

Welcome to Slovakia

Are you under 18
years old and just
arrived in Slovakia?



HERE YOU CAN
FIND USEFUL
INFORMATION

Where am I?

Hello! You are in Slovakia.

Slovakia is located in Central Europe and is a member state of the European Union. It has borders with Hungary, Austria, the Czech Republic, Poland, and Ukraine. Other than Ukraine, all these countries are also members of the European Union. This means that they have similar laws. Austria and Slovakia use the same currency as some other members of the European Union, which is the Euro. The capital of Slovakia is Bratislava. The official language is Slovak, and many people can speak English or German.



Who is considered as a child in Slovakia?

**You will be considered a child until
the age of 18.**

In Slovakia and the European Union, you will be considered a child until the age of 18. **All children are protected regardless of their nationality or legal status.**

If you are a child travelling without your parents, you have the right to special protection in Slovakia through Child Protection authorities. Special Protection refers to support for children travelling or staying in Slovakia without their parents/caregivers.

What are the rights of children in Slovakia?

All children, regardless of their nationality or legal status, have various rights, such as those relating to the family environment and childcare, health and welfare, education, leisure and culture, and special protection measures guaranteed in the United Nations Child Rights Convention which has been ratified by Slovakia.

To enjoy these rights, you need to inform the authorities, and international organizations **that you are under 18 years old**. If you have documents proving your age, present them to the authorities. Remember to keep your documents safe! No one is allowed to take them from you or your family, except border guards or police who will need to check them for a short period before returning them to you. If you do not have such documents with you, you can tell the authorities how old you are. If the authorities are still not sure about your age, they may have to undertake some assessments.

If you do not speak Slovak, you have the right to request an interpreter to help you communicate in the language that you speak when required at all stages.



What happens to children who are traveling without parents?

Children travelling without their parents will have a special status; if this is your case, the Slovak child protection authorities have the responsibility to protect you and to ensure that your physical and emotional well-being (your “best interest”) is a priority. This means that in all actions affecting you, whether undertaken by public or private entities, your **best interest shall be a primary consideration**. If you are not travelling with your parents, but with other relatives who are taking care of you, the Slovak child protection authorities will work with your relatives to issue an official legal document, to validate this care arrangement and responsibility to look after you in Slovakia. If you **are travelling alone, without parents or relatives**, the Slovak child protection authorities will place you in the Children and Families Centre to ensure your safety, where a child protection expert from the child protection authorities will be your guardian.



What does “guardian” mean?

A guardian is a person who is responsible for protecting your interests in the absence of your parents. This person is legally responsible for you and will represent you before the relevant authorities in Slovakia. **You STILL have the RIGHT to express your thoughts and wishes**, but all formal actions and decisions affecting you need to be taken by your guardian. For example, your guardian will represent you in front of the police/ court or sign official documents on your behalf, for example, if you want to enrol in a school or are admitted to a hospital.

What is it like to live in the Children and Families Centre?

These Centers are located all over Slovakia, with one Center in the town of Medzilaborce that specializes in caring for non-Slovak children. The staff at the centre will take care of you and provide you with everything you need, such as food, clothing and health care, for as much time as needed. You will also need to attend Slovak language courses and school while in the Centre. It is an open centre, and all movements need to be discussed with the social worker. However, once you enter the Centre you will need to finish the medical quarantine which might take up to one month. **You can contact your family if you wish to do so**. The Centre for Children and Families staff will be happy to help you do so and answer your questions.

If I **do not know where my family is**, can someone help me find them?

Yes, **you can trace your family if you have lost contact with them**, and you do not know where they are. To get help with this, you can tell the staff at the centre that you wish to trace your family to find them, and they will support your request and follow up with authorities to start the tracing if applicable.

If I know **where some of my family members are**, can someone help me to get in contact with them?

If your parents, adult siblings, aunts or uncles are in another country, **you may have the possibility** to be reunited with your family. Usually, the process of family reunification is initiated by your guardian with the support of the national authorities named the Migration Office. You need to tell your guardian about your wish to be reunited with your family and provide details about your family such as names, contact numbers and addresses so they can follow up with the authorities on your behalf. The process may take time and it is not guaranteed in all cases that you will be reunited with your family; it depends on different factors such as **your safety, your relationship with the family members, and your family conditions**. Remember that you can always talk to your guardian or social worker to better understand the process and the different steps.

What are my options in Slovakia?

If you are **afraid of returning** to your home country because you fear being harmed because of your race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, **you have the right to apply for asylum or temporary protection (dočasné útočisko)**. Your legal guardian will fill out the asylum application on your behalf. During the interviews with the presence of your legal guardian, you will be asked questions to understand what your fear is, and if you would be at harm if you return home. If you are already in the Centre for Children and Families, you can ask your guardian or a social worker to explain the process.

Also, remember you can also **write to UNHCR** if you need assistance and more information in your preferred language at “**svkbrprot@unhcr.org**” or you can **contact the UNHCR Helpline** who speaks English, Slovak, Ukrainian and Russian at : **0800 22 12 30** (toll-free line, call from Slovak tel. number) **+421 2 22 11 56 50** (call from non-Slovak tel. number)

For more information:

On the process:
<https://help.unhcr.org/slovakia/asylum/>



On assistance to children:
<https://help.unhcr.org/slovakia/children/>



Support from other organisations:

