

Historic places of worship: basic information by country - Slovakia

Country	Slovak Republic
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The current situation	
Brief country context to explain current situation	<p>Slovakia is a small country in Central-Eastern part of Europe, until 1918 part of the historic Hungarian Kingdom/Austrian Empire, 1919-1992 part of former Czechoslovakia. It is a rather multicultural country – the eastern part of it forms the border between the Western and Eastern church. The majority of the population (69 % - data from 2001) belongs to the Roman Catholic denomination, follows the Lutheran church (under 7 %), the Greek-Catholics (above 4 %), Calvinist Reformed Church (above 2 %), Orthodox Church (under 1 %), other registered church organizations (1 %) and without any religion (above 13 %). The history of religion in the area of Slovakia, starting with the Christianity of the Great Moravian Empire in the 9th Century, following by the church organization of the medieval Hungary, the influence of Hussites in the 15th Century, Reformation in 16th and Recatholization in 17th and 18th Centuries is visible on the substance and architecture of the historic churches too. The oldest churches still in use are originating from the 13th C. (Romanesque), 14-15th (Gothic), but also a number of buildings from the 19th Century is on the Heritage List. A depressive period was between 1950 (dissolution of all holy orders and the Greek-Catholic church and secularization of all denominations and church organizations with strict state supervising and governmental communizing of their former property) – until the change in 1989. Now there is a freedom of religion in Slovakia, the churches and belonging estates were restituted by the former owners/denominations/parishes/religious communities etc., - there are 18 denominations registered by the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic (http://www.culture.gov.sk/cirkev-a-nabozenske-spolocnosti/registrovane-cirkvi). Because of the geographical character of the country (3/4 of the territory are mountains) there is no tradition of centralization – a lot of different regional centres and local areas with special historic features are recognizable in the field of places of worship as well. And there is an important difference to mention between the very religious East (lack of development and infrastructure) and the more wealthy and built-up West of Slovakia – the capital is Bratislava, located on the very western border to Austria.</p>
Places of worship in use	
Number of places of worship by religion/denomination and religious attendance.	Data from 2001 (http://www.mksr.sk/statkult/file3735.htm): 2663 parishes, church communities, 4029 filiae from them, using together 5654 places of worship (church, chapel, prayer-house - 651 from them are of the Evangelical/Lutheran Church), there were 33 new churches finished in the same year and 57 churches not completed - still in a process of building (mostly Roman Catholic).
Who is responsible for the management of buildings?	The management is always the task of the owner – the registered legal subject.
Who finances the maintenance? (State funding, Church tax...)	<p>According to the Building Law in Slovakia responsible for the maintenance of each building is always the legal subject, who is registered as the owner. The churches, registered by the Ministry of Culture, are supported by the state – the state budget covers the necessary costs of the church organizations (in 2001 – aprox. 5 mil. €) including the salaries of the priests (in 2001 – 21.7 mil. €). There are no church taxes in Slovakia and no separation of the church from the state.</p> <p>There is an Agreement signed by the state president and the registered churches and religious communities from 2002, where</p>

