SLOVAK PRO

THE FIRST 25 YEARS

Building Bridges. Connecting People.
Creating Opportunities.



By Pavol Demeš and the Slovak PRO Team

The Team

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Printer: Heritage Printing and Graphics, Arlington, VA
First Edition: October 2026
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Published by: Slovak PRO Inc., United States of America

This publication was prepared to mark the 25th anniversary of Slovak PRO, in close cooperation with its leaders—particularly Vladimír Lackovič, Michal Šimkovič, Oto Raček, and Jana Trnovcová Ragucci—and presented at the Fourth Slovak PRO Summit in Washington, D.C., on October 23, 2026.



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Pavol Demeš is a Bratislava-based foreign policy analyst, civic diplomat, author, and photographer, and a former Minister of International Relations of the Slovak Republic.

He has long been involved in strengthening transatlantic relations and cooperation between Slovakia and the United States. He is the author of several publications on Slovak–American relations, including Friend, Partner, Ally: The Story of Slovak–American Relations. He has followed and supported Slovak PRO and the wider Slovak community in North America for many years.



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Is a creative director, designer and founder of Donau Design Studio. She holds an MA from Comenius University in Bratislava and an MFA from the Academy of Art University in San Francisco.

Denisa helps nonprofits and global companies shape their brands. Her work is guided by a passion for civic causes, thoughtful branding, urban design, science and technology.

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FOREWORD

Michal Šimkovič
President of Slovak PRO

2024–Present



"We are building a modern global diaspora, one that does not simply look back at where we came from but actively shapes where Slovakia is going."

This publication marks Slovak PRO's 25th anniversary and tells the story of what we've built over those years — not by one person or one generation of leaders, but through the effort, generosity, and persistence of many people.

Today, Slovak PRO brings together more than 3,000 members across 13 cities in the United States, Canada, and Europe. More than 50 volunteer leaders dedicate their time, talent, and energy to building opportunities for Slovaks around the world.
In many ways, Slovak PRO is a small miracle. No country our size has built a comparable volunteer-powered global network of leaders. It is largely self-organized and sustained by people who choose to contribute simply because they believe the Slovak community can be stronger together.

Over the years, that community has created the Slovak PRO Summit in New York, Slovak PRO House at SXSW in Austin, industry conferences, mentorship programs, local chapters, and countless connections between founders, professionals, innovators, and friends. This publication captures some of those stories, the people behind them, and the organization's evolution over its first 25 years.

People join Slovak PRO for different reasons and bring different ambitions. Mine is simple: to make sure Slovak PRO is still here 25 years from now — stronger, more ambitious, and ready for the next generation to make it their own.

We are building a modern global diaspora, one that does not simply look back at where we came from but actively shapes where Slovakia is going.

My sincere thanks to the author of this publication, Pavol Demeš, and to everyone who contributed their memories, stories, photographs, and time to bringing it together. And above all, thank you to the hundreds of volunteers, partners, sponsors, mentors, and members who have made the first 25 years possible.

I hope these pages give you a sense not only of what Slovak PRO has accomplished, but of what can happen when a community decides to organize, contribute, and build together.

REFLECTION

Oto Raček
Founder and President of Slovak PRO

2001–2017



While studying in New York, I had many friends who hailed from Central and Eastern Europe. We formed a close community, supported one another, and made life far from home easier. After graduation, however, I began to miss that sense of belonging. I wanted to create something that would have felt entirely natural in Slovakia: a circle of people who understood one another, shared experiences, spent time together, and offered a helping hand when needed. In short, I wanted to create a small Slovakia across the ocean.

At the time, I was working as a programmer for a consulting company in Lower Manhattan. We had suitable office space, and an idea began to take shape: why not bring together Slovak students, recent graduates, and professionals from different fields who were building their lives in New York?

I approached two friends, Alex Mitro and Iveta Hlinka, and asked them to join forces with me and bring together our contacts. In June 2001, we organized our first gathering of young Slovak professionals. Forty people came. The gathering was so successful that we began meeting every month, along with informal happy hours after work. The community kept growing, and before long, my office could no longer accommodate everyone.

From the beginning, our purpose was clear: to connect what we carried in our hearts — our Slovak identity — with our lives, experiences, friendships, and ambitions in America. We wanted to help one another build a future, even thousands of miles from home.

There were quieter years when I feared that, without someone who shared this vision, the network might gradually disappear. Then I reconnected with Vladimír Lackovič, whom I remembered as a high school student attending one of our early gatherings. Vlado saw the value of what we had created and wanted to help carry it forward. His energy, vision, and commitment — together with those of an extraordinary team — rekindled the original spark.

At that pivotal moment, then Consul General Jana Trnovcová Ragucci also stood beside us, helping Slovak PRO give its ambitions a clear and lasting direction.
The seed planted in June 2001 has grown into a strong tree. Its branches now extend across the United States, Canada, and Europe. I am immensely proud of the community we have created, and grateful to everyone who continues to help it grow.

"From the beginning, our purpose was clear: to connect what we carried in our hearts— our Slovak identity—with our lives, experiences, friendships, and ambitions in America."

REFLECTION

Vladimír Lackovič
President of Slovak PRO

2017–2024



"Thousands of Slovaks around the world are building companies, advancing science and technology, creating art, preserving our culture, and contributing to their communities."

The story of how Slovak PRO has shaped my life is an example of the power this community holds for us all. When I joined Slovak PRO in 2014, I was seeking a connection to home and a professional community of others who understood the experience of building a business and career in a new place. Over the past 12 years of my involvement, this organization has become a driving force in my work. It taught me about community organizing. It guided me towards my career in international relations. And it is the primary way I have stayed so deeply connected to Slovakia. What started as a few people trying to bring Slovaks together became something that shaped how I think about community, leadership, and what we can accomplish when people join together in service of something bigger than themselves. I know that thousands of people have been impacted by Slovak PRO just as I have.

