



# **Independent Think Tanks in Slovakia**

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### Introduction

The process of society's transformation in post-communist countries represented, in general, the introduction of a model based on liberal values (liberal democratic regimes); it was a process of wide liberalization of society in political and economic spheres. It created momentum for proponents of liberal views and values and formed the real space for liberal politics and policies. Many public intellectuals of liberal orientation and views (anti-regime dissidents, writers, artists, scholars, civic activists) constituted the first "revolutionary" wave/generation of democratic politicians, who influenced domestic political discourse, speaking in the name of liberal principles. Think tanks in Slovakia generally emerged in this liberal political space and played an important role both in ideological and organizational terms.

Of course, think tanks were not the primary actors in this space. Several political parties that declared themselves liberal were formed and acted in Slovakia since 1989. However, representatives of other political forces and the proponents of various ideological concepts, not only center-right politicians (apart of liberal, also conservatives and Christian democrats), but also center-left politicians (social democrats, socialists, post-communists) have been involved in the process of society's liberalization as well. Liberals were faced with a specific kind of political rivalry: being in fierce confrontation with the real enemies of democratic transformation, open society and liberal democracy (authoritarian forces – Communists, populists, nationalists), they also had to compete politically in the period of transition with their natural allies with whom they had to secure and to boost the accomplishments of the initial stage of transformation (the fundamentals of pluralistic political systems, free market economy, developed systems of protection of human and minority rights, pro-Western foreign and security policy, etc.). In Slovakia the success of liberal policies in the main areas of society was possible as a result of common efforts of a wide range of center-right political forces and

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organizations, with liberal think tanks among them. However the price for such alliances was often the weakening positions of liberal political formations.

### **1. The think tank community in Slovakia**

#### **1.1 Political Background**

Slovakia is one of the success stories of the transition in Eastern Europe, especially as far as the economic performance is taken into account. The country has a vibrant civil society, which has been put under pressure by the rise of populism. In contrast to other Eastern European countries, populism in Slovakia did not peak in the 2000s, but was present since the 1990s when the political scene was dominated by the national populist Meciar.

The establishment of a democratic political system in Slovakia was indispensably connected with the November 1989 “Velvet Revolution” in Czechoslovakia that removed the 40-year-rule of the Communist party and marked the beginning of the society’s democratic transformation. The democratic regime emerged as the result of a non-violent political revolution that combined mass public rallying for principal societal changes, and the negotiations of representatives of civic movements with officials of the old regime on the transfer of power and transition to democracy.

The Communist regime in the ÈSSR was one of the most repressive in Central Europe. It stifled any alternative political activity and preserved its own totalitarian character during the period of Soviet “perestroika,” when other communist regimes partially liberalized. There were no reformist wings that could introduce alternatives to the politics of the official party leadership within the Communist party of Czechoslovakia (KSÈ). Legalized opposition political structures did not exist in either the Czech Republic or Slovakia.

The main engine of the November 1989 anticommunist revolution in Slovakia was Public against Violence (VPN), a civic movement that emerged from the wave of civic resistance that arose after the police brutally intervened in a mass student protest in Prague. The leadership of VPN was partially recruited from a small community of

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active opponents of the communist regime who espoused different ideological and political orientations, mainly it was recruited from the circles of representatives of non-conformist and opposition intellectual elite who surfaced during the communist period of the “islands of positive deviation” within the existent structures in society. In Slovakia the dissident and civic movements against the communist regime in the 1970s and 1980s were not as active or large as they were in the Czech Republic.

The leading, driving force within the VPN movement was a group of liberally oriented intellectuals (prevailingly scholars in social and human sciences) and civic activists. Few months later this group succeeded to become a dominant political force in the country for the period of two years, playing the role of the main actor of systemic changes in society. In 1990 – 1992 VPN acted as a liberally oriented, non-populist governing political formation.

VPN as well as its Czech partner, the Civic Forum, chose in 1989 a non-violent way to encourage regime change, because it respected the principles of legality and constitutionality in the transition to democracy. In these circumstances, the main condition of respecting the constitution of the ÈSSR, adopted in 1960, was removing the provisions that anchored the Communist party’s monopoly of power and its ideological doctrine.

During the initial period after toppling the communist regime, a concept of ‘non-political politics’ prevailed within the VPN movement; it was based on the idea that its primary role would be control of power. This concept directly ensued from the movement’s inadequate preparedness to fill the power vacuum created after the fall of communist regime. According to many protagonists of the Velvet Revolution, an important role at this stage was played by “specific Slovak phenomenon – intellectuals’ reluctance to become professional politicians and people’s distrust in “masters”, i.e. high government officials, regardless of their origin or moral and professional background”. In the words of Soòa Szomolányi, “part of revolution, which was also called a ‘revolution based on negotiation’, was that VPN leaders were not ready to take over power following the collapse of the communist system. Liberal

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intellectuals who opposed the communist regime on the level of reflection rather than that of action were not practically prepared to take over power. Most legitimate activists of the revolutionary civic movement lacked the ambition to become political leaders and did not want – or hesitated too long – to fill executive or legislative posts”. As it quickly turned out, the oversimplified concept of the political party’s role as a mere controller of power was not enough to provide a foothold to pro-reform policies that were strongly opposed by the ‘old structures’. Subsequently, this concept indirectly allowed populist forces that had emerged on the political scene to take initiative and drum up commanding public support over the next two years.

In the early stage of the transformation process (1990 – 1992), the two relevant political parties whose internal character and preferred political patterns showed clear traces of ‘hard’ populism emerged on Slovakia’s political landscape; both of them ruled the country between 1994 and 1998 and both of them have participate in power in a subordinated position since the 2006 elections. One – the Slovak National Party (SNS) – drew its voter support among radical ethnic nationalists, while the other – the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) – based its strategy on resistance against the launched liberal reforms and on power ambitions of its leader who systematically built his image of an unfaltering defender of ordinary citizens’ interests.

The SNS became the chief representative of nationalistic political forces. Founded in March 1990, the party’s first public act was staging a demonstration before the building of the Slovak National Council, the country’s parliament, in protest against an attempt to remove a Communist Party representative Rudolf Schuster from the post of parliament speaker. The slogans presented at this demonstration clearly indicated that the new party would draw its ideological and political support from separatist anti-Czechoslovak (i.e. anti-Czech) tendencies and anti-Hungarian resentment shared by some part of the Slovak population. Shortly after its founding, the SNS openly began to advocate the concept of Slovakia’s full independence.

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The efforts to advertise the idea of Slovakia as a full-fledged independent country in the social and political discourse intensified after the first free parliamentary elections in 1990, in which the SNS became a parliamentary party. Apart from the SNS, these efforts were fueled by non-parliamentary but exceptionally assertive extreme nationalist formations as well as ‘nationally-oriented’ cultural societies led by Matica slovenská, a state-financed cultural and educational organization. These groupings openly began to tie the notion of independent Slovakia to the legacy of the wartime Slovak State, a vassal to Nazi Germany between 1939 and 1945. To present their ideas, nationalist and separatist forces used various social events of symbolic nature, for instance unveiling a plaque in Bánovce nad Bebravou in memory of Jozef Tiso, president of the wartime Slovak State who was sentenced to death for collaboration with the Nazis, or a commemorative rally in Ružomberok dedicated to Andrej Hlinka, leader of the national-conservative and clerical Slovak People’s Party that was a relevant political force in interwar Czechoslovakia.

