants did not forget their Slovak roots, took an active interest in the culture of their ancestors, and passed on their knowledge to future generations.

The Slovak Republic did not forget the descendants of Slovaks who emigrated abroad and **amended its Citizenship Act on 1 April 2022 to make it easier for them to obtain Slovak citizenship**.

In response to the amendment, this guide summarizes the changes made to the Citizenship Act and provides guidance to Slovaks living abroad on obtaining Slovak citizenship.

How can Slovaks living abroad acquire Slovak citizenship?

I.A Summary of the process of obtaining Slovak citizenship by Slovaks living abroad

Obtaining Slovak citizenship consists of **three milestones** if the applicant does not yet have a certificate of a Slovak living abroad.

The first milestone is **obtaining a certificate of a Slovak living abroad**. The applicant must have a direct ancestor (parent, grandparent, etc.) of Slovak nationality, regardless of whether he is still alive or must be of Slovak nationality himself. The time required to obtain a certificate of a Slovak living abroad depends on the circumstances of the specific case. In addition, the applicant must prove their national awareness, which may take some time if they have not yet grown one during their lifetime. Therefore, the exact timeframe cannot be determined, as the cultivation of national consciousness is a subjective process, the length of which depends mainly on the applicant’s activity. Overall, however, obtaining a certificate of a Slovak living abroad usually takes about three to four months.



After obtaining a certificate of a Slovak living abroad, another, the second milestone is **obtaining a temporary residence permit in the Slovak Republic**. An applicant who holds a Slovak living abroad certificate can obtain a residence permit without proving the purpose of the stay. A temporary residence permit for a Slovak living abroad can be obtained within 30 days of the application. Still, in individual cases, the process may be extended.

After obtaining a temporary residence permit in the Slovak Republic based on a certificate of a Slovak living abroad, the last third milestone is the **acquisition of Slovak citizenship**, which depends on whether the applicant has a so-called benefit to the community of Slovaks living abroad or not.

An applicant without the benefit to the community of Slovaks living abroad must complete at least three years of residence in the Slovak Republic to obtain Slovak citizenship. As this scenario is very time-consuming and unrealistic for the vast majority of applicants, in this guide, we deal only with **applicants with benefits to the community of Slovaks living abroad** who do not have to meet the obligation to stay in the Slovak Republic for at least three years. Furthermore, the applicant does not even have to prove knowledge of the Slovak language. However, the applicant must demonstrate a significant contribution to the benefit to the community of Slovaks living abroad, from which they come, in the economic, scientific, technical, cultural, social, or sports fields.

Even in this case, it is difficult to determine the time required to obtain Slovak citizenship if the applicant has not yet earned a benefit to the community of Slovaks living abroad but plans to do so. The Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic assesses the citizenship application, requesting the opinion of the Office for Slovaks Living Abroad (the “Office”) or other state bodies to evaluate the application, and then sends its evaluation to the Minister of the Interior of the Slovak Republic.

This process can be quite time-consuming, and at the date of writing this guide, there was no decision-making practice to determine how long it takes to decide on the granting of Slovak citizenship for an applicant who holds a Slovak living abroad certificate and also demonstrated the benefit to the community of Slovaks living abroad.

I.B Details on obtaining a certificate of a Slovak living abroad

First of all, it is necessary to define who is a Slovak living abroad from the point of view of Slovak law. Only a person who meets the following criteria can apply to the Office or the embassy of the Slovak Republic in the state in which this person resides to issue a certificate to exercise rights or benefits for Slovaks living abroad (i.e., also to obtain Slovak citizenship).

A Slovak living abroad is defined in the Act on Slovaks Living Abroad as a person who does not have a permanent residence in the Slovak Republic and

- (1) is a citizen of the Slovak Republic, or
- (2) is not a citizen of the Slovak Republic but retains national awareness, and he or his ancestors in the direct line have Slovak nationality.

To issue a certificate, the applicant must prove that he meets at least one of the above criteria.