One of the greatest gifts Slovak PRO has given me is the people I have met: scientists, entrepreneurs, diplomats, artists, students, community leaders, and even presidents. Some of my best memories are from those early meetups with Oto Raček, where I first met the people who have now become my lifelong friends. But I learned from Oto that communities do not build themselves. Someone has to make the call, send the invitation, find the room, introduce people who do not know each other, and do it again the following month. As our community grew, we realized that it could not be sustained on the efforts of two or three organizers alone.

This is where the magic of Slovak PRO was realized: what connects its members is not a profession or a title, but a willingness to contribute. As we asked people to help organize and lead the network, Slovak PRO quickly evolved into a vibrant community where each person felt ownership of its success. This has proven to be one of Slovak PRO's greatest strengths: a culture of volunteers who are proud of where they come from, professional in what they do, generous with their time, and willing to step forward and help. Some stayed for years, while others came to build something and then moved on. Each and every person left their mark.

"This has proven to be one of Slovak PRO's greatest strengths: a culture of volunteers who are proud of where they come from, professional in what they do, generous with their time, and willing to step forward and help."



Slovaks Meet Slovaks in San Francisco, 2024

Slovak PRO has convinced me that Slovakia's greatest asset is its people. Thousands of Slovaks around the world are building companies, advancing science and technology, creating art, preserving our culture, and contributing to their communities. Slovak PRO can connect them, from Bratislava to Boston, Košice to Austin, New York to San Francisco. And that connection should flow both ways: Slovakia benefits from its diaspora, and the diaspora benefits from staying connected to Slovakia.

Twenty-five years ago, a few people decided to bring Slovaks together in New York. Twenty-five years from now, I hope we can look back and see that the same simple idea has connected Slovaks around the world: a growing community that welcomes new generations and gives Slovaks everywhere a reason to stay connected.

Thank you to everyone who has given Slovak PRO their time, energy, ideas, friendship, and trust over these 25 years. This has never been the story of Oto, Michal, or me.

It is the story of the many people who built Slovak PRO together.

FROM ONE CITY TO THIRTEEN HUBS

The Origins, Development, and People of Slovak PRO

Over 25 years, Slovak PRO has evolved from a small group of young Slovak professionals in New York into a volunteer-led North American — and increasingly international — platform connecting Slovak professionals, entrepreneurs, students, scientists, artists, companies, and institutions. Its history is not the work of a single individual but is instead a story of continuity across successive generations of leaders and volunteers who have contributed their time, expertise, contacts, and organizational skills to a shared purpose. What began as an informal community of Slovaks who came together because they craved cultural connection and mutual professional support has gradually become a formal nonprofit serving thousands, with a growing geographic reach, specialized professional groups, and a stellar suite of business, educational, cultural, and community programming.

Slovak PRO at a Glance

2001–2026



NEW YORK CITY

2001

Oto Raček, Alex Mitro, and Iveta Hlinka establish the Young Slovak Professionals Network in New York. Oto Raček serves as the president of the network.

2017

The network adopts the name Slovak PRO.

2012–2016

Activities are reactivated by Oto Raček and Vladimír Lackovič, with support from the Consulate General of Slovakia in New York. Together, they begin shaping a new chapter for the network, focused on monthly programming and community outreach.

2017

After several years of programming, and with increased demand for structure and a larger team, Vladimír Lackovič becomes the second President of Slovak PRO. He launches a sustained period of organizational renewal and expansion, including the multi-year development of a volunteer-based leadership team.



THE BEGINNINGS

Slovak PRO expanded on the foundation of the Young Slovak Professionals Network, created in 2001 by Oto Racek, Alex Mitro, and Iveta Hlinka. The group began growing organically through small meetups. Today, we have well over 2500 members throughout New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut.



GROWTH

The network and its organizers were instrumental in the success of major events, such as hosting Elan at Carnegie Hall. The Young Slovak Professionals, renamed as Slovak PRO in 2007, remained very active until around 2010.



NEW LIFE

Vladimír Lackovič reaches out to Oto about bringing new life to the network. The Slovak community in the greater New York area—and especially a growing population of Slovak students, entrepreneurs, and young professionals—desperately needs a venue to meet, socialize, and help each other in their careers.



MIAMI



SAN FRANCISCO



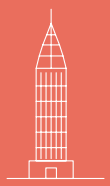
CHICAGO



TORONTO



WASHINGTON D.C.



AUSTIN



BOSTON



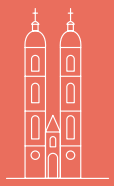
SAN DIEGO



SEATTLE



VANCOUVER



MUNICH CHAPTER

2022

Slovak PRO Inc. became a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

2023–2024

The organization holds its first two Slovak PRO Summits — which have become signature events — and expands beyond New York into a national U.S. network heralded by seven formal, city-based chapters.

2024

Michal Šimkovič becomes the third President of Slovak PRO. The organization continues its professionalization, focusing on team development, national presence and brand awareness, and fundraising.

2025–2026

The network grows to 13 hubs across the United States, Canada, and Europe; develops specialized industry groups for the arts, biotech, and finance, among others; and after 25 years, returns to its roots by re-launching Young Slovak PRO to mentor and support students and young leaders within the community.