The flames of nationalism and separatism were fanned further by mass demonstrations that took place while parliament discussed a new bill on state language in October 1990. Matica slovenská organized in Bratislava a “nationwide rally” in support of enacting Slovak language as the sole official and state language on the entire territory of Slovakia; its motto was “Slovak Language without Exception”. Backed by the SNS and other nationalist groupings, Matica slovenská submitted its own draft of the language act that sought to curtail substantially the right of ethnic minorities to use their mother tongues in official contact. Supporters of the so-called ‘Matica’ bill organized petition drives across the country as dozens of enterprises, organizations and schools sent resolutions to the assembly, urging deputies to make Slovak the only official language in Slovakia. During the debate on the bill at the end of October, nationalist forces staged a rally in front of parliament that was attended by several thousand people. In protest against the assembly approving the cabinet bill, some of its participants launched a petition drive that demanded dissolution of parliament and demise of the government formed after the first free elections in decades. Opponents of the cabinet’s bill backed by Matica

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slovenská leaders also launched a hunger strike in front of parliament building. The strikers demanded that the passed bill be referred back to the assembly and that a referendum on the language act be held. Although the ruling coalition comprising the VPN, the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH) and the Democratic Party (DS) withstood the nationalists' pressure at the time, the turmoil that accompanied the debate over the language act adumbrated a confrontation that would affect Slovakia's overall development for many years to come.

Unlike in Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic where people's dissatisfaction with the course and results of early stages of the transformation process benefited primarily leftist parties (i.e. the communists, post-communists and social democrats), the greatest beneficiary of voters' disenchantment in Slovakia became the HZDS of Vladimír Mečiar.

Immediately after its founding in 1991, the populist HZDS became a dominant political force in terms of voter support. The movement emerged as a direct result of disintegration processes within the VPN, which won the first free elections in June 1990. But the VPN's election victory was only in part a result of citizens' support for its attractive and comprehensible election program called "A Chance for Slovakia" and its imaginative and effective election campaign; an equally important factor was the decision to accept on its candidates' list politicians who could not be considered true supporters of liberal and democratic reforms, particularly reformed communists from the 'Prague Spring' of 1968 and some 'newcomers' that entered politics during initial months after November 1989, but possessed relatively high level of popularity.

Liberally-oriented anti-communist leaders of the Velvet Revolution gathered in the VPN Coordination Center (KC VPN) soon became concerned with practices used by Prime Minister Vladimír Mečiar, a former communist whom they reproached for authoritarian leanings, lack of cooperativeness and application of political methods incompatible with democratic system of governance (e.g. manipulation with files of ŠtB, a communist-era secret police, which he used to blackmail his political opponents and personal foes).



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In early 1991, Mečiar's supporters formed within the VPN a platform called "For Democratic Slovakia", which was soon joined by the so-called Trnava 'national' initiative established in fall 1990 that actively backed Mečiar in his conflict with KC VPN. As it quickly turned out, this group offered an alternative model of Slovakia's 'national' opposition politics that laid the groundwork for future performance of the dominant populist political force.

The conflict within the VPN came to a head in spring 1991 when displays of nationalism in the country's political life grew stronger. In April 1991, parliament removed Mečiar from the post of prime minister. During the removal procedure, tens of thousands of Mečiar's sympathizers demonstrated their support for him in front of the parliament building; the disorderly masses damaged the entrance gate into the building. Leaders of the platform "For Democratic Slovakia" publicly called on citizens to organize further protest actions, sparking a flurry of demonstrations around the country that demanded parliament's presidium to revise its decision, make changes to its make-up and even call early parliamentary elections in Slovakia.

The removal of Vladimír Mečiar from the post of prime minister became an event that strongly affected Slovakia's domestic politics for years to come. To some extent, politics was brought back to the streets, which allowed charismatic Mečiar to capitalize on populist methods and gestures as well as direct contact with people and highly emotional appeals to the masses that soon became specific features of Slovak populism of the Mečiar type.

At its congress held in Košice in April 1991, the VPN definitively split into the VPN and the HZDS. Subsequently, Mečiar was elected HZDS chairman. The movement was immediately joined by the already mentioned Trnava initiative, some representatives of the left-wing VPN platform (i.e. reformed communists), as well as leaders of the so-called centrist platform who initially adopted a neutral position on the conflict between the liberals and Mečiar and hard nationalists. Mečiar consciously strove to maintain this broadness of the newly-established movement in order to appeal to the broadest possible segment of the electorate.

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Between April 1991 and June 1992, the HZDS focused on mobilization activities aimed at achieving the best possible result in the 1992 parliamentary elections. It was during this period that the foundations of the following election mobilization strategies were laid in Slovakia:

- Licentious anti-establishment rhetoric, accusing the government of various misdemeanors, disrespect for the rule of law, corruption, privileging the rich and neglecting the poor;
- Verbal criminalization of political opponents;
- Portraying the government as an agent of external forces (between 1990 and 1992 it was the Czechoslovak federal government, during the period of 1998–2006 it was Western groupings such as the EU or NATO, foreign monopolies, etc);
- Calls to restore order that has allegedly been disrupted during the incumbent administration's rule, illiberal elements in understanding of law and order;
- 'Pro-social' promises of distributive nature that are anti-capitalist in essence;
- Encouraging nostalgia about life before the communist regime's collapse;
- Appeals to ordinary people, blue-collar workers, residents of rural areas and smaller municipalities, 'producers of material goods' that view the life through common sense, as opposed to sophisticated and over-elaborate urban intellectuals who deal in activities that bear no immediate material benefits for the society;
- Nationalism and defense of 'national and state' interests of the state established by the ethnic majority, which endorses more or less overt anti-minority resentment;
- Elements of isolationism in foreign and security policy.

The HZDS perfectly capitalized on its opposition status. As the public support for so-called 'federal' reforms began to decline and debates over the future fate of the

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common Czechoslovak state seemed endless, the movement recorded a resounding victory in the 1992 parliamentary elections. After the elections, Vladimír Mečiar led the new government that comprised representatives of the HZDS and the SNS chairman. Despite a confrontational tone vis-à-vis his political opponents, Mečiar at this point did not resort to methods seeking to eliminate opposition and non-ruling parties from political decision-making processes as these parties' representatives were allowed to take seats in parliament's presidium and lead some of its committees.

