



# **Challenges for Organising and Collective Bargaining in Care, Administration and Waste collection sectors in Central and Eastern European Countries**

## **Slovakia: Central Public Administration**

Barbora Holubová



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## 1. Methodological preface

This study was developed through extensive desk research and analyses of social dialogue in central public administration (CPA) and the public sector from the previous projects. Considering the rapid changes in Slovakia’s CPA following the government shift after the September 2023 elections, the insights in this report should be seen as preliminary due to the ongoing developments and actions of key social partners. Given the tumultuous period for collective bargaining in state and public administration during the report's preparation (August - October 2024) and the busy schedules of social partner representatives, we draw on archival individual or media interviews with significant actors in collective bargaining within the CBA sector.

### List of interviews

Type of stakeholder	Organisation	Data of interview
Trade union	Confederation of Trade Unions of Slovakia – representative of the presidency	June/2024 (Archive interview - project True) <sup>1</sup>
Trade union	Confederation of Trade Unions of Slovakia – representative of the presidency	September/2024 (media interview on collective bargaining)

## 2. Sketching the context

The central bodies of the state administration of the Slovak Republic are listed in Act No. 575/2001 Coll. on the organisation of government activities and the organisation of the central state administration.

According to the classification of public administration bodies, there are supreme state bodies (legislative, executive, and judicial authorities) and central state administration bodies (ministries and other state administration bodies). Then, there are local state administration bodies, such as tax and customs directorates, regional school offices, labour and social affairs offices, labour inspectorates, and school inspectorates. However, this also includes judicial authorities, security forces, and emergency services, as well as the police, the army, and the intelligence service (Berčíková et al., 2008).

In addition to ministries, the Slovak Republic has several central state administration bodies, such as the Office of the Government, the Antimonopoly Office, the Statistical Office, and others. The Office for the Regulation of Network Industries and the Slovak Information Service have a special legal status under Act No. 575/2001 Coll.

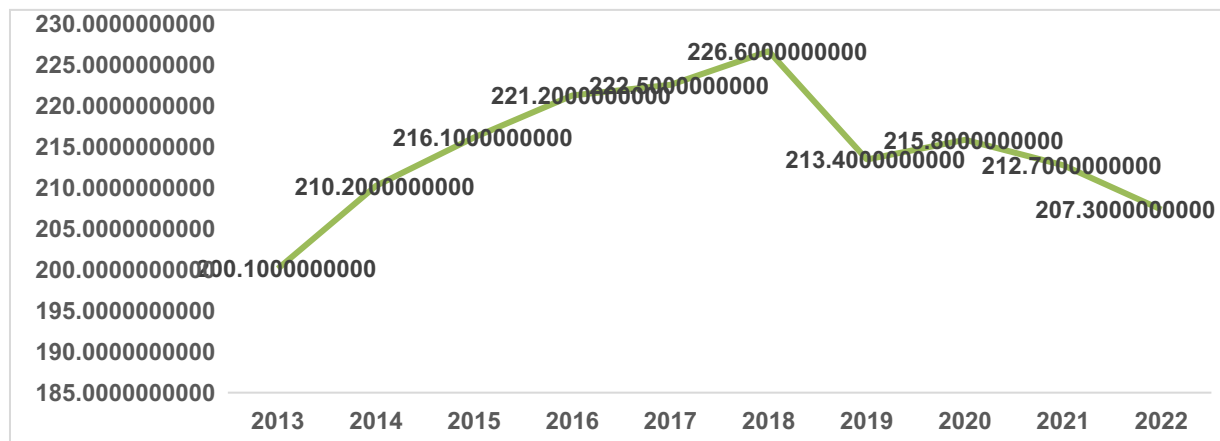
<sup>1</sup> More information about the project at <https://www.celsi.sk/en/true-europe/>

The public administrative bodies in Slovakia, especially the central state administration, are heavily influenced by political decisions rather than by the actual needs of state management. This is evident in the frequent changes in the number and responsibilities of ministries. For example, the recent establishment of the Ministry of Tourism and Sports resulted from an agreement within the ruling coalition.