BUILDING ON
EACH OTHER'S FOUNDATIONS

Three Presidents, One Shared Vision

2001–2024



THE PRESIDENCY OF

Oto Raček

2001–2017

Slovak PRO's roots go back to 2001, when Oto Raček, together with Alex Mitro and Iveta Hlinka, established the Young Slovak Professionals Network in New York. The initiative responded to a practical need: young Slovaks studying, working, or beginning their careers in the United States wanted a place where they could exchange professional experience, help newcomers find employment and navigate American life, build business contacts, discuss developments in Slovakia, and maintain a connection to Slovak culture and identity.



Young Slovak Professionals founders Oto Raček, Iveta Hlinka, and Alex Mitro, attending a reception at the Residence of the Permanent Representative of the Slovak Republic to the UN.



Young Slovak Professionals at Peter Breiner's Slovak Dances Carnegie Hall, December 2016

Oto Raček became the central figure of this formative period. Born in Spišská Sobota, Slovakia in 1972, he moved to the United States in 1992 and pursued a career in information technology and cybersecurity. Under his leadership, the network grew organically through informal gatherings, personal recommendations, professional meetings, cultural programs, and discussions with Slovak public figures.

The early organization brought together Slovak professionals, American business partners, newcomers to the United States, and established members of the Slovak-American community. Informal mentoring was one of its most valuable functions: experienced members offered advice, contacts, and introductions to potential employers or business partners. The network also hosted Slovak politicians, artists, entrepreneurs, and public figures, including Mikuláš Dzurinda and Emília Vášáryová, and contributed to cultural events such as the Slovak band Elán's performance at Carnegie Hall.

Members organized visits to the Slovak Embassy in Washington, D.C., particularly during the tenure of Ambassador Martin Bútora. These contacts helped establish an early relationship between the emerging professional diaspora and Slovak diplomacy.

In 2007, the Young Slovak Professionals Network adopted the shorter and more inclusive name Slovak PRO. "PRO" referred primarily to professionals, while also expressing support for Slovak talent, cooperation, and Slovakia itself. After approximately 2010, activities declined as the volunteer network remained dependent on a small number of organizers. Personal ties and the original community, however, remained intact.

The network began to reactivate toward the end of 2012, aided by closer cooperation with the Consulate General of Slovakia in New York. A pivotal meeting convened by Consul General Jana Trnovcová Ragucci at the Consulate General on April 1, 2014 brought together Oto Raček and Vladimír Lackovič and led to an action plan for Slovak PRO's renewal. Their goal was to preserve its original mission while building a more sustainable organization with regular programming, modern communications, a broader volunteer base, and ambitions extending beyond New York.

Raček remained closely associated with Slovak PRO after the leadership transition. As President Emeritus and a member of the Board of Directors, he has provided institutional memory and a living link between the informal network founded in 2001 and today's nonprofit organization. He helped sustain Slovak PRO through periods of reduced activity, supported its revitalization, and continued to participate in flagship events, including delivering the closing remarks at the 2025 Slovak PRO Summit.

Left: Young Slovak Professionals meeting Slovak State Secretary Magda Vášáryová at the Residence of the Permanent Representative of the Slovak Republic to the UN in NYC. Date: May 2, 2005

THE PRESIDENCY OF

Vladimír Lackovič

2017–2024

Through Vladimír's vision for robust programming, a collaborative leadership team, flagship convenings, and a global reach, Slovak PRO cemented its place as the most respected and influential community of Slovak professionals abroad.

Vladimír Lackovič joined the Slovak PRO team in 2014 and became its second President in 2017. Born in Banská Bystrica in 1989 and raised in Nitra, he moved to the United States in 2004 at age 15. His professional background spans entrepreneurship, digital technology, marketing, business development, consulting, and international affairs.

Working together with Oto Raček, Lackovič led Slovak PRO through a sustained period of revival and transformation. Regular professional gatherings returned to New York, and communications were modernized. As Slovak PRO began to engage a broad cross-section of the Slovak diaspora, additional volunteers stepped up to support its work. Slovak PRO expanded its mission beyond general networking to include support for Slovak businesses and startups, professional development, closer cooperation with Slovak institutions, and science, technology, education, and cultural programming. During this time, demand for Slovak PRO's offerings continued to grow, with monthly events regularly drawing dozens of participants.

An important milestone came in 2018, when Slovak PRO joined the Embassy of the Slovak Republic in Washington, D.C. and the Consulate General in New York in organizing the Slovak PRO Networking Event at the Bohemian National Hall. The event demonstrated that Slovak PRO had become a respected partner of Slovak diplomatic and public institutions.

Recognizing the need to create a structure that would outlive any single leader, Lackovič devoted significant energy to recruiting and managing a formal, volunteer leadership team. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Slovak PRO grew its digital program offerings, which led to requests for the expansion of the network to diasporic communities outside of New York. As a result, over the course of the next several years, 12 additional chapters were established in cities across the United States, Canada, and beyond, and the leadership team grew to over 50 volunteers.

With a sustainable management model in place, the organization followed with a legal transformation in August 2022, when Slovak PRO Inc. received federal tax-exempt status under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. This created the foundation needed to accept tax-deductible donations, enter formal partnerships,



Vladimír Lackovič moderates the Slovak PRO Summit 2023, Slovak PRO Summit, New York City

obtain sponsorship, and finance activities transparently, while preserving Slovak PRO's volunteer-led character.

Under Lackovič's leadership, Slovak PRO nurtured a strong partnership with the Consulate General of Slovakia in New York, under Consuls Ladislava Begeç and Milan Vrbovský. Through this collaboration, Slovak PRO found a permanent home at the newly opened Consulate building to host its future activities. With the network's growing prominence, there was a desire to convene a national gathering of top Slovak professionals across North America — and the Slovak PRO Summit was born.