In September 1992, parliament adopted the Constitution of the Slovak Republic. Preparatory works on the constitutional text took a quite hectic pace, which provoked doubts about the quality of drafted text among legal experts as well as political parties' leaders. The assembly turned down a KDH proposal that a temporary constitutional law be passed instead of a constitution. Besides, HZDS and the SNS deputies passed a decision that voting on the Constitution be declaratory, which was an overt duress on those deputies who opposed the submitted draft of the constitution. In protest of rejecting their amendments, deputies for a coalition of ethnic Hungarian parties left the plenum while KDH deputies openly voted against the submitted draft. The act of adopting the constitution thus fell quite short of uniting the country's political elite and its inhabitants and amounted to a rather controversial event that polarized the Slovak society even further.

Between 1993 and 1994, the HZDS struggled to overcome its internal disintegration. Some respected HZDS leaders left the movement citing conflicts with chairman Mečiar and disapproval of his political style; simultaneously, they shed more light on internal situation of the HZDS, particularly Mečiar's autocratic style and his tendency to suppress his opponents.

In late November 1993, Mečiar met behind closed doors with HZDS regional leaders from East Slovakia in the village of Zlatá Idka. At the meeting, Mečiar gave a speech that was secretly tape-recorded and subsequently leaked to the press. In the speech, Mečiar scolded leaders of the opposition and outlined a program of HZDS taking a complete control over the country upon its victory in the next parliamentary elections.

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The program envisaged “steam-rolling” of political opponents, fundamental personnel changes in state administration organs, appointment of higher civil servants loyal to the HZDS, strengthening clientelist ties between the HZDS and its “satellite” political, social, cultural and professional organizations etc. The published speech caused a furor and, as it later turned out, catalyzed differentiation processes within the HZDS that became fully perceptible at the beginning of 1994.

As a direct result, the government led by Mečiar lost majority in parliament in spring 1994. Mečiar was again removed from the post of prime minister and his administration was replaced by an interim government comprising the KDH, the Democratic Union (DU) and the Party of Democratic Left (SD<sup>1/4</sup>) that was silently supported by ethnic Hungarian parties. The new administration tried to continue in basic reform trends set during period of 1990 – 1992. It helped calm the country’s domestic politics and stabilize the situation in parliament. During its rule, Slovakia showed some positive macroeconomic trends such as a growth in gross domestic product and foreign exchange reserves along with a simultaneous decline in inflation and foreign debt; equally importantly, the interim government improved Slovakia’s image abroad. But it turned out that six months in office was too short for the broad center-right-left coalition to stabilize positive development trends, particularly in terms of communicating them to the general public. Consumed by tackling problems accumulated during the previous two years, ruling parties could not compete with permanent election campaigning by the HZDS leader. To make matters worse, the strategies of forming election coalitions chosen by most ruling parties (except ethnic Hungarian parties) proved futile. The HZDS freed of government responsibility fully capitalized on its opposition status and posted another stellar election performance.

The early elections of 1994 paved the way to power for a ruling coalition of HZDS – SNS – ZRS that began to pursue methods of overt political confrontation. These methods showed during the process of constituting the new assembly when the HZDS strove to change the power ratio in parliament by questioning deputy mandates the opposition DU legitimately obtained in elections; the HZDS also tried to prevent substitutes for members of the interim administration from exercising their

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mandates during the assembly's constituent session; last but not least, it demanded then President Michal Kováč, political opponent of Mečiar, to resign immediately. This policy of revenge may also be illustrated by the way of constituting parliamentary committees, statutory organs of the National Property Fund and broadcast media councils, establishing the commission to investigate the so-called "crisis of the constitutional system in 1994" (i.e. the circumstances of removing Mečiar from the post of prime minister in March 1994), removing the attorney general and statutory representatives of the Supreme Bureau of Supervision, or passing an amendment to the law on the so-called large-scale privatization and the law to abolish privatization decisions adopted by the interim administration.

The struggle for the basic nature of the political regime climaxed during 1994-1998, when the policy of the ruling coalition, HZDS-ZRS-SNS, moved towards the gradual formation of a semi-authoritarian regime with elements of illiberal democracy. Slovakia in those days showed numerous "democratic deficits" that manifested themselves in the lack of stability of democratic institutions, strong societal polarization fuelled by the confrontational political style of ruling elites, and frequent attempts to bend the valid constitutional rules for the sake of accumulating power.

Between 1995 and 1996, basic hallmarks of Slovakia's internal political development included an almost complete absence of dialogue, non-existence of consensus between the government and the opposition, political confrontation and efforts of the dominant ruling party – namely the HZDS – to control the political landscape. One of the most perceptible displays of these efforts was a campaign to oust legitimately elected president Michal Kováč. The pressure on the president took place on several levels that included clipping his constitutional powers, proclaiming no-confidence in him by the cabinet and parliament, waging a discrediting campaign against him in pro-government media, fabricating accusations of high treason by the intelligence service and finally staging an abduction of the president's son to Austria by members of the secret service. The main purpose of the abduction was to render Kováč Jr. available for criminal prosecution in Germany where law enforcement organs at the

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time investigated a fraud case he might be involved in; eventually, the investigation did not produce any evidence that could implicate him in the said crime.

The situation remained more or less the same until the populist parties were forced out of power in 1998. The exit of Meciar generally strengthened the position of parties with clearer ideological orientation on both ends of the left-right spectrum; however, since these parties formed a joint coalition government together (1998 – 2002), their respective self-definition on the left-right continuum did not have the character of a typical political competition.

A more favorable environment for ‘ideological competition’ did not emerge until elections in 2002 that brought to power a center-right, liberal-conservative ruling coalition. All parties that formed it clearly defined their positions on the left-right continuum and openly declared their ideological orientations. The ruling coalition’s clear character allowed its principal opponent and political rival – namely party Smer – to define its position by subscribing to a certain ideological construction.

Originally, Smer led by Robert Fico emerged as a single-handed initiative of one politician whose personal ambitions were not satisfied in a party of which he was one of leading representatives (SD<sup>1/4</sup>). Immediately after its emergence, Smer portrayed itself as a “non-ideological” party avoiding ideological self-definition, which made it a populist subject of the second generation and a perfect example of soft populism. Gradually, though, Smer began to accentuate its leftist character, first by subscribing to the “Third Way” concept in 2002 and to “Social Democracy” before the 2006 elections. The example of Smer that became a dominant political force in the country while evolving from a non-ideological party to a party with clearer ideological orientation illustrates that the role of ideological factor is far from negligible in Slovakia’s party politics.

The effort to capitalize on the ideological factor was apparent also in 2001 when media self-made man Pavol Rusko established the Alliance of a New Citizen (ANO). A centrist party that appealed to voters by populist anti-establishment rhetoric, the ANO from the beginning portrayed itself as a liberal party and incorporated into its

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program a number of concepts based on ideology of liberalism (ANO was a member of the center-right ruling coalition in 2002 – 2006; it failed to qualify into the parliament in elections 2006).

After the second free elections in 1992, Slovakia's party system was marked by polarization that defined the character of interactions between parties, particularly among the composition of the ruling coalitions and the type of opposition politics. However, the system was not polarized from the ideological point of view. This polarization was primarily connected with the different ways parties exercised power, not with the ideological distance between them. Within the party system two main groupings of parties formed that differed in their ideological orientation but that held a similar understanding of the execution of power.