The applicant proves the **Slovak nationality** by an official document containing a record of the applicant’s Slovak nationality or ancestor in the direct line. This information may be stated in an official document, which is, in particular, a birth certificate, baptismal certificate, registry extract, marriage certificate, certificate of citizenship or certificate of permanent residence of the applicant, deed of release from the state union of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, Slovak Socialist Republic or of the Slovak Republic, school certificate, military book, working book, house book, certificate of nationality from the Slovak National Archive, the National Archive of the Czech Republic, the State Archive of the Transcarpathian Region in Uzhhorod or another national archive of Ukraine or the former USSR, including the census if it contains a record of nationality under the law of the state whose authority was issued, a passenger manifest, etc.



National awareness, which is an active manifestation of the Slovak nation and the values that represent the Slovak language, Slovak cultural heritage, and traditions, shall be demonstrated by the applicant's statement of the results of his public activities, which show his national awareness or written testimony of an expatriate organization operating in the place of his residence and if there is no such organization a written testimony of at least two Slovaks living abroad who reside in the same state as the applicant.

National awareness can also be demonstrated by mastering the Slovak language, by providing a certificate of attendance at a school with the Slovak language of instruction or a school certificate issued by a school with the Slovak language of instruction; in such a case, it is not necessary to submit written testimony from the expatriate organization. The document proving the applicant's national awareness must not be older than six months; this does not apply if the applicant demonstrates national awareness by school certificate.

The application for a certificate is submitted in person at the Office or at the embassy of the Slovak Republic in the applicant's country of residence.

The application must be **accompanied by**:

- (1) two currently identical color photographs of the applicant with dimensions of 3.5 x 4.5 cm (pictures taken in photo booths are not accepted by the Office);
- (2) a photocopy of part of a valid travel document or a valid identity document of the applicant with personal data, photograph, number, series of the document and its validity; the original of the document must be submitted for verification;
- (3) the applicant's birth certificate;
- (4) birth certificates of the applicant's ancestors in a direct line up to the birth certificate of the applicant's ancestor, after which the applicant proves Slovak nationality;
- (5) a photocopy of a certificate or a Slovak living abroad of the applicant's ancestor or descendant in the direct line, if it was issued;
- (6) a document certifying the applicant's integrity, which is a transcript from the criminal record or a similar certificate issued by a competent authority of a state of which the applicant is a national, as well as a state in which the applicant resides, not older than three months (criminal record or other document issued by a competent authority of a state must prove integrity throughout the territory of the issuing state);
- (7) proof of payment of an administrative fee of EUR 10.

If the **applicant is 14 to 18 years old**, the application for a certificate must be accompanied by the written consent of the applicant's legal representatives to issue the certificate to the applicant, on which the signatures of the legal representatives must be officially verified (notarized), as well as photocopies of the applicant's legal representatives' identity documents presented during the official verification (notarization) of signatures.

If the **applicant is under 14 years of age**, the application for a certificate must also be accompanied by:

- (1) a photocopy of part of a valid travel document or a valid identity document of the applicant's legal representative submitting the application on behalf of the applicant with personal data, photograph, number, serial number, and its validity (original documents must be submitted for inspection);
- (2) a photocopy of a certificate of a Slovak living abroad of the applicant's legal representative or other applicant's ancestor in the direct line, if issued;
- (3) a written consent of the applicant's second legal representative to issue a certificate to the



applicant, on which the signature of the second legal representative must be officially verified (notarized);

- (4) a photocopy of the identity document of the applicant's second legal representative, which was submitted for verification of their identity during the official verification (notarization) of the signature.

Documents issued by courts and authorities that are valid in the applicant's home country as public documents are considered public documents in the Slovak Republic if they are **provided with the prescribed verifications**, i.e., if they bear the "APOSTILLE" certification clause (for the Hague Convention countries) or are subject to legalization or super legalization (for other countries), with certification clauses **not being older than six months**.

Certificate in the form of "APOSTILLE" or legalization or super legalization is not required for public documents issued by an authority of a Member State of the European Union under Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council (EU) 2016/1191 of 6 July 2016 on promoting the free movement of citizens by simplifying the requirements for presenting certain public documents in the European Union.