The inaugural Summit in 2023 was held in New York under the auspices of President Zuzana Čaputová, who joined the event as an honored guest and held a discussion with participants about the importance of connecting Slovak professionals abroad with Slovakia. The second Summit in 2024 similarly welcomed President Peter Pellegrini. These gatherings brought together Slovak-American professionals, entrepreneurs, scientists, artists, public figures, and representatives of partner institutions, and gave the modern Slovak diaspora a direct opportunity to engage with Slovakia's highest representatives.

As Lackovič transitioned from President to a member of the Board of Directors in 2024, he assumed responsibility for government, nonprofit, and Slovak relations. After being named Slovakia's Special Representative to the U.S. for Trade and Investment on behalf of the Slovak Investment and Trade Development Agency (SARIO), Lackovič forged an ongoing collaboration between SARIO and Slovak PRO, creating yet another bridge between Slovak professionals, Slovak companies, and American partners and investors.

Through Vladimír Lackovič's vision for robust programming, a collaborative leadership team, flagship convenings, and a global reach, Slovak PRO cemented its place as the most respected and influential community of Slovak professionals abroad.

THE PRESIDENCY OF

Michal Šimkovič

2024–Present

With Michal's guidance, Slovak PRO has gained both the means and the confidence to step into its place as an active global community of Slovak professionals.

Michal Šimkovič became Slovak PRO's third President in 2024. Born in Dubnica nad Váhom in 1984, he moved to the United States in 2011. Based in Silicon Valley, he is a designer, technology professional, investor, and advisor who has played an important role in connecting Slovak technology founders with experienced mentors and the American market.

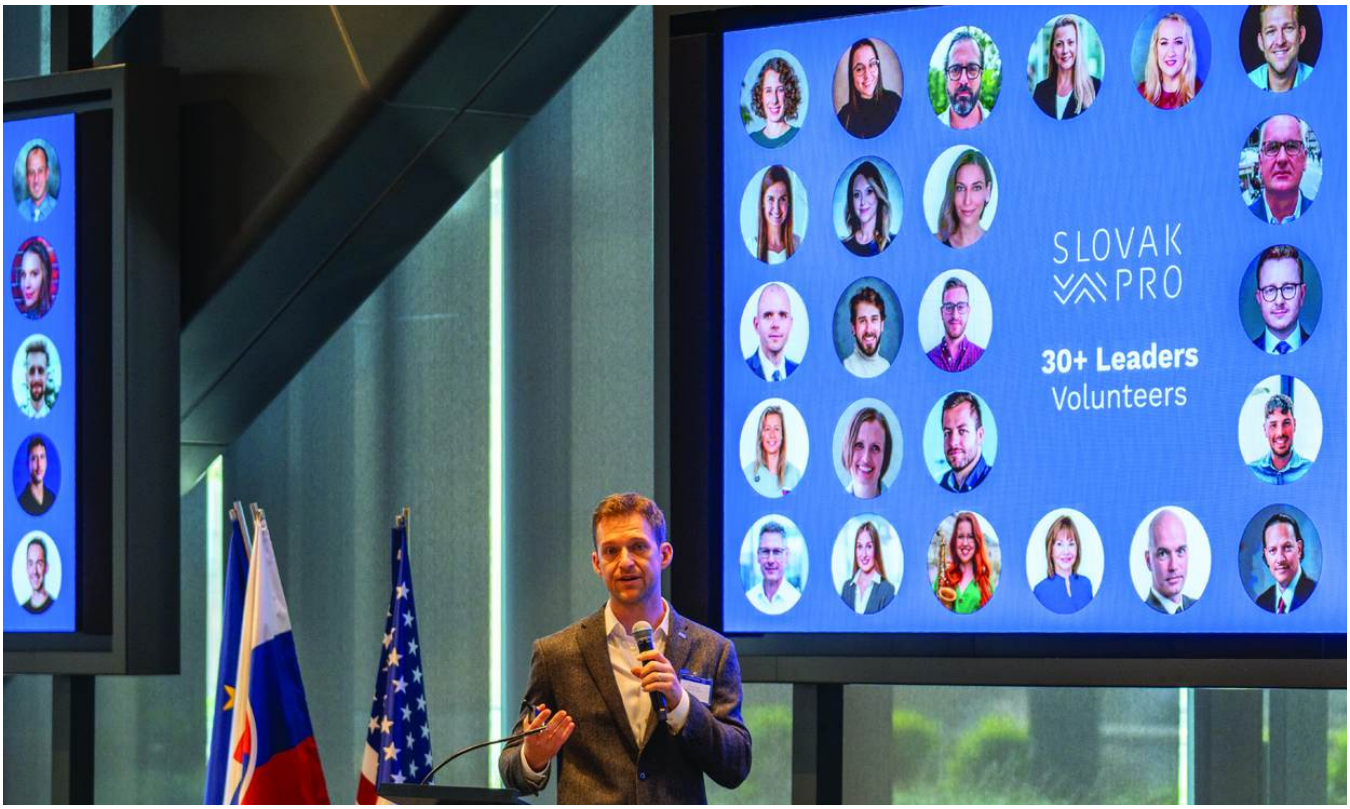
Before assuming the presidency, Šimkovič led BrainBoard, a Silicon Valley professional community and platform helping Slovak startups improve their products, presentations, and value propositions. Cooperation between BrainBoard and Slovak PRO led the San Francisco community to join Slovak PRO at the first Summit in 2023, marking a decisive step in the organization's expansion beyond New York City.