The first grouping included parties that espouse the principles and values of liberal democracy (free and fair elections, the rule of law, division of power, protection of human rights and civil liberties, religious freedom, and property rights). These parties had a clear ideological profile: an unambiguously pro-European and pro-Atlantic orientation and a desire to solve societal conflict through negotiations within a legal framework. These parties were members of existent international party organizations (conservative, liberal, social-democratic, green). While these parties were in opposition in 1994-1998, they formed ruling coalitions after the 1998 and 2002 elections.

The second grouping included the political parties that governed the country from 1994 to 1998. They exercised power in ways that were incompatible with liberal democratic principles, which ultimately caused the country's temporary disqualification from integration with the Euro-Atlantic organizations in the second half of the 1990s. These parties preferred an authoritarian style of governing that was marked by populism, nationalism, and isolationism. Their understanding of politics was confrontational and power-driven and they underestimated the value of negotiation and compromise. The policies of these parties led to the emergence of a political regime in Slovakia that included elements of illiberal democracy, such as

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ignoring the constitutional framework and the practice of democracy without constitutional liberalism. These parties tried to solve societal conflicts in a way that increased their own power at the expense of the agreed rules of the game.

Divisions within Slovakia's party system were closely related to urban–rural cleavage of Slovak society, regional and socio-demographic discrepancies, and differences in socio-cultural orientations of particular groups of the population. Analysis of Slovak's voting behavior confirms that non-authoritarian political formations are supported more by dwellers of bigger cities, the better educated, the younger citizens, and people with liberal, civic, and pro-Western views. An exemption lies within the electorate of the SMK, in which all the segments of the Hungarian ethnic minority are represented equally. On the contrary, authoritarian and populist parties are backed by inhabitants of rural areas and smaller cities and older and less educated citizens with clear inclinations to nationalism, paternalism, and isolationism.

At the edge of centuries, Slovakia's party system witnessed some changes including the establishment of new parliamentary parties. However, these changes did not lead to principal shifts in prevailing types of interactions between parties (for instance, it did not lead to coalition cooperation between parties belonging to two different party groupings). Polarization within the party system still persists. A good illustration of this polarization is the alternating pattern of ruling coalitions. Since 1992 the ruling parties either continued to govern after elections or commonly went into opposition, while the opposition parties either continued to act in opposition or took power. There has never been a case where a coalition comprised of parties that did not serve – either in government or opposition – in the previous electoral term was formed.

Since 2002 the differences in the socio-economic policies of parties began to shape more sharply the main division line within the party system. This phenomenon can be explained by the fact that the struggle for sustaining the democratic frame of the political regime (the actors of this struggle were parties belonging to both groupings) was definitely over when Slovakia unconditionally fulfilled the political criteria for membership in EU and NATO. Issues of social and economic development, such as



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reforms of the tax system, public finances, the welfare, pension, and health care systems, and education, became dominant. It needs to be said that after Slovakia's accession to EU and following the first elections to the European parliament, those parties that are members of European party organizations started to emphasize their ties with European party families as well as their ideological background.

From the very beginning of the 1990s, Slovakia lacked the 'transition consensus', mostly due to political leaders' different notions about the type of society that should emerge as a result of transformation. While political forces carrying the legacy of the Velvet Revolution from November 1989 (i.e. civil and Christian democrats, conservatives, liberals and the political representation of the Hungarian minority) and post-communist left agreed that the transformation should lead to establishing a liberal-democratic regime, hard populists (particularly the HZDS and the SNS) led society's development in direction of creating the hybrid regime based on elements of non-liberal democracy, authoritarian practices and curtailed protection of human and minority rights. Although hard populists never openly presented an intention to build a regime of non-liberal democracy in the country, their inability to muster broader public support for the course they preferred as well as confrontational methods of tackling problems gradually led them to use against their political and ideological opponents (i.e. the opposition, civil society players and the media) methods and means that coarsely contradicted principles of liberal democracy.

For hard populists, the economic transformation amounted to a process of transferring parts of state property into the hands of groups or individuals who would provide economic background for ruling parties and a semi-authoritarian political regime. At the same time, they calculated that part of state property (especially so-called natural monopolies) would never be privatized but would remain in government's hands and allow the establishment to strengthen its power position through its nominees in these enterprises' statutory organs. The Mečiar administration tried to justify the privatization process's clientelistic nature by the need to "create a national capital-generating stratum" (i.e. "honest privatizers - Mečiarists"). At the same time, hard populists combined practical measures aimed at

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letting their cronies privatize state property with anti-privatization and anti-capitalist rhetoric in order to appeal to voters with etatist, egalitarian and paternalistic views; some of these voters were mobilized by this anti-privatization rhetoric.

Another factor that had a mobilization effect on many voters was the rhetoric aimed against “selling out national property” abroad that would justify the ongoing transfer of state property into the hands of “national privatizers” i.e. persons close to the populists in power.

But the issue that clearly had the greatest mobilization effect between 1994 and 1998 was the issue of Slovakia’s integration into Euro-Atlantic groupings. For non-populist democratic parties, the country’s elimination from the integration process provided a strong argument to appeal to voters. Slovakia’s membership in the EU and NATO as a result of a positive change at the helm turned out to be one of the most effective election slogans used by non-populist democratic parties in 1998. Four years later, this slogan was transformed into a slogan about the necessity to complete the country’s EU and NATO integration, which was often juxtaposed to populist parties’ possible return to power.

### 1.2 Existing full-fledged think tanks

Against the background of political developments in Slovakia it is much easier to map the existing think tanks, and to attempt to assess their role. As of 2013 – the time when we took a snapshot of the Slovakian situation - there were number of think tanks in the country, which fell in the following categories, according to their specialization:

Economy and social affairs	7
Governance	2
Foreign and security policy	3
Ethnic relations, minorities	2

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Overall society's development, democratic politics, political culture 1

Total 15

The highest concentration was visible in the area of economics and social affairs, which is revealing of the emphasis which liberal ideology places on economic matters.

### Economy and social affairs think tanks by year of origin

NFAH (F. A. Hayek Foundation)	– 1991
MESA10 (Macro-Economic and Social Analysis 10)	– 1992
CPHR (Center for Economic Development)	– 1993
INEKO (Institute for Economic and Social Reforms)	– 1999
INESS (Institute of Economic and Social Studies)	– 2006
HPI (Health Policy Institute)	– 2005
KI (Conservative Institute)	– 1999

Most of the think tanks in this field have been established in the 1990s, although there are a couple of newcomers.