	<p>chapter 21 says: http://www.culture.gov.sk/cirkev-nabozenske-spolocnosti/legislatva/zkony/zmluva-medzi-slovenskou-republikou-a-registrovanymi-cirkvami-a-nabozenskymi-spolocnostami</p> <p><i>“The Slovak Republic and the registered Churches and Religious Communities will participate in the maintenance and restoration of buildings which represent the ownership of the Churches and ..., listed as heritage buildings ... from sources from the state budget of the Slovak Republic” ...</i></p>
What support organisations exist (to help a church or other organisation when there is a problem?)	Churches, registered on the Heritage List, could get individual financial support for their conservation (or heritage research, restoration research – or anything prescribed by the Heritage Board as needed for a proper restoration or conservation – the application could be done each year by the owner, the Grant System is led by the Ministry of Culture, but there is only a right for applying, not secured a right of receiving – the support depends on the annual state budget.
Places of worship not used for worship	
Number of places of worship that have closed for worship in recent years	Numbers not published yet, it is possible just to estimate that it could be under 50. Churches, not used for worship, are quite rare in Slovakia, mostly in border regions, where the population is dying out as well, or where the community, which built and used the church in the past, was moved away (Jewish synagogues, German speaking areas where after the WW2 the local Germans were transported to Germany) – but these examples are not especially connected with the last decade. The period after the political change in 1989 brought a religious “freedom”, after a large restitution wave there was a wide effort, especially in the Roman-Catholic church, to build more new churches (at the occasion of the Pope’s visit in 1995 the Pope consecrated 200 angle-stones for new RC churches). It was a reaction to the depression of the religion of the socialist era, when just a small number of newchurch-buildings were allowed, especially of the Orthodox church and of some relatively small Protestant denominations – as a “balance” for the Roman-Catholics. This period of new church buildings seems to be finished in the last years. What occurs now: in a few villages there are problems with maintenance of the historic church if there was built a large and comfortable new one. But there is still a large problem with the synagogues in Slovakia – in some towns there is a restituted Jewish community (even when mostly just a formal one), and in a number of sites the heritage building remains in the ownership of the local municipality. Some of the synagogues are closed without usage, some adapted to Christian prayer-houses, to cultural centres, to libraries, to shops or stock-houses. The worse in these cases is the frequent change of the way of use, because it demands always some adaptations – and at the “end of the story” there would be nothing left from the authentic value nor from the architecture.
What organisations are responsible for the management of these places of worship	The management is always the task of the owner – the denomination (if it exists), the local municipality (if there is no church community) – in some cases abandoned historic churches are long-term rented by legal subjects or NGO-s for arranging tourist information centres – mostly from tourist trade EU-supports or Visegrad-fund-supports, in cooperation with the local municipality.
Who finances the above organisations?	Grant systems for financial support programs – EU, Visegrad Fund etc.
General information	
Number of buildings of architectural or historical importance.	The List of Cultural Monuments Fund in Slovakia contains 1618 church buildings under Heritage Care (1582 churches, 35 synagogues, 1 prayer house), and 20 “vanished” places of worship (archaeological sites with rests of a church), 490 chapels (not regular services).
Rural/urban issues	

Tax situation	There is no church tax in Slovakia.
Have any surveys been compiled recently? (Please attach weblink or email document).	<p>Under the Ministry of Culture and Tourist Trade there is an Institute for State – Church Relations http://www.mksr.sk/statkult/file3735.html: „<i>The Institute for State-Church Relations (Ústav pre vzťahy štátu a cirkví, UVSC) deals with interdisciplinary research of state-church relations, religiosity, churches and religious societies (CaRS), religious extremism, quasi-religious phenomena; by means of theoretical and analytic, informational and documentary, consulting, publishing and organizational activities in the field of both traditional and non-traditional religiosity, by systematic monitoring of the spiritual scene, UVSC intends to contribute to a non-confrontational dialogue and co-operation of the State with churches and religious societies. In accordance with the Recommendation of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe from 22 June 1999 (Illegal activities of sects), UVSC, as the only national, confession-neutral institution, has turned its attention to the potentially dangerous activities of some religious groups and orientations.</i>”</p> <p>In 1994/1995 a very detailed documentation of all listed movable heritage monuments in sacral buildings was completed (all church furnishing, altars, benches, paintings, vessels, monstrances, roods, statues, vestments, lights, candlesticks etc.) - this was carried out by the state police (pictures by analogue camera and videos on cassettes as well) provided in the presence of the church and governmental office (department for culture) and on base of supervising of the regional heritage board as well - the aim was to prevent criminal activities - stealing these works of art and transfer them over the border, the records are available at the state police archives.</p>
Which subjects are of special concern?	Churches and religious denominations, registered at the Ministry of Culture, have according the legal system of Slovakia the right of being supported from state budget. The height of the support depends on the number of believers/members and on various other features. The news on large moslem influence and infiltration of different religious tendencies (f.e. scientologists) into the society, coming from Western European countries, evocated a renewal of the existing legal act in Slovakia – among other conditions today it is not possible to register a church denomination until it has not at least 20.000 followers, documented with their list and signature.
Which are the areas that could be helped by working together at a European level	To find usage for abandoned churches in border areas – especially in tourist trade projects, managing tourism and connected arrangements on both sides of the border.
Predicted future national situation/direction it is heading	It is a fear of following the process from Western-Europe – the decrease of religiosity in the whole society, connected with neglecting the places of worship too. Therefor it could be useful to learn the medicin before the disease breaks through ...
Any other comments	