In 2018, more than 416,000 people worked in the public administration sector. 52% worked in the central state administration, including state enterprises and universities. Municipalities employ 46% of state employees<sup>2</sup> (UHP, 2020).

According to Eurostat, this applies approximately to employment in the CBA. Employment in this sector increased from 2013 to 2019, followed by a significant decrease in 2019, resulting in 207,000 employees in 2022.

**Figure 1: Evolvement of employment in CBA Slovakia (Thousand persons, aged 15-64, 2013 – 2022)**



Source: *Employment by sex, age and detailed economic activity (from 2008 onwards, NACE Rev. 2 two digit level) - 1 000 [lfsa\_egan22d\_\_custom\_10922857]. NACE: Public administration and defence; compulsory social security*

Not all the central administrative bodies have systematised civil service positions; that is, workers employed according to Act No. 55/2017 Coll. on civil service (hereinafter referred to as the "State Law Service") (Civil Service Council, 2024). Some state administrative bodies have employees based on Act No. 552/2003 Coll. on the performance of work in the public interest, which applies to different working conditions, collective bargaining structures, and CBAs; hence, with similar contents.<sup>3</sup> The following analysis will focus primarily on the workers employed based on the State Law Service.

<sup>2</sup> A large part of local government employees perform the tasks of the so-called transferred competencies - activities that the state "ordered" from local governments; however, it continues to finance them and has extensive control powers – for example, primary and secondary education, some medical facilities and social service facilities, building proceedings or registers (UHP, 2020)

<sup>3</sup> For more details, see the Slovak report for the care sector.

### 3. General characteristics of the sector

Based on the Civil Service Council's annual reports (2024), the data for 2023 show that 38,057 civil service positions were registered in Slovakia. This is nearly the same number as in 2017. However, the number decreased to 34,000 in 2019 and has continuously increased to the current number (Civil Service Council, 2023).

**Table 1: Evolvement of the number of systemised state employee positions in 2017 – 2023**

	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Number of systemised state employee positions	38 838	n/a	34 456	36 155	35 973	37 285	38 057

Source: Civil Service Council's Annual Reports <sup>4</sup>

In 2022, only 92% of positions were filled due to budget constraints and low interest in working as state employees. The CPA is not competitive, leading professionals to seek better conditions in the private sector. Consequently, some state positions are intentionally left vacant to attract and reward highly specialised professionals (Civil Service Council, 2024).

Of the total number of current civil servant positions, 30,296 are rank-and-file, and 4,620 are senior civil servants. Consequently, the average ratio indicates that one senior civil servant oversees seven rank-and-file civil servants (Civil Service Council, 2024).

Out of all civil servants, 76% are women and 24% are men. Despite men making up only 24% of the workforce, 40% of them hold leadership positions. Slovakia ranks 10th in the EU for women's representation in the top two levels of civil service positions (Civil Service Council, 2023).

The State differs from the private sector as an employer by providing higher job and income security, shorter working hours, more paid leave, and the right to continuous education for civil servants. However, civil servants also face limitations, such as being unable to engage in private business and having to file asset declarations (Civil Service Council, 2018).

"Personal salary" is a special form of remuneration for civil servants, often exceeding 5,000 euros monthly. The number of civil servants receiving personal salaries has increased over the years, reaching 2.13% of state employees in 2023. The Civil Service Act limits the personal salary amount, ensuring it cannot be lower than the functional salary granted to a civil servant Civil Service Council, 2024).