### Governance

SGI (Slovak Governance Institute)	–
2001	
TIS (Transparency International Slovakia)	–
1993	

### Foreign and security policy

SFPA (Slovak Foreign Policy Association)	– 1993
CENAA (Centre for European and North Atlantic Affairs)	– 2003

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CEPI (Central European Policy Institute) – 2012

### **Ethnic relations, minorities**

FI (Forum Minority Research Institute) – 1996

CVEK (Center for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture) – 2005

### **Overall society's development, democratic politics, political culture, social issues**

IVO (Institute for Public Affairs) – 1997

### **Think-tank-like organizations**

VIA IURIS – judiciary and law (1993)

Association ASPEKT – gender issue, women's rights (1993)

Civic Association *Citizen, Democracy and Responsibility* – human rights and civil liberties (1992)

Society for Sustainable Development – environmentalism/ecology (1993)

The information provided above suggests that apart from the economic issues, the second most popular field for think tanks is foreign and security affairs. Minority rights, and minority relations is another niche in which think tanks have specialized, as well as the fight against corruption. IVO (Institute for Public Affairs), which was established in 1997 has been the only all-purpose, political think tank, which has openly focused on the political process in both Slovakia and Europe more broadly.

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### Modifications

Think tanks are flexible and adaptable organizations. Not all of them remain think tanks or identify themselves as think tanks. Below we list examples of think tanks which have been transformed into other types of organization:

- CEP (Center for European Policy), established in 1993, modified into education organization (EU integration/EU policies) in 2007
- SPACE (Social Policy Analysis Center Foundation), established in 1997, modified into social service organization (program for surrogate families) in 2007

### Time of establishment

According to the time of establishment most of the think tanks were set up in the 1990s. Their main purpose has been to help the transition process, and the entrenchment of market economy, democracy and constitutionalism. Hence the liberal-democratic bias in the think tank community in the country:

- 1991–1998 (beginning of transformation, struggle for democracy against authoritarianism) – 7:

Of these seven think tanks, three were in the socio-economic field, one in ethnic minorities, one foreign policy, one governance, one overall society's development/democratic politics.

In the new century, the establishment of think tanks continued, as the focus shifted more to issues of governance and EU matters:

- 1999–2004 (sectoral reforms, accession to EU) – 4:  
1 foreign policy, 2 socio-economic, 1 governance
- 2004–2012 (membership in the EU) – 4:  
2 socio-economic, 1 ethnic minorities, 1 foreign policy

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## Think Tanks in Slovakia

### Performance

As of 2013, the performance of the think tanks in the country could be broken down in three categories – high profile; middle profile and newcomers. From the listing below it is visible that the number of relatively established organizations is significantly higher, which suggests that the entry into the field is not very easy, and there may be danger of cartelization.

- High profile

INESS, IVO, INEKO, FI, CVEK, SPPA, CENAA, HPI, TIS, KI

- Middle profile

F. A. Hayek Foundation, SGI

- Low profile

MESA10, CPHR

- Brand new

CEPI

### Think-tankers as state officials (in senior positions)

The influence of think tanks could be measured in a variety of ways. One is to examine the number of think tankers who have been invited to become part of the government and the administration, or who have moved to the field of politics more generally. In Slovakia, the situation is the following (as of 2013):

Prime minister (SPACE Foundation): 2010–2012 (returned to academia)

Vice-prime minister for economy, minister of finance (MESA10): 1998–2006, 2010–2012 (still in politics)

Minister of education (INEKO): 2010–2012 (returned to think tank)

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## Think Tanks in Slovakia

State secretary at ministry of labor and social affairs/vice-minister (INEKO):  
2002–2006 (still in politics)

State secretary at ministry of economy/vice-minister (F.A. Hayek Foundation):  
2010–2011 (still in politics)

State secretary at ministry of labor and social affairs/vice-minister (F. A.  
Hayek Foundation): 2010–2011 (still in politics)

Government plenipotentiary for public administration reform (MESA10): 1999  
–2006 (left politics)

State secretary at ministry of defense/vice-minister (CENAA): 2010–2012  
(returned to think tank)

State secretary at ministry of foreign affairs/vice-minister (SFPA): 2002–2006  
(still in politics)

Ambassador to US (IVO): 1999–2003 (returned to think tank)

Ambassador to UK (SFPA): 2010–till now

In terms of representation in government by think tanks, the situation is the  
following:

### Think tankers from specific organizations:

INEKO	2
MESA10	2
F. A. Hayek Foundation	2
SFPA	2
CENAA	1
SPACE	1
IVO	1

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## Think Tanks in Slovakia

**Party affiliation of appointees from think tanks (which is revealing that most of them are in the centre-right part of the spectrum):**

SDKÚ (center-right, moderate conservative, member of EPP)	7
SaS (liberal, member of ELDR/ALDE)	2
Most-Híd („Hungarian“ party, pretending to be moderate conservative, applied for membership in EPP)	1
Independent, joint nomination of SDK-KDH-SMK	1

### 2. Self-perception of think tankers in Slovakia

For the purposes of the project, five structured interviews with top representatives of think tanks operating in Slovakia have been carried out. Three of these think tanks operate in the socio-economic field, one in foreign policy and one in ethnic minorities. Three of these organizations are “old“ and two “new“.

Most of the think tankers understand their work as more than provision of expertise for the government. They insist on the link with civil society and on the controlling function over the government. Therefore, as it will be seen, independence from the government remains a top priority:

*“For me think tank means full-time-job organization, a sort of reflecting government’s measures, mirror for the government. Think tanks are crucial for society. There is government from one side and general public from another side and there is literally no other institution than think tank which is confronting the government and saying that this is good and this is bad. There is no other way of evaluation of governmental approach...”*

*“My definition of think tank is basically in line with Lockean definition of political society. It is independent political society (entity) controlling government, conducting participatory activities in political, economic and social processes. Think tank must bring something to political decision-making process.”*



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## Think Tanks in Slovakia

### 2.1 Definition of the situation

Generally, interviewed think tankers shared a sense of crisis. They define it in different ways, but what is common is the understanding that liberal values and their defenders are facing increasingly difficult position in the public sphere. One important aspect of the crisis is financial – funding from external sources become scarcer, while think tanks are weary of being funded from the state. Against the background of underdeveloped culture of private donations and charities, this puts considerable strains on independent think tanks.

#### *a) Crisis exists*

The crisis affects *independent* think tanks – those, which try to preserve their distance from the government:

“Yes, I think crisis affects all think tanks. Maybe there are few think tanks which are (financially) healthy. There is, for example, a think tank at the ministry of economy as well as a sort of governmental think tanks at ministry of finances and ministry of education. Maybe these so-called “think tanks” are not affected by crisis, but I believe that all other (independent) think tanks which are working in NGO sector are affected by crisis.”

Yet, some think tankers expressed a more optimistic attitude. They thought that the crisis presents them with new opportunities as well:

“Yes, I feel that. However, sometimes crisis have a positive development and our think tank CEPI would not have been conceived without this crisis. We see the gap that still exists. Think tank community is organized on the national basis in Central Europe and we see new potential for providing the platform for foreign policy analyses on the regional basis.”

#### *b) Main reason – financial*

Most of the interviewees defined the root cause of the crisis of financial. Some of them attempted to provide a more complex picture of the situation:

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## Think Tanks in Slovakia

“There are more reasons. Financial and economic crisis has an influence on the fundraising of think tanks. From our own experience we see that it is not easy to raise funds to maintain the state and scope of the work which think tanks are doing. Another reason is the lack of interest from the side of government. In Slovakia, the current government perceives think tanks as enemies, not as partners for discussion. Government does not feel that think tanks are partners in evaluating the government’s measures and steps.”