Documents issued by the applicant's home country must be **officially translated into Slovak** (including stamps, signatures, and official stamps on the official translation of the document into Slovak). However, if the documents are issued in the Czech language, a translation into the Slovak language is not required.

The Office only accepts an official translation made by an official translator of the applicant's home country, entered in the relevant home country register, or by an official translator registered by the Ministry of Justice of the Slovak Republic. The competence of the official translator of the home country shall be certified to the applicant by the competent authority of the home country in the form of "APOSTILLE" (for the Hague Convention countries) or legalization or super legalization (for other countries), with certification clauses **not being older than six months**. The above verifications are not required if the competence of the official translator of the home country is confirmed for the Office by the relevant embassy of the Slovak Republic on the cover letter by which it forwards the application to the Office.

The Office is **entitled to request additional documents** from the applicant at any time during the procedure for issuing the certificate if the Office deems it necessary to determine the exact and complete state of affairs, e.g., to **clarify any fact concerning the applicant or the applicant's ancestors in a direct line**. If the documents submitted by the applicant with the application reveal a mutual non-compliance, the Office shall **invite the applicant to justify such non-compliance**. The Office may also **summon the applicant to a personal meeting**, e.g., to find out the applicant's national awareness and cultural identity, personal ties and relationship to the Slovak nation, and knowledge of Slovak traditions.

As a rule, the Office shall decide **within 60 days of receiving the application** for a certificate with all the requisites. The period for the decision begins to run from the delivery of the application to the Office, even if the application was submitted at the embassy of the Slovak Republic. However, this deadline is only ordinary, and the Office may decide for longer.

A Slovak living abroad is issued with a certificate **for an unlimited time**. If the applicant is under the age of 18, the certificate shall be issued either for three years, for five years, or up to the age of 18.

I.C Details on obtaining a temporary residence permit in the Slovak Republic for a Slovak living abroad

Once the applicant has been issued a certificate of a Slovak living abroad, obtaining the necessary temporary residence permit in the Slovak Republic is **considerably simplified**. The applicant may



stay in the Slovak Republic until the temporary residence is granted. After granting temporary residence, the applicant **may do business, work, and study in the Slovak Republic without the need for additional immigration permits.**

The application for temporary residence is submitted in person at the Immigration Police competent according to the applicant's place of residence in the Slovak Republic or at the embassy of the Slovak Republic accredited for the country of which the applicant is a citizen or in which the applicant resides.

The application must be **accompanied by**:

- (1) a valid passport;
- (2) two color photographs measuring 3 x 3.5 cm;
- (3) a Slovak living abroad certificate;
- (4) a transcript from the criminal record of the country of which the applicant is a national and of the countries in which he has resided for more than 90 days in the last three years for six consecutive months (this does not apply if the applicant submits the application within 60 days of the issuance of a Slovak living abroad certificate);
- (5) proof of payment of an administrative fee of EUR 4.50.

Documents **must not be older than 90 days** at the time of application (except for a Slovak living abroad certificate).

All documents issued abroad must be **officially certified** in the form of "APOSTILLE" or legalization or super legalization and must be translated into Slovak by an official translator registered by the Ministry of Justice of the Slovak Republic.

As a rule, the Immigration Police shall decide **within 30 days of receiving the application** for a temporary residence permit with all the requisites. However, this deadline is only ordinary, and the Immigration Police may decide for longer.

Temporary residence for a Slovak living abroad is **granted for five years**, and it can be extended, even repeatedly.

I.D Details on obtaining Slovak citizenship by a Slovak living abroad with a residence permit in the Slovak Republic

Slovaks living abroad who are holders of a certificate and have been granted temporary residence in the Slovak Republic can obtain Slovak citizenship based on a citizenship application. As we have already mentioned, there are two types of applicants:

- (1) the **first type** consists of applicants without the so-called benefits to the community of Slovaks living abroad, who must meet the condition of a stay of at least three years in the Slovak Republic. The Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic will decide on their application, while it will be possible to file an appeal against the decision, which is determined by the Minister of the Interior of the Slovak Republic;
- (2) the **second type** consists of applicants with the so-called benefit to the community of Slovaks living abroad, who do not have to meet the condition of a minimum stay in the Slovak Republic. Their application will be decided directly by the Minister of the Interior, against whose decision it is not possible to file an appeal.