Under Šimkovič's leadership, Slovak PRO entered a new period of geographic and organizational development. The network grew from a presence in seven U.S. cities in 2024 to eight U.S. cities and two Canadian cities in 2025. In 2026, it expanded into Europe, opening its first European chapter outside Slovakia in Munich. The number of annual events increased from more than 40 in 2024 to over 50 in 2025, while the volunteer team grew from 26 members in 2024 to 52 by August 2026.

13
HUBS
In the U.S., Canada, and Europe — up from 7 U.S. cities in 2024

50+
EVENTS A YEAR
Up from more than 40 in 2024

56
VOLUNTEER LEADERS
By Octoer 2026 — up from 26 in 2024



Michal Šimkovič presents at the Slovak PRO Summit 2025, New York

This period also brought greater professional specialization to the network's programming. Slovak PRO began developing expert communities in technology and startups, finance, biotechnology and healthcare, legal affairs, and the arts. In July 2026, it launched Young Slovak PRO, a platform connecting students and young professionals — including second- and third-generation Slovaks — with one another and with established experts in their fields. Its name deliberately recalls the original Young Slovak Professionals Network and connects the organization's beginnings with its future.

During Šimkovič's tenure, Slovak PRO has developed a fundraising program, strengthened its financial standing, and is actively taking steps towards hiring its first paid executive employee to oversee the network's volunteer leadership alongside the Board of Directors. With his guidance, Slovak PRO has gained both the means and confidence to fully step into its place as not only a U.S. network but an active global community of Slovak professionals.

LEADERSHIP

The People and Structure Behind Slovak PRO

As Slovak PRO grew, leadership became more widely distributed among the Board of Directors, operational leads, chapter coordinators, industry-group leaders, and project teams. This structure has allowed volunteers in different cities and professions to take responsibility for activities while ensuring continuity across the organization.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
As of August 2026

Michal Šimkovič
President and Member of the Board

Lucia Kapogiannopoulos
Secretary of the Board and leader of the Legal Group

Martin Biely
Treasurer, Chief Financial Officer, Member of the Board, and co-leader of the Finance Group

Vladimír Lackovič
Member of the Board and Head of Government, NGO, and Slovak Relations

Gabriela Záhoranská
Member of the Board with a special focus on expansion



Slovak PRO leaders at the Slovak PRO Summit 2025



Gabriela Záhoranská

BOARD MEMBER AND FORMER EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Gabika has played a particularly important role in expanding the network, strengthening its organizational structure, and coordinating its growing activities. From 2022 to 2024, she served as Head of Expansion, helping to establish and develop new chapters. She joined the Board in 2024 and served as volunteer Executive Director from 2024 until July 2026. She continues to serve on the Board and support the network's ongoing growth.



Jana Trnovcová Ragucci

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Jana accepted the role of volunteer Executive Director in September 2026. She will guide the organization through its next phase of growth, with a special focus on expansion, partnerships, and developing long-term institutional capacity. Jana has been connected to Slovak PRO since 2012, when she helped reactivate the network as Consul General and stayed as its supporter and adviser ever since.

Volunteers in Different Cities and Professions take responsibility, while the network keeps its continuity.

Marketing and operations

A volunteer marketing team led by **Dennis Fino**, Head of Marketing, has been coordinating these activities with Jakub Košík, Jakub Tinka, Denisa Trenkle, and Peter Šima. Kathryn Buzik, Šimon Flek, and Richard Rohaľ are the latest additions to the marketing team. **Dominika Glueck** is transitioning into the role of marketing team leader. Ray Day has also joined the communications team as an advisor.

Operational responsibilities have also included **Andrea Hrušovská**, who supports people and expansion; **Eva Šimeková**, who is responsible for connections with Slovakia's entrepreneurial and innovation ecosystem; and **Martin Rapoš**, who supports the broader development of industry groups. Hana Lachká and Petra Ďurišová provide additional operational support. Chapter leaders and other volunteers contribute local content, while the central team coordinates major communications.

ACROSS 13 HUBS

Chapter Leadership

CHAPTER LEADERS
As of October 2026

The leaders of Slovak PRO's local chapters are a crucial part of the organization's overall leadership. These volunteers organize events, maintain community contacts, identify partners, welcome newcomers, and adapt Slovak PRO's mission to local circumstances.

NEW YORK
Martin Biely, Diana Egenberg, Nicole Hubka, Saskia Jakubčin, Lucia Kapogiannopoulos, Vladimír Lackovič, Marián Pavlus, Oto Raček, Kristína Sojáková, Wilfrido Solano, and Yvonne Zuffová

SAN FRANCISCO & SILICON VALLEY
Milo Poplar, Michal Šimkovič, and Denisa Trenkle

BOSTON
Dominika Glueck, Paulina Jurkovič, and Lenka Molčányiová

AUSTIN
Andrea Hrušovská and Jozef Hrušovský

SEATTLE
Petra Dúbravcová and Paulina Slivková

SAN DIEGO
Braňo Čižmár and Dominika Šišková

CHICAGO
Niko Dubovský, Boris Gera, Martina Pometlová, and Braňo Vargic

TORONTO
Miro Cupák, Bibiana Košová, and Richard Stilicha

FLORIDA
Marika Hartman, Petra Jurová, and Jana Špes

VANCOUVER
Lukáš Červeňan and Martin Milenovský

WASHINGTON, D.C.
Jana Hranaiová, Alica Jurišová, Bibiana Rais, and Martin Rapoš

MUNICH
Slavo Fabišík and René Pajta

BRATISLAVA & SLOVAKIA
Petra Ďurišová, Eva Šimeková, Gabriela Záhoranská, and members of the marketing and operations team

EXPERTISE

Industry Groups

Slovak PRO Industry Group leaders as of October 2026:

Finance
Martin Biely and Marián Pavlus

Bio & Health
Jana Špes and Ján Szöllös

Arts
Diana Egenberg

Legal
Lucia Kapogiannopoulos

Young Slovak PRO
Saskia Jakubčin

Global Security
Alex Horváth

These groups enable Slovak PRO to offer focused mentoring, sector-specific knowledge, investment contacts, and professional cooperation beyond general networking.