### *c) Non-economic reasons*

Other reasons for the crisis, which were pointed out by our interviewees related to the underestimation of think tanks’ role in society by local donors, government, parties, and the public.

### *d) Internal weaknesses of think tanks*

Parts of the reasons for the current crisis relate to the internal weaknesses of think tanks and their difficulties to adapting to new realities. The respondents did not have a strong sense that they need to reexamine their policies and substantive approaches, however. They were more willing to reflect on organizational, rather than on substantive, policy questions. This, in itself, seems a cause of internal weakness.

## **2.2 Differences between “old” and “new” think tanks**

Generally, the sense of the respondents was that “old” think tanks – as being more established – weathered the crisis better than the new ones. Old” think tanks relied on institutional support in the past (start-up grants), while the ”new” think tanks do not, and this is part of the explanation for their weakness. “Old” think tanks tend to continue “business as usual”, while “new” think tanks are more responsive, flexible and dynamic – this could work very well to their advantage. Further, “new” think tanks are more capable in using the new ICT, social networks and social media

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## Think Tanks in Slovakia

*“Let us take this example: now there is a pressure to publish everything in English, not in national languages anymore because you have very small national market, small audience. If I would write paper on intricacy and details of Balkan policies of the EU, I would have 5 readers who know the details in Slovakia and maybe 50 more interested. If I write it in English it is a totally different story. If I write it with coauthors in other countries who can plug in the national perspectives and also describe what their governments are doing, it will multiply. It is new global world, but even in terms of Europe the numbers are the king. Small think tanks in small countries have difficulties. If they just continue the old model, they will face the end in terms of financing and real impact. Old think tanks have hard times. First thing is that you have to do everything in English. Second, it is much more international environment and you have to adjust yourself to it. And the third thing is that foreign policy has changed, Europe has changed, it is much more linked with political economy, economy of integration, the crisis etc. Electronic communication and technology change the situation too. We do not produce anything in paper (only as addition), we do everything online, on Facebook, Twitter, on webpage. We started to do everything through Facebook as we had to wait for money for webpage. I can imagine how it is not easy for the established think tanks to convert.”*

### **2.3. The issue of independence**

All our respondents, as it became clear, placed a special emphasis on the independence from the government, especially in terms of funding. There was a sense though, that cooperation with the government or political parties does not automatically compromise the independence. Independent think tanks must be open to (possibly) the whole political spectrum. Public funding is acceptable in principle (with exception of one organization which principally rejects it) not on the institutional but only on the project base. But diversity of funds is key for preserving the independence – public financing by no means should be exclusive, or even dominant. There was an exception to this view:

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## Think Tanks in Slovakia

*“The most crucial point is not to receive the governmental funds. I think that maintaining the real independence is possible only by staying financially independent. For example, our institute has never received any money from the government. That is why we can really act as independent organization. Otherwise (with governmental money) you can be perceived/described like a servant and if you are acting against government’s measures, criticizing them, government can easily say – “You received money from us, so why are you criticizing us?”*”

Apart from the funding issue, respondents tied the issue of independence to principles and ideas. To be independent means to follow own values and principles regardless of interests or intents of donors.

*“What we are doing – we are providing our analysis and reform proposals, policy papers and consultancy to whatever political party that has an interest to use them. For us people are not important, ideas are important. And even if party Smer – Social Democracy will accept and adopt our recommendations, we would consider this as success and benefit for society. We are open to all political parties. Many representatives of political parties are coming to our office to discuss issues, mainly economic ones. And this is the way how think tank should operate – not to cooperate only with one or two specific parties, but to be open to the whole political spectrum.”*

### 2.4. Think tanks vs. academia

Respondents expressed very high levels of skepticism regarding cooperation with academia. These levels were even higher level among economic think tanks, and especially vis-à-vis the Slovak Academy of Sciences (SAV).

*“I do not think academia has any impact or value added to the discussions on public topics. There are two reasons for this. The first is that in academia there are no qualified experts who are following the up-to-date issues. They are more focused on their very specific research, in very specific areas. They are not following what is going on in society, in many cases – and I know this from my personal experience – they even do not know what the economic and financial crisis means, what are the*

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## Think Tanks in Slovakia

*causes and what are possible solutions. Other point is that academia is not independent. It is 100-percent-dependent on the governmental funds. They do not have any courage to deal with sensitive issues, to go against government. In academia the critical thinking is lacking. I do not want to say that it is 100-percent missing there, but it is lacking. We are not cooperating with the Slovak Academy of Sciences (SAV), but we are cooperating with universities. You can find there few experts who are very active, not only in the field of academia, but also consulting some issues for Brussels, government etc. We are cooperating with these very few professors, who are inviting us to the universities to deliver lectures. And we invite them to give lectures within our education events on some topics. But, it is very rare to find active and flexible experts in academia.”*

Interestingly, political think tanks showed greater enthusiasm for cooperation with academia on issues such as foreign policy and minorities.

### **2.5 Political elites vs. think tanks**

Most of the respondents supported the view that the “Golden Age” of think tanks was in 90s, when they were dealing with reform policies, democratization, when they interacted intensively with political actors. Today, their argument went, politicians ascribe lower relevance to think tanks. Politicians perceive think tanks not as partners for dialog and policy-making, but as providers of services or as platform for their own PR activities. Further, some representatives of the government demonstrate open hostility to think tanks.

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## **Think Tanks in Slovakia**

### **Conclusions**

*“There are three major obstacles: lack of funds, over-occupation by operational management of the institutions and the ignorance of the government. Favorable factor is the existent general mood in society which creates opportunities for think tanks to come up with new ideas.”*

### **Obstacles**

The think tank community in Slovakia is going through a crisis, whose most visible dimension are the financial difficulties and the lack of funds. But to this one has to add the generally unfriendly political situation, which came about with the secondary rise of populism in the 2000s. Further, ignorance of government regarding the benefits from the activities of think tanks is still at a very high level.

In organizational terms, think tankers are overburdened with various activities, combining research, media presentation, and administration and operational management. This leads to inability to operate efficiently.

Limited links with Western partners has also been showed as an impediment, especially in the current circumstances in which national and European politics are tightly interconnected.

Finally, the absence of common strategy for the improvement of the situation of the think tank community as a whole has been universally shown as a weakness in Slovakia.

### **Favorable factors**

Despite these difficulties, think tanks do have some advantages. First, they are very adaptable and sensitive to changing moods and perceptions in society, which does create opportunities even in times of crisis. Secondly, there is a great not sufficiently tapped resource – cooperation with both domestic and international partner

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## **Think Tanks in Slovakia**

organizations. Third, think tanks in Slovakia have accumulated a considerable experience with public policy: they have impressive track record in comparative perspective. Fourth, think tanks have preserved their very good relations with media, and are still attractive to the media both as organizations and individual experts. Finally, the level of professionalism of staff and the organizational culture of think tanks is quite high.