<sup>4</sup> The latest is from 2023, available at [https://www.vlada.gov.sk/share/rss/sprava/8379\\_sprava-o-stave-a-vyvojis%CC%8Cs-2023.pdf?csrt=1784861266219476430](https://www.vlada.gov.sk/share/rss/sprava/8379_sprava-o-stave-a-vyvojis%CC%8Cs-2023.pdf?csrt=1784861266219476430)

#### 4. Major problems and challenges in the sector

Based on the annual reports of the Civil Service Council, the long-term challenges in the civil service in Slovakia are as follows:<sup>5</sup>

- ❓ **The politicisation of civil service** is considered one of the main problems, according to various international organisations and institutions (OECD, the European Commission, etc.), as well as academics and the non-governmental sector.
- ❓ **Professionalisation** is considered a serious issue in the civil service and a factor influencing the acquisition and stabilisation of high-quality employees.
- ❓ Civil servants critically evaluate **the lack of sufficient information** and the exchange of information for work. Relevant data sharing, access to databases, and information exchange are limited, hampering the quality of civil servants' outputs. Civil servants call for preferential treatment by sectors regarding data and information access.
- ❓ **Civil servants also call for rationalising internal processes and reducing bureaucracy. These areas need to be reflected in civil servants' education**, as well as the application of ethical rules and the translation of ethical principles into all management areas.
- ❓ Civil servants perceive a **higher level of distrust of the public** than the citizens themselves.
- ❓ **Interest in civil service positions remains low.** The demand for state servant positions decreased; during 2017-2019, the number of recruitment procedures reduced by half. A third of civil servant positions were occupied by those in the selection process who could not fill them.
- ❓ The state has a **problem attracting applicants to fields where the private sector is increasingly rewarded** (administration of IT systems, public procurement) (Civil Service Council, 2018 – 2024).

Around 5,000 planned positions (4%) in the central state administration remain unfilled annually, mainly in the police and military. Eliminating vacancies above 5% would reduce 1.1 thousand jobs and save 28 million euros each year (UHP, 2020).

**Reducing civil servants** is often a focal point in political discussions to mitigate public debt and enhance operational efficiency. The most recent proposal involves a 30% reduction in civil servants (Laczko, 2024).

In specific sub-sectors, such as police and law enforcement, environmental sector, and cultural institutions, there is a noticeable **trend of substantial personnel turnover**, often involving replacing existing state or public employees with new individuals who align with the current leadership's political affiliations. This practice carried out without

<sup>5</sup> All annual reports are available at <https://www.vlada.gov.sk/sprava-o-stave-a-vyvoji-statnej-sluzby/?csrt=1784861266219476430>

transparent justification, can create an environment of coercion and increased allegiance among the remaining staff.

In 2024, government actions have further **reduced job security in central public administration**. These include the recall of 50 experts in the Ministry of the Environment, the abolition of the Special Prosecutor's Office, radical personnel changes in cultural institutions, the return of political nominations in the Ministry of Health, inappropriate replacement of police leadership, and dismissals of police investigators dealing with corruption cases. Additionally, the long-time director of the environmental police has departed, and the National Crime Agency is being downsized and reorganised, with complete abolition scheduled for the end of August 2024 (Filo, 2024).

The Slovak Trade Union of Public Administration and Culture is challenging the recent civil servant layoffs (September 2024) in the Ministry of Culture. The unionists identified the layoffs as purposeless and pointed to the worsening working conditions, accompanied by fear and stress (Močková, 2024).

Employment instability and personnel purges have an impact mainly on the Police Force. **Extreme understaffing** increases the pressure on those police officers who are still on duty, which causes further departures and creates a vicious circle. Moreover, due to frequent and recurring night shifts, young police officers have difficulties harmonising their work and family lives. This is one of the reasons young police officers leave for the private sector (Trade Unions of the Police Force, 2024).

According to the Police Force's trade union, the number of police officers has decreased by 2,000 in the last three years. This is due to the current political instability, which has resulted in deteriorating working conditions, including job insecurity (Trade Unions of the Police Force, 2024).

Additional challenges related to the police force state employees:

- ❑ Insufficient and slow fulfilment of the salary requirements;
- ❑ Insecure salary valorisation;
- ❑ Low housing and risk allowance;
- ❑ The low amount of the stabilisation allowance (Trade Unions of the Police Force, 2024).