The composition of these teams changes as volunteers relocate, take on new professional responsibilities, or establish new chapters. The names therefore represent the documented leadership during the organization's most recent phase rather than a permanently fixed structure.

Advisory Board

Slovak PRO established its inaugural Advisory Board in 2024. Its founding members were Honorary Consul Barbara Pivnicka, investor and former Morgan Stanley executive Robert "Bob" Lesko, and former Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Ivan Mikloš. In 2025, the Advisory Board was expanded to include Jana Trnovcová Ragucci, former Consul General of Slovakia in New York, who contributes her experience in diplomacy, institutional relations, strategic planning, and organizational continuity.



Barbara Pivnicka
Honorary Consul



Robert "Bob" Lesko
Investor, former Morgan Stanley executive



Ivan Mikloš
Former Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance



Jana Trnovcová Ragucci
Former Consul General of Slovakia in New York

OUR TEAM · 2026

The People Who Make It Happen



Oto Raček
Founder
President Emeritus



Michal Šimkovič
Board - President



Jana Trnovcová Ragucci
Executive Director



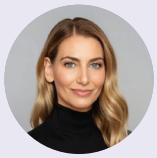
Lucia Kapogiannopoulos
Board - Secretary, Legal



Martin Biely
Board - Treasurer
CFO Finance



Vladimír Lackovič
Board - Gov. Relations



Gabriela Záhoranská
Board - Expansion



Dennis Fino
Head of Marketing



Jakub Košík
Marketing



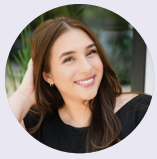
Jakub Tinka
Marketing



Denisa Trenkle
Marketing
San Francisco



Peter Šima
Marketing



Kathryn Buzik
Marketing



Šimon Flek
Marketing



Dominika Glueck
Marketing Lead · Boston



Ray Day
Communications Advisor



Andrea Hrušovská
People & Expansion · Austin



Eva Šimeková
Slovak Ecosystem



Martin Rapoš
Industry Groups · D.C.



Hana Lachká
Operations



Petra Ďurišová
Operations



Richard Rohaľ
Marketing



Diana Egenberg
New York · Arts



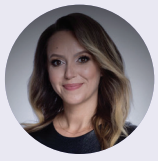
Nicole Hubka
New York



Saskia Jakubčin
New York · Young Slovak PRO



Marián Pavlus
New York · Finance



Kristína Sojáková
New York



Wilfrido Solano
New York

Thirteen hubs.
Multiple countries.
One community.



Yvonne Zuffová
New York



Milo Poplar
San Francisco



Paulina Jurkovič
Boston



Lenka Molčányiová
Boston



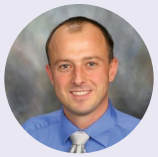
Jozef Hrušovský
Austin



Petra Dúbravcová
Seattle



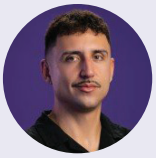
Paulina Slivková
Seattle



Braňo Čižmár
San Diego



Dominika Šišková
San Diego



Niko Dubovský
Chicago



Boris Gera
Chicago



Martina Pometlová
Chicago



Braňo Vargic
Chicago



Miro Cupák
Toronto



Bibiana Košová
Toronto



Richard Stilicha
Toronto



Marika Hartman
Florida



Petra Jurová
Florida



Jana Špes
Florida · Bio & Health



Lukáš Červeňan
Vancouver



Martin Milenovský
Vancouver



Jana Hranaiová
Washington, D.C.



Alica Jurišová
Washington, D.C.



Bibiana Rais
Washington, D.C.