### ***Major challenges***

In order to improve their activities, think tanks have to focus on the following issues in Slovakia:

- A better understanding of what is going on in Europe is essential since the convergence of national and supranational politics has been especially evident since the 2012 crisis of the euro;
- Think tanks should use more competently and regularly new technologies, new media, and social networks. This is both a challenge, for some of the established think tanks, and an opportunity for newcomers;
- Fund raising strategies should be diversified further and the reliance on foreign donors decreased. Foreign funding is still a very important and valuable source, crucial for the survival of the sector, however;
- Think tanks should come up with strategies for broadening of their outreach. They should have access to broader publics. New media and social networks could be instrumentalized, although this should be done together with the use of traditional means like TV, which still have enormous impact;
- Maintaining independence from business donors is crucial for Slovakia – from the perspective of public trust;
- Improving expert capacities and project portfolio – expertise is a key to the success of think tanks. Although Slovakian think tanks have made important progress in terms of professionalism, they need to remain competent and well informed of cutting-edge research, in order to maintain their position;

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## Think Tanks in Slovakia

- Last but not least, adequate response to ideological opponents should be found. Slovakia is one of the countries in which think tanks are seen (by parts of the public) as players in the liberal end of the political spectrum. A lot needs to be done by them in order to defend their claim to independence from specific political players, as well as their interpretation of the public interest.

Thanks to Slovakia's full-fledged EU membership, the system of democratic institutions is now much more consolidated; the populists do not openly question democratic rules and their immediate participation in government does not threaten to undermine the liberal democratic regime. Not a single ruling party currently in power in Slovakia is an anti-system party with ambitions to dismantle the liberal democratic regime. Still, the values preferred by populist parties currently in power (i.e. etatism, clientelism and ethnic nationalism) may erode the foundations of the liberal democratic regime, particularly in the field of public administration, self-governance, free market mechanisms, ethnic minorities and foreign policy. In this sense, although think tanks have changed to a degree their role and function, they are still much needed guardians of liberal policies and ideas.





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### Annex I

#### LIBERALLY ORIENTED NGOS

The existing liberally oriented non-governmental organizations in Slovakia can be divided into three categories:

Organizations working in the area of politics on the basis of an established partnership with political parties (political foundation, youth organization).

Non-party independent organizations (civic associations, non-governmental non-profit entities, foundations, think tanks, educational institutions) self-identified as organizations with liberal creeds in the area of society's order, economy, culture and education. Some cooperate with existing political parties with liberal ideological profiles, being the occasional reservoir for party politics, while other stress their strictly non-partisan character.

Independent organizations, operating in different areas of public life and society, which are not openly self-declared as liberal entities, but their activities are substantially contributing to domestic public discourse, defending liberal values and principles and strengthening the liberal democratic regime.

*Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom – Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung für die Freiheit (FNF) – office in Slovakia*

The **FNF (Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom)**, a German foundation for liberal politics, launched its activities in Central and Eastern Europe after the collapse of the Communist regimes in 1989. According to FNF's mission statement, the foundation "fosters the establishment of democratic structures by promoting liberal political parties and groups. A close network of political parties, citizens' initiatives, human rights organizations, think tanks and scientific institutions forms the basis of the Foundation's activities".

The Foundation opened its office in Bratislava in 1991. Its partners on the political scene have been ADSR and MOS (since 1993) and DU (since 1994). In 1995 FNF initiated the establishment of the Institute for Liberal Studies (ILŠ) and supported it further.

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During its operation in Slovakia the Foundation organized dozens of conferences, workshops and public discussions. In the years of Mečiar's era it provided liberal expertise for opposition MPs, supported the translation and publication of three books on liberalism to Slovak. FNF carried out projects focused on the political education of Slovak Roma and their participation in their communities' local politics.

Since 2002, FNF's main partner in Slovakia was the foundation, Liberal Society (LS). It also closely cooperated with the Bratislava-based F. A. Hayek Foundation, a liberal economic think tank.

In 2010 FNF ended its operations in Slovakia. Viera Gajová served as the head of the FNF's office in Bratislava until its closure.

### *Young Liberals – Mladí liberáli (ML)*

**ML (Young Liberals)** is an independent civic association supporting the “values of liberalism, which primarily include freedom and respect for private property”. The association has operated since 2002 (formally it emerged by the transformation of the previously existing **Liberal Youth of Slovakia**). ML's main goal is to promote liberal thinking among young people. ML is a member of the European Liberal Youth (LYMEC) and International Federation of Liberal Youth (IFLRY). The political partner of ML in Slovakia is the liberal party SaS.

The association organizes “Liberal Clubs“, informal groups of liberally oriented individuals, throughout Slovakia (in cities, local communities, schools, etc.). Its activities also include seminars, workshops, cultural and sport events, and lectures aimed at the promotion of liberal thinking and the principles of liberalism in public life. ML cooperates with the Friedrich Naumann Foundation and liberal economic think-tanks.

### *Foundation Liberal Society – Nadácia Liberálna spoločnosť (LS)*

The **LS (foundation Liberal Society)** is a successor of the **Institute for Liberal Studies (ILŠ)**, established in 1995 and acted under its initial name until 2002. Co-founders of ILŠ included the Friedrich Naumann Foundation, the Forum Foundation and Foundation Gaudeamus. LS defines itself as a “non-governmental and non-profit liberal think tank”, founded “in the context of a real need for

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objective evaluations of social processes, with the aim to promote liberal values and to open the space for social and expert discussion in the transition period”.

In its mission statement LS describes its main priorities, which include “promotion, strengthening and application of liberal thinking and development of liberal values, targeting the development of democracy, tolerance, culture, humanity and civil society” through the organization of discussions, seminars and working meetings, research studies and expert opinions, editorial and publishing activities, educational activities, and development of foreign contacts. LS focuses on the broader liberal agenda, combining socio-economic, political and ideological topics.

As the LS website indicates, in 1995–2011 the organization has held 90 seminars and conferences, 32 workshops, several lectures of prominent liberal personalities, dozens of discussion meetings, including “Liberal Clubs” in Slovakia’s regions. The Foundation has produced 8 studies and 59 expertise works dealing with relevant issues of society’s development. The list of LS/ILŠ publications includes 17 studies, 29 workshop bulletins (summaries), as well as three books (the first Slovak editions): *The Common Sense of Wealth Creation* by Marc Swanepoel, *Hayek: His Contribution to the Political and Economic Thought of Our Time* by Eamonn Butler and two editions of Detmar Doering’s book *Liberalismus: Ein Versuch über die Freiheit*.

Since 2008 LS has grant an annual award for a person who spreads liberal values. Four Slovak journalists were awarded from 2008 to 2011. This activity aims to reward authors who significantly contribute to the popularization, development and implementation of liberal thinking in various areas of social life, and thus to promote liberal values for the purpose of democracy and civil society.

