



Business Service Centers in Slovakia: Back to the Future?



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Crowne Plaza Hotel

BRATISLAVA

The Business Service Center Forum (BSCF) aims to raise awareness of this significant industry sector which has emerged in Slovakia since the beginning of the 21st century and currently employs over 30 thousand people in a skilled and educated work force with a double the average salary of the Slovak economy. Already for the third time, its yearly activities and upcoming goals were summarized at an annual conference, this time with the subtitle "Back to the Future?".

In late 2017, AmCham's BSCF conducted a survey of its members, which revealed some interesting data demonstrating the importance of this sector for the Slovak economy. The outcomes of the survey were presented by Gabriel Galgóci, BSCF Chair and AT&T Slovakia Country General Manager, along with a short video introducing the key facts about the BSC sector in Slovakia.

In the keynote speech, Joseph P. Quinlan, Senior Fellow, Center for Transatlantic Relations, John

Hopkins University, presented a detailed overview of Europe's potential from the perspective of foreign investors. He took a closer look at what Slovakia has to offer in the European context and why it is an attractive option especially for BSCs.

The main topic of interest of the BSC sector in Slovakia which will very likely decide its future hasn't changed since last year. It is the quality, or the lack of, of available work force to fill the growing needs of the BSCs. As the results of the BSCF survey demonstrated and the panelists confirmed, this sector is looking for applicants with a very specific skill set. More and more often, companies aren't able to find adequate candidates in sufficient numbers in Slovakia and are thus forced to expand their search abroad.

This trend was reflected in the main program of the conference, which was divided into two panels. In the first one, several representatives of the academia sector discussed the potential of business-



academic cooperation in Slovakia. Representatives of high schools and universities offered their views on how BSCs link with educational institutions and identify the most crucial challenges of the business-academic cooperation for shared services in Slovakia. The discussion as well as the following Q&A session also explained why the current opportunities are often not motivating enough for the BSCs and what adjustments could change that.

The second panel turned the attention to the growing

need of acquiring qualified workforce from abroad. The title – Immigration as a Necessity to Maintain Growth – summarized the current situation of BSCs on the Slovak job market. The panel featured an exclusive lineup of public administration representatives from all the relevant offices, including Rastislav Chovanec, Deputy Minister of Economy, Marián Valentovič, Director-General, Central Office of Labor, Social Affairs and Family, and Branislav Červenka, Director, Department of Alien Police, Bureau of Border and Alien Police.

They addressed numerous questions from the present business representatives regarding the priorities of the Slovak government as far as foreign experts are concerned, or about the readiness of the Slovak labor market for higher immigration. Rastislav Chovanec, whose cooperation with BSCF dates back to the first BSC conference, presented the Ministry's perspective regarding the BSC sector and the plans for the upcoming year.

The fourth person on the panel was the one who named all the actual problems immigrant



GABRIEL GALGÓCI
BSCF Chair and AT&T Slovakia
Country General Manager



JOSEPH P. QUINLAN
Senior Fellow, Center for
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Hopkins University



RASTISLAV CHOVANEC
Deputy Minister of Economy



workers in Slovakia and the companies that employ them face. Holly Ferreira, Director MBS Performance Management & Reporting, Mondelēz, presented her own immigration story and pointed out what needs to improve based on her personal experience upon relocating to Slovakia. As she concluded: "To unlock the growth potential within the Slovakia Services Industry, barriers to attract highly-skilled resources need to be minimized. As global organizations look at Slovakia as a strategic option and compare to other markets, the speed and ease of relocating skilled resources will be key in the decision-making process."

The conference further strengthened the public awareness of the importance of the BSC sector for the Slovak economy and confirmed the position of the BSCF as the leading platform for a productive dialogue with the representatives of the public sector. Slovakia remains to be perceived as an attractive destination for BSCs, however, as the conference clearly demonstrated, this shouldn't be taken for granted. The conference was successful at naming concrete steps which could have the biggest impact on improving the conditions for this industry sector and enabling its further development. Representatives of the relevant ministries as well as the Alien Police mentioned specific changes to be incorporated in 2018 in line with the demands of the BSCF. It will be interesting to see how this entire sector develops in the upcoming year.



PANEL 1: BUSINESS-ACADEMIC COOPERATION IN SLOVAKIA – EXAMPLES TO FOLLOW FOR SHARED SERVICES?
From left: **Beáta Mitická**, Director, Tatranská akadémia, Poprad; **Aniľa Romanová**, Associate Professor, Faculty of Business Management, University of Economics, Bratislava; **Elena Tibenská**, Director, Secondary vocational school, Košice; and **Peter Ivan**, Director, Academy of Commerce, Košice



PANEL 2: IMMIGRATION AS A NECESSITY TO MAINTAIN GROWTH
From left: **Rastislav Chovanec**, Deputy Minister of Economy; **Holly Ferreira**, Director MBS Performance Management & Reporting, Mondelēz; **Branislav Červenka**, Director, Department of Alien Police, Bureau of Border and Alien Police; and **Marián Valentovič**, Director-General, Central Office of Labor, Social Affairs and Family



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