## 5. Characteristics of social dialogue organisations in the sector

The trade unions' organisations representing state-public employees are the social partners for central public administration employees (Sedláková, Kahancová, 2018):

- ❑ Confederation of the Trade Unions of the Slovak Republic (KOZ)

- ❓ Trade Unions of Public Administration and Culture (SLOVES)
- ❓ Trade Union of education and science in Slovakia
- ❓ Slovak trade unions of Health and social services (SOZZaSS)
- ❓ Trade Union of the Police of the Slovak Republic<sup>6</sup>
- ❓ Trade Unions of the Defense Employees
- ❓ Trade Unions of the Justice in the Slovak Republic<sup>7</sup>
- ❓ The Workers' Union of Agriculture in Slovakia
- ❓ Independent Christian Unions of Slovakia

Slovakia currently lacks specific data pertaining to the CPA density of trade unions based in the country. However, as of 2021, KOZ reported a total of 239,632 members associated with trade unions. Among these members, 102,382 were affiliated with non-production trade unions, constituting less than 43% of all members connected to KOZ (Adámek et al., 2023).

SLOVES is a stable, strong, and recognised public administration and public services employee organisation, with 20,400 members. It is a voluntary and politically independent association of members mainly working in various government bodies and organisations related to public administration and culture. SLOVES concludes multi-employer collective agreements for civil servants as well as public servants each year.<sup>8</sup>

In 2022, a Sector Council for Public Services and Administration was established. The Council's role is to anticipate labour market trends, harmonise employer needs, and ensure individuals' lifelong education in such a way as to increase their standard of living, employability in the labour market, and the competitiveness of the Slovak labour market.<sup>9</sup> The priorities for the upcoming working period of the Council set in 2022 were:

- ❓ Aligning the national occupational standards and updating the qualification cards for public administration.
- ❓ Preparing a Code of Ethics in Public Service,
- ❓ Addressing age management, the principle of seniority in public administration, exploring the possibility of using reduced working hours and shared jobs,
- ❓ Updating the methodology of data sources in the structure of public administration employees.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>6</sup> <https://ozpsr.sk/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://ozjvsr.sk/>

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.sloves.sk/o\\_nas.php](https://www.sloves.sk/o_nas.php)

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.sustavapovolani.sk/category/sektorove-rady-novinky/sektorova-rada-pre-verejne-sluzby-a-spravu/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.sustavapovolani.sk/2022/10/eticky-kodex-a-problematika-age-managementu-sektorova-rada-pre-verejne-sluzby-a-spravu-definovala-priority-na-poprojektove-obdobie/>



## 5.1. Challenges for organising employees

Based on a comprehensive analysis of the significant challenges in organising non-member workers in Slovakia, the most pertinent findings and obstacles are presented below (Adámek et al., 2023).

**Perception of Union Inactivity:** Many workers, particularly male employees, perceive trade unions as passive entities that inadequately represent labour interests. This perception deters their involvement in unions.

**Lack of Awareness Among Young Workers:** Younger workers, specifically those under 29, exhibit the lowest knowledge concerning labour unions. This lack of awareness substantially hinders the recruitment of younger individuals into unions.

**Sector-Specific Criticism:** Employees in the manufacturing sector express more pronounced dissatisfaction with trade unions than their counterparts in non-manufacturing sectors. This sector-specific discontent may impede efforts to organise workers in industries where unions are viewed less favourably.

**Union Membership Costs:** While the issue of financial obligations was referenced, it was not regarded as a significant impediment. This suggests that, although costs may be a consideration, other factors, such as perceptions of union efficacy, represent more crucial barriers (Adámek et al., 2023).

## 5.2. Good practices for organising employees

One of the few relatively successful recruitment strategies to expand the membership base has been implemented in the SLOVES trade union for employees in public administration and culture. Due to the ageing of the employees and trade union members, the SLOVES management has decided to renew the Commission for Young People. The goal is that the older leaders at the grassroots level will gradually pass on their experience and agenda to young trade unionists. This transition is expected to occur in each section of the SLOVES trade union. However, there is an emphasis on the need for change from the grassroots level (Epraca, 2023). SLOVES and others have planned various initiatives to attract young people to join. These initiatives include establishing Youth Commissions with special status, budgets, and activity plans. 11 The first meeting of the Youth Committee took place in June 2024. They discussed SLOVES activities, closer collaboration between KOZ SR member trade unions and young trade unionists, and the potential for educating young trade unionists through the Academy of Young Trade Unionists.