The executive council of LS includes Viliam Vaškoviè (council’s chairman, former member of DU, state secretary of finance ministry in 1998 – 2002), Milan Kòazko (former member of VPN and HZDS, the founding member of ADSR, DU and SDKÚ, minister of foreign affairs in 1992 – 1993 and minister of culture in 1998 – 2002), Borek Severa (Friedrich Naumann Foundation representative for Central Europe and Baltic states) and Vladimír Baèišin (economist and essayist). In 2009, LS joined the European Liberal Forum.

From 1995 to 2000 ILŠ (predecessor of LS) closely cooperated with the liberal party DU. In 2002–2006 LS kept relations with liberal party ANO in the mode of “free cooperation”, this type of interaction is continuing in relations between LS and liberal party SaS.

*F. A. Hayek Foundation – Nadácia F. A. Hayeka (NFAH)*

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**NFAH (F. A. Hayek Foundation)** is an independent, non-political, non-profit organization, founded in 1991 by a group of free-market oriented Slovak economists. It is a liberally oriented economic analytical center (think tank). As NFAH's website indicates, its core mission is "to establish a tradition of market-oriented thinking in Slovakia – an approach that had not existed before the 1990's in our region. From this classic liberal tradition, to offer practical reform proposals for market solutions to economic and social problems; in the reform process to widen and propagate throughout Slovakia classic liberal ideas, provide a platform to exchange of ideas of experts and the broader public, and develop the basic liberal ideas and values".

In its research activities NFAH deals prevalingly with the economic agenda and promoting values of economic liberalism. It is active in the following areas of public policy: improvement of the business environment, pension reform, taxation, social system, public finance, EU integration and harmonization, privatization, and education reform. It has invited and hosted in Slovakia international scholars, among others the Nobel prize winning economist, Gary Becker; father of social security reform in Chile José Piñera; flat tax promoter and US presidential candidate Steve Forbes; and author of the economic reform in New Zealand Roger Douglas.

NFAH conducts research projects (including Business Environment Audit, focusing on regulatory reforms), education programs, international conferences and publishing activities. The Foundation is involved in several reform projects at the municipal level, consulting towns and cities to outsource their services to private firms, improve city management and budget responsibility. The common denominator of NFAH activities is the principal support for individual liberty and the institution of private property. The Foundation initiated the establishment of the Slovak Taxpayers Association, which fights against excessive financial tax burdens and tries to increase public awareness about tax matters. Every year, the Slovak Taxpayers Association calculates and announces the date of the Tax Freedom Day.

NFAH's educational program targets a wide range of interested persons. The basic program, Summer School of Economics, is designed for secondary school students and teachers. Liberal Weekends and Summer University of Liberal Studies are designed for university students, graduates and journalists. Czech-Slovak liberal colloquium, prepared in cooperation with the Prague Liberal Institute in the Czech Republic, is designed for people actively interested in liberalism, who present their own research and scientific works.

Key members of NFAH include economists Ján Oravec, Matúš Pošovanc, Martin Chren, and Ivan Švejna.

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*Institute of Economic and Social Studies – Inštitút ekonomických a spoločenských analýz (INESS)*

The **INESS (Institute of Economic and Social Studies)** was founded in 2006. It is “an independent, non-governmental and apolitical civic association founded by concerned individuals”. The Institute focuses on “solutions to urgent economic and social problems, bearing in mind that society’s main pillars are private property, peaceful coexistence and the guarantee of personal freedom”. The core task of INESS, defined by its experts, is “to promote free market ideas and principles throughout Slovak society”. The mission statement of INESS includes the provision that the Institute “does not participate in projects that result in the violation or challenging of the principles of liberty and property rights”. The document also emphasizes that INESS is an “apolitical non-profit association, whose activities do not support any political party or interest group”.

As an economic think-tank, INESS monitors the functioning and financing of the public sector and evaluates the effects of legislative changes on the economy and society. As its website mentions, INESS’s goal is to “broaden public awareness of the principles of market mechanisms’ functions and the effects of state interventions and their impact on society and everyday life”. INESS priority areas include taxation and contributions to the state budget, the public healthcare system, monetary policy, EU membership issues, government regulation and property rights, saving, social policy, and government expenditures. It issues a monthly economic newsletter *Market Finesse*.

Key members of INESS include economists Richard Ľurana, Radovan Ľurana, and Juraj Karpiš.

*Bratislava International School of Liberal Arts – Bratislavská medzinárodná škola liberálnych štúdií (BISLA)*

**BISLA (Bratislava International School of Liberal Arts)** is a private university (college), based on the concept of liberal-arts education (the model long associated with the United States). Its predecessor, **Society for Higher Learning (SHL)**, was founded in 1996. Since its establishment, SHL has operated a wide network of academic and non-academic professionals who provided tutorials, lectures, and seminars in a three-year non-degree program. SHL publishes a Slovak-English journal *Kritika & Kontext*.

In September 2006, BISLA started to operate as an accredited three-year degree-granting undergraduate college. Its core curriculum is based on political science with offerings in other social science disciplines and the humanities: history, philosophy, sociology, anthropology, theatre, fine arts

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and literature. Together with BISLA the **Bratislava Institute of Humanism (BIH)** was established, which organizes public lectures and debates on intellectual, social, and political issues.

The organization's website mentions that "the BISLA, the Bratislava Institute of Humanism, and the Society for Higher Learning are bound closely together by shared faculty and a liberal, cosmopolitan spirit". Accredited by the state authority, BISLA receives no public funding. Tuition, foundation grants, and other private contributions provide BISLA's operating revenue.

BISLA's students are mostly Slovak, half the courses are taught in Slovak, half in English. The educational program is based on a mix of small seminars, tutorials and lecture classes, and practical, supervised fieldwork. Emphasis is placed upon continuing intellectual interactions among and between students and faculty. BISLA seeks to strengthen itself as a private liberal-arts college in conjunction with other such institutions in an emerging network, the European Consortium of Liberal Arts and Sciences (ECOLAS).

Key members of BISLA include Samuel Abrahám (political scientist), František Novosad (philosopher), Egon Gál (philosopher), Martin Kanovský (philosopher), and Dagmar Kusá (sociologist).

### *Institute for Public Affairs – Inštitút pre verejné otázky (IVO)*

The **IVO (Institute for Public Affairs)** is an independent nonprofit civic association and public policy research institute (think tank) founded in 1997 with the aim of promoting the values of democracy and open society. It received institutional support from the Open Society Institute. Since its foundation, IVO has released more than 140 publications (monographs, edited volumes, working papers, research reports) in the areas of political science, sociology, demography, media, legislation, and comprehensive studies, including the annual analytical reports on the state of society. It has conducted dozens of public opinion polls and organized hundreds of conferences, workshops, seminars and presentations. IVO's declared intention is to influence decision-making processes and public debate in line with the principles of an open society.

As a research organization IVO is operating in a socio-political area and unlike the economic analytical centers FAHF and INESS is perceived as a "political" think-tank. It is a non-partisan institute with no connection to any political party, however it openly supports those policies implemented by political parties that broaden the space for the application of liberal principles in different sectors of society (accountable democratic governance, protection of human and minority