Slavo Fabišík
Munich



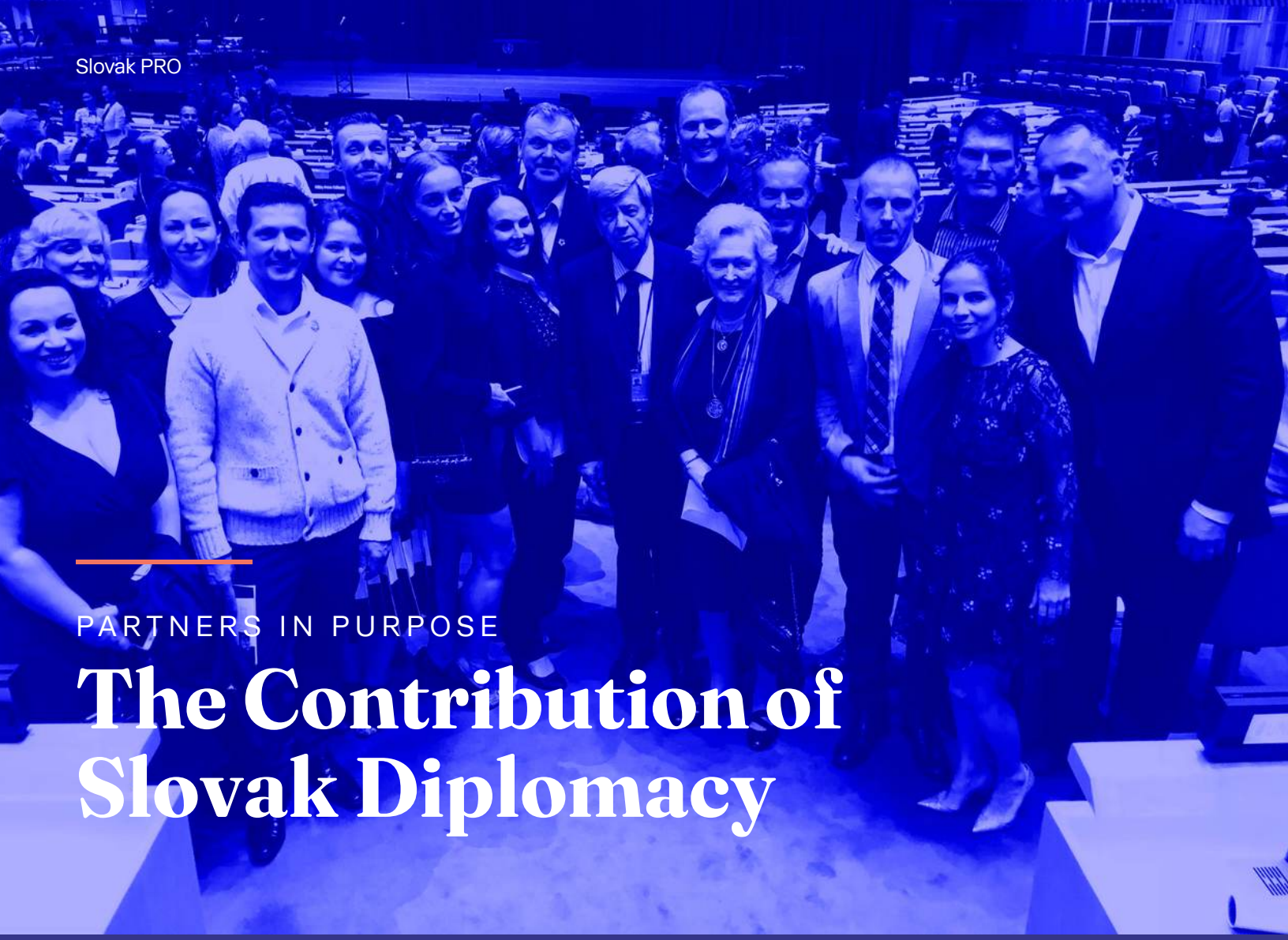
René Pajta
Munich



Ján Szöllös
Bio & Health



Alex Horváth
Global Security



PARTNERS IN PURPOSE

The Contribution of Slovak Diplomacy

Slovak PRO members at the United Nations General Assembly Hall, New York City

Slovak PRO has remained independent and volunteer-led, while developing a close and mutually beneficial relationship with Slovak diplomatic missions.

The network gives diplomats access to a modern professional diaspora that is not always reached through traditional community structures, allowing them to integrate the uniquely valuable perspectives of Slovaks living abroad into Slovakia's future. In return, diplomatic cooperation provides Slovak PRO with institutional contacts, visiting delegations, public officials, and opportunities to connect Slovaks abroad with developments and partners in Slovakia.

Several Slovak diplomats made an especially important personal contribution to building this relationship. Jana Trnovcová Ragucci, as Consul General in New York, supported the reactivation of Slovak PRO from 2012 and convened the decisive April 2014 meeting that brought together Oto Raček and Vladimír Lackovič. Her successors Ladislava Begeç and Milan Vrbovský continued to strengthen cooperation with the professional community, supported events and institutional contacts, and helped Slovak PRO develop its role as a formal partner of the Consulate General. Beatrice Szabóová, who began serving as Consul General in New York in 2025, has supported the organization's most recent phase and opened the 2025 Slovak PRO Summit.

"It has allowed Slovak professionals abroad to share their knowledge and experience directly with representatives of their home country."



Slovak Professionals meeting with President Andrej Kiska in New York, September 2014

The organization's earlier relationship with Slovak diplomacy was encouraged by Ambassadors Martin Bútora, Peter Kmec, Ivan Korčok, and Radovan Javorčík, during whose tenures members of the network attended events at the Slovak Embassy in Washington, D.C. Cooperation later broadened to include the Permanent Mission of Slovakia to the United Nations, led by Frantisek Ruzicka and Michal Mlynar, the Embassy in Ottawa led by Ambassador Viera Grigova, Slovak honorary consuls, and Slovak economic and commercial diplomats.

Honorary Consul of Slovakia in San Francisco Barbara Pivnicka also played an important role in linking the professional community on the West Coast with Slovak institutions, and she subsequently joined Slovak PRO's Advisory Board. Honorary Consul Peter Muzila has been a partner of the Slovak PRO chapter in Boston. The newly appointed honorary consul, Joe Seliga, has been a driving force in the Slovak professional community in Chicago. In Texas, the Honorary Consulate of Slovakia, led by Honorary Consul Martin Valko, has been a partner of Slovak House at SXSW in Austin. Currently, Slovak PRO works closely with Ambassador Andrej Droba, who became Slovak Ambassador to the United States in 2025, as well as Peter Hulényi, Permanent Representative of Slovakia to the United Nations.