In addition to regular recruitment activities, public protests, warnings of employee rights violations, and precautionary strikes can also be considered recruitment strategies. These strategies can attract the attention of other employees and influence their decision to join the field. Below are some of them described.

The Trade unions of the Judiciary took drastic measures in 2019 by going on strike to draw attention to their plight for better working conditions and improved employment conditions for all judiciary employees. Over **3,700 judicial employees participated in the strike**, which was supported by professional associations and other social actors in the sector (Petrovič, 2019).

In August 2024, the collective agreement for state and public administration employees expired. Trade unions and the government did not meet a new agreement, and the trade unions declared a strike emergency (interview with the Confederation of Trade Unions representative in the Slovak Republic). Some experts are concerned that state employees may not go on strike due to their loyalty to state institutions and job security in the public sector, which could pose significant challenges for the planned strike (Daniš, 2024).

In late June 2024, a faction of the police **force silently protested** by wearing black bands on their sleeves, defying uniform regulations imposed by the Ministers of the Interior. The protest was due to the unmet promise of a salary increase made by the Minister of the Interior. The protest also highlighted the poor working conditions faced by police personnel, including antiquated workspaces that lacked air-conditioning. The protest garnered attention among the not-unionised police personnel and led to further negotiations (Serebryakov, Murajdová, 2024).

### **5.3. Characteristics of Employer Representation**

Government entities such as ministries, local government authorities, and other public institutions are employers engaged in collective bargaining for the public administration sector. These employers represent the state's interests in negotiations with employee unions, addressing various aspects, including wages, working conditions, and other terms of employment.

The employer's authorised representatives - the state and government representatives - are the government itself, usually represented by the Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic, the Minister of the Interior of the SR, and the Minister of Labour, Social Affairs, and Family of the SR (Sedláková, Kahancová, 2018).

## **6. Collective bargaining and other forms of social dialogue in the sector - characteristics**

Based on the Eurostat data, more than 83% of the employees working in the CBA were covered by collective pay agreements in 2018. The reason for this is the result of collective bargaining within the entire public and state sector, as well as being covered by collective agreements of higher levels.

**Table 2: Number of CPA employees covered by collective pay agreements (2018)**

	Number of employees in CBA
Number of employees in all sectors	1 951 273
Number of employees in CBA	173 296

Source: *Number of employees by sex, economic activity and collective pay agreement [earn\_ses18\_01\_custom\_11198510]; in NACE: B-S Industry, construction and services (except activities of households as employers and extra-territorial organisations and bodies) and O Public administration and defence; compulsory social security*

At the central government level, sectoral and establishment-level bargaining has been regularly established since 2003 (since civil and public service regulations have been in force). The social partners annually negotiate separate agreements for civil service and public service. This is also the case at the level of local government. Also, establishment-level bargaining exists there (Sedláková, Kahancová, 2018).

According to the analysis from the Ministry of Finance, the practice of collective bargaining in the public sector in Slovakia, however, generates the same relative valorisation for most professions despite their differential pay competitiveness. It mainly contributes to this centralised bargaining, where most professions are decided at the government level. Models from other countries show that decentralised and separate sectoral bargaining can better consider the needs of employee groups and regional diversity. A more consistent separation of collective bargaining and some wage deregulation, or the sub-sectoral minimum wage, could streamline the process and bring better employee benefits. From the employees' point of view, deregulation would make it possible to ask for market salaries. From the perspective of central state administration, the solution may be to leave the negotiation for some public administration employees, whom they do not pay, to municipalities (UHP, 2020).

The KOZ trade union confederation negotiated the collective agreements for state and public service workers from 1 January 2023 until 31 August 2024. Basic salary scales will increase by 7% from 1 January 2023 and 10% from 1 September 2023. Amendments to higher-level collective agreements for 2022 provide civil and public servants with a one-off payment of €500 in August. The latest collective agreements also include a range of social benefits, not least a reduction of working time for public employees of 2.5 hours per week (KOZ, 2024, interview with the representative of the Confederation of Trade Unions in the Slovak Republic).