The second type of applicants must prove their **significant contribution to the community of Slovaks living abroad** from which they come. The Office, whose opinion is the basis for the decision of the Minister of the Interior, will request the testimony of an expatriate organization operating in the applicant's place of residence for their significant contributions to the community of Slovaks living



abroad.

We recommend a responsible and prudent applicant – to save time and ensure the issuance of a decision on granting Slovak citizenship as soon as possible – on their own initiative to contact the nearest expatriate organization, which can provide such testimony in writing. In addition, the expatriate organization can create opportunities for those interested in obtaining Slovak citizenship to become a significant benefit to the community of Slovaks living abroad by participating in projects aimed at, for example, the promotion and development of Slovak culture and traditions.

Well-known **expatriate organizations for Slovaks living abroad** are, for example:

- (1) [+421 Foundation](#) (New York, NY, USA)
- (2) [Canadian Slovak League](#) (Mississauga, ON, Canada)
- (3) [The National Council of the Slovak National Minority](#) or [Slovak Matica in Serbia](#) (Serbia)

After a three-year stay in the Slovak Republic (in case of the first type of applicant) or after obtaining a temporary residence permit (in case of the second type of applicant), it is possible to apply for Slovak citizenship.

The application for granting Slovak citizenship is submitted in person at the competent district office in Slovakia, the diplomatic mission, or the consular office of the Slovak Republic.

The application must be **accompanied by**:

- (1) a detailed structured curriculum vitae stating the name, surname, maiden name, birth number (if assigned), date and place of birth, address of permanent residence, details of education, employment, other economic activity, language skills, special abilities, interests, and the date and signature of the applicant;
- (2) a valid identity document containing the current face of the applicant;
- (3) the applicant's birth certificate;
- (4) proof of marital status, which is a marriage certificate, a valid judgment or a certificate of divorce, the death certificate of the spouse, if the applicant is a married man or a married woman, divorced or widowed;
- (5) proof of residence in the Slovak Republic and, in the case of a former citizen, proof of last permanent residence or affidavit of such residence;
- (6) a certificate of integrity not older than six months, which is a transcript from the criminal record of each state of which the applicant is or has been a national and a transcript from the criminal record of each state in which the applicant has been authorized to reside in the last 15 years before applying for Slovak citizenship, or another certificate of integrity issued by the competent authorities of these states;
- (7) a Slovak living abroad certificate;
- (8) a questionnaire of the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic completed by the applicant.

The application shall be accompanied by other documents if the competent district office cannot obtain them from the information systems. If the applicant does not have them or they are irrelevant, the applicant may replace them with a solemn declaration (affidavit).

The Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic shall decide on granting Slovak citizenship in the case of the first type of applicant **within 24 months of receiving the application**. However, this deadline is only ordinary, and the Ministry of the Interior of the Slovak Republic may decide for longer.

As already mentioned, at the date of publishing this guide, there was no decision-making practice from



which it would be possible to determine how long it takes to decide on the granting of Slovak citizenship for the second type of applicant, i.e., a holder of a Slovak living abroad certificate who has significantly contributed to the community of Slovaks living abroad. However, we assume that **this process should be substantially faster.**

Conclusion

Although the possibilities for foreign Slovaks to acquire Slovak citizenship have significantly expanded since 1 April 2022, as the amendment to the Citizenship Act has made it easier for many people who have not yet tried or renounced their attempts, the acquisition of citizenship still remains a legally and administratively demanding process, especially if the person interested in Slovak citizenship does not even have a certificate of a Slovak living abroad.

It is also a challenge for a Slovak-speaking person to get through this process successfully and effectively, so we recommend any foreign Slovak who is interested in Slovak citizenship request assistance from a Slovak law firm.

Our lawyers have a perfect command of the acquisition of Slovak citizenship by Slovaks living abroad, have a lot of practical experience in the immigration agenda, and know several world and local languages. Therefore, they will be happy to help you.