## 6.1. Content analysis of collective agreements

**The Collective Agreement of Higher Degree** was concluded for the entire central public administration in 2022 for the validity period 1.1.2023 - 31.8.2024.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.employment.gov.sk/files/sk/praca-zamestnanost/vztah-zamestnanca-zamestnavateľa/kolektívne-pracovnoprávne-vztahy/kolektívne-zmluvy/zoznam-kolektívnych-zmluv-vyššieho-stupňa/statna-sluzba-verejna-sluzba/kzvs-1-1-2023-31-8-2024-statna-sluzba.pdf>

This is the most recent agreement signed between the state representatives (from the previous government) and the Slovak Confederation of Trade Unions and Independent Christian Unions of Slovakia.

The collective agreement of a higher degree is binding for all civil servants and all service offices according to Act No. 55/2017 Coll. on civil service and amending and supplementing specific laws as amended (hereinafter referred to as the "State Law Service"). The content of the collective agreement pertains to a more favourable adjustment of the conditions for civil servants to implement the state contract services. The most relevant clauses:

- ☐ The duty time of a civil servant is 37 and 1/2 hours per week;
- ☐ The basic amount of vacation for a civil servant is five weeks. Vacation in the acreage of six weeks belongs to a civil servant who completes it by the end of the calendar year and is at least 33 years of age, and permanently takes care of a child.
- ☐ Salary tariffs for civil servants will increase by 7% from January 1, 2023 and from September 1, 2023, they will increase by another 10%.
- ☐ A civil servant is entitled to severance pay equivalent to a functional salary. If the legal regulation allows it, the contracting parties can agree on a more favourable increase in the severance pay in the company-level collective agreement.
- ☐ At the first end of the civil service relationship, after proving the right to early leave old-age pension, old-age pension or disability pension belongs to the state severance pay to the employee above the scope of the Civil Service Act in the amount of the most recently awarded functional salary. In the company collective agreement
- ☐ If the relevant legal regulation allows it, the contracting parties can agree on a more favourable increase in the severance pay.
- ☐ The amount of the service office's contribution to the supplementary pension savings in the employer contracts concluded in the period from 1.1.2023 to 31.8.2024 is at least 2% of the volume of settled salaries of the participating civil servants on supplementary pension savings.
- ☐ The total allocation to the social fund consists of a) mandatory allotment in the amount of 1% and b) additional allocation in the amount of at least 0.05% from the summary of gross salaries settled by civil servants for payment for the calendar year.
- ☐ The daily amount of income compensation can be agreed in the company collective agreement in case of temporary incapacity for civil servants to work at a higher percentage rate as stipulated by law, at most 80% of the daily state assessment base employee.

**A specific CBA is signed for police employees. Due to the current restructuring of the police force, which the political opposition labels “cleansing,” we extract specific CBA clauses relevant to maintaining their working rights.**

## **Collective agreement of a higher level for members of the Police Force for the year 2024<sup>12</sup>**

### **Participation of the trade unions in the decision-making:**

- ☐ The trade union regularly participates in interdepartmental commenting on generally binding legal and internal regulations drafts. At the same time, it is necessary to ensure that this procedure does not make classified reality available.
- ☐ Drafts of generally binding legal regulations, sent to the Ministry for comments, will be forwarded to the trade union for comments through the Ministry's legislation and legal services section if their content includes items related to labour, economics, social security and police training.
- ☐ The trade union's opinion is part of the Ministry's draft internal regulation, which regulates the financial, social, and economic security of police officers and safety and health protection in public service performance.
- ☐ The Ministry undertakes that, within the scope of application of § 228 of Act No. 73/1998, Coll. can negotiate with the chairman of the trade union or a person authorised by him from the trade union's management in compliance with the provisions of Act No. 18/2018 Coll. proposals for the staffing of management positions in individual levels of management within no more than ten working days from their delivery.
- ☐ The Minister or the President of the Police Corps undertakes, at the request of the trade union, to establish a commission for the objective examination of complaints filed by police officers, citizens, or other entities, in which the trade union will also have representation.
- ☐ The Ministry undertakes that the chairman of the Police union or a person authorised by him will give a reasoned opinion on the proposal for re-admission to the Police Force.
- ☐ The Ministry undertakes those proposals for issuing personnel orders of the Minister and the Secretary General of the Ministry's service office or disciplinary orders of the Minister that require discussion or approval by a trade union body. Those proposals will be submitted for the opinion of the head of the trade union.

### **Wage and extra payment settings:**

- ☐ Starting January 1, 2024, the Ministry will maintain a personal allowance of 170 euros for police officers. Officers not currently receiving the allowance will be granted up to 170 euros. In the Bratislava and Trnava regions, the allowance will be 210 euros.
- ☐ When a police officer is transferred to a new location and receives reimbursement for expenses, they are entitled to a monthly housing allowance. This allowance is included in the reimbursement provided under the law.

<sup>12</sup> Kolektívna zmluva vyššieho stupňa pre príslušníkov Policajného zboru na rok 2024

The length of years of service in the police force is important for **determining the retirement pension**. To calculate the pension for a member of the Police Force, we consider the following:

- ❓ Their official income if their employment in the Police Force lasted continuously for 30 years or more or if their employment lasted for 30 years or more since their last re-employment.
- ❓ The amount of service income should be multiplied by 30. After that, it should be multiplied by the number of years of service or the number of years since the last re-admission to the police force if the service period in the police force was less than 30 years.

There are also CBAs at the level of particular state enterprises, such as the Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic. However, the company-level CBAs do go beyond the CBA of a higher degree in the whole CPA and copy the clauses one by one.<sup>13</sup>

## 6.2. Other forms of social dialogue

In addition to collective bargaining, social partners also use other forms of social dialogue. This often involves, for example, commenting on legislation through the public portal of legislative proposals or various working groups that prepare documents for negotiations at a higher level. Such working groups, for instance, were also formed at the Trade Union Confederation to create an action plan for implementing the Minimum Wage Directive and map the obstacles to expanding coverage by collective agreements (interview with the representative of the Trade Union Confederation).

In Slovakia, in addition to official social partners, other social actors play a significant role in the social dialogue, either by supporting official social bargaining or by adopting an opposing stance.

Numerous **professional associations** are active in justice, including the Association of Judges of Slovakia, the Association for Open Justice, the Judicial Council of the Slovak Republic, and the Council of Judges at Courts. Most of the associations also supported the strikes of the justice Trade unions in 2015 and 2019.

**The Association** of Slovak Theatres and Orchestras and the Civic Platform Open Culture are critical in supporting public employees.

**Club of well-meaning officials** - is a civic association that aims to connect and develop public sector workers. The club also wants to build a community of capable and honest professionals working in public services. It has been operating since 2015, and today, it unites more than 1,000 civil servants in its community, for whom it regularly organises discussions, workshops and networking activities. The Club is

<sup>13</sup> [https://www.sloves.sk/sekcie/doc/podnikova\\_kz\\_statna\\_sluzba\\_uo\\_2023.pdf](https://www.sloves.sk/sekcie/doc/podnikova_kz_statna_sluzba_uo_2023.pdf)

organising an “Official Act of the Year” award.<sup>14</sup> The Official Act of the Year award recognises officials' initiative, skills, and modern approaches to enhancing public services and improving lives in Slovakia. It aims to highlight innovative practices and inspire active officials while emphasising the importance of quality work to the public.

The Civil Service Council is the guardian of professionalism, a code of ethics in state administration, and a kind of ombudsman for civil officials. The Council operates in various areas, primarily assisting in the effective management of human resources, investigating complaints and resignations, protecting the principles of the civil service, improving the quality of civil service by educating civil servants, and also building analytical capacities for the civil service; for example, for the creation of a State Report and the development of the civil service in Slovakia. The Civil Service Council coordinates and monitors initiatives from officials or citizens who report misconduct in public administration (Epraca, 2024).

In June 2024, the Slovak Government cancelled the Civil Service Council without proper discussion or expertise, justifying it as a measure to save the state budget. However, this decision is questionable as the Council's independence was mandated by the European Union and the Slovak Republic. The cancellation may be seen as an attempt to silence critical civil servant voices. There are concerns about potential political purges and a lack of expertise in the state administration (Epraca, 2024; TASR, 2024).

### **6.3. Impact of European sectoral social dialogue**

The European Social Dialogue Committee for Central Government Administrations (SDC CGA) was established by the European Commission in 2010, bringing together trade unions (TUNED) and employers (EUPAE) from the central government sector. Slovakia, a member of EUPAE, actively participated, for example, in implementing the SDC CGA's guide on addressing workplace bullying and burnout, translating it into Slovak (SDC CGA, 2015)

The Government Office of the Slovak Republic is an esteemed member of the European Public Administration Network (EUPAN)<sup>15</sup>, which serves as an informal network comprising the Directorates-General responsible for public administration in the Member States of the European Union, the European Commission (EC), and observer countries. The primary objective of EUPAN is to bolster cooperation among European public administrations by focusing on specific objectives and finding effective ways to address shared priorities at both national and EU levels. EUPAN plays a significant role in facilitating the exchange and sharing of views, experiences, tools, and best practices among its members on various topics and areas of interest.

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.uradnickycin.sk/uradnickyy-cin-roka/>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.eupan.eu/>

Based on the EUPAN survey, the Slovak Republic government office cooperates and engages in social dialogue with trade unions. The current most important issues are civil servants' salaries and their social status. The most pressing issue for the future is the minimum guaranteed standards for civil servants in social welfare and provision (EUPAN, 2015).

## 7. Conclusions and recommendations

The report findings point out that the functioning of public administrative bodies in Slovakia, particularly in the CPA sector, is highly **influenced by political decisions** rather than based on substantive management needs. This is evidenced by frequent changes in the number and competencies of ministries, which leads to **instability in the sector**.

The report highlights the difficulties in collective bargaining and social dialogue within the CPA sector, which are influenced by the broader socio-political environment. These **challenges are worsened by the dynamic political landscape** resulting from recent government changes.

There is a significant focus on organisational challenges, such as the complexities in the structure and operation of state administration bodies. These challenges are compounded by the **fluctuating human resource** needs often not aligned with the actual requirements for efficient state management.

The recent government decisions, including cancelling the Civil Service Council, are seen as potentially **detrimental to the independence and professionalism within the CPA**. This move is viewed as politically motivated and could undermine the quality and stability of the civil service in Slovakia.

The report emphasises **attracting younger workers to unions by creating dedicated budgets and activity plans for youth commissions**. These initiatives aim to increase union membership among younger employees and ensure their active participation in social dialogue.

The Government Office of the Slovak Republic **actively participates** in the European Public Administration Network (EUPAN) to promote collaboration and exchange best practices among public administrations across Europe, including addressing civil servants' salaries and social standing through social dialogue with trade unions.

Recommendations:

There is a need for a more **stable and depoliticised approach to managing the CPA sector**, emphasising strengthening social dialogue and collective bargaining practices.





The recommendations call for **greater engagement of social partners to ensure that the administration's operational needs are met** and that political changes do not adversely affect the sector's functionality.

The report identifies significant barriers to union participation, particularly the perception of union inactivity and the lack of awareness among younger workers. To address this, we suggest **enhancing communication strategies and developing targeted approaches for engaging younger workers.**

It recommends **adopting sector-specific strategies to revitalise union participation in CBA.** This includes focusing on particular subsectors in the CBA, especially police and judiciary, and addressing their specific concerns.

There is a need for better communication between social partners, including trade unions and employers, to ensure that the needs and concerns of workers are effectively addressed. This could involve **regular consultations and the implementation of agreed-upon measures to improve working conditions.**

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