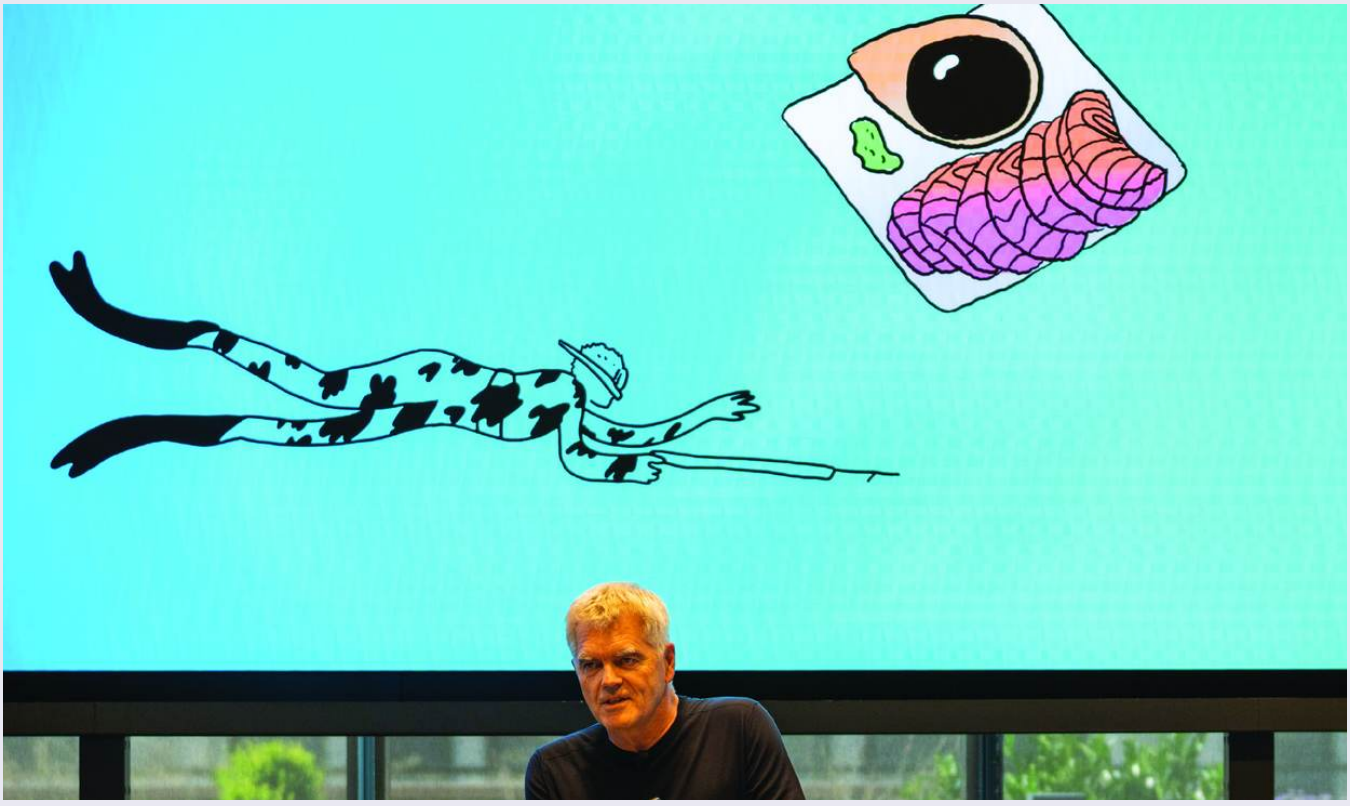
This cooperation has supported major events, visiting delegations, business contacts, and the annual Slovak PRO Summits. It has also allowed Slovak professionals abroad to share their knowledge and experience directly with representatives of their home country. Slovak diplomacy and Slovak PRO thus reinforce one another: the diplomatic network helps connect Slovaks abroad with institutions and opportunities in Slovakia, while Slovak PRO offers diplomacy access to talent, expertise, local knowledge, and professional contacts across a growing international community.

EVENTS IN PICTURES

Where the Network Comes Alive



Networking event with Ambassador Ivan Korčok, New York City, 2019



Slovak PRO Summit 2025, Keynote Speaker Anton Zajac, ESET



Networking event at Digital Natives Group, 2017



Slovak PRO Summit 2024, Keynote Speaker Marián Gáborík



Slovaks in Concert 2026, New York City, Martin Valihora at the drums



Slovak PRO Summit 2023, Keynote by Ivan Mikloš



A Conversation with Kickie Chudikova and Katarina Bridova on the "Hard Work Behind Slovak Success Stories" in New York City, 2025



Slovak Astrophysicists at Harvard University, Boston, 2024



Slovak PRO Summit 2025, New York City, President Peter Pellegrini

FROM NEW YORK TO THE WORLD

Geographic and Programmatic Expansion

New York remains Slovak PRO's natural base and largest community, with strong links to New Jersey and Connecticut. Its expansion beyond the region, however, is one of the organization's defining achievements.

San Francisco and Silicon Valley brought technology founders, designers, investors, and software professionals into the network. Boston developed around science, medicine, research, and academia, while Austin connected technology and the creative industries and presented Slovakia at SXSW. New chapters were subsequently established in Chicago, Seattle, San Diego, Washington, D.C., and Florida.

Initial gatherings in Montreal and Toronto in 2024 laid the foundation for a more permanent Canadian network, followed by stronger communities in Toronto and Vancouver in 2025. The opening of the Munich chapter in 2026 marked Slovak PRO's first formal expansion into Europe outside Slovakia.

Slovak PRO today operates as a broad network of **more than 3,000 people** rather than as a traditional membership organization. Its activities span six complementary areas:

01
Networking and community building

02
Professional development and mentoring

03
Support for Slovak companies and startups entering the U.S. market

04
Science, research, and academic cooperation

05
Culture, arts, historical memory, and Slovak identity

06
Engagement of students and young professionals

SLOVAK PRO HUBS, 2026





Slovak House at SXSW

The Slovak PRO House at SXSW, first held in Austin in 2024 and repeated in 2025 and 2026 as Going BIG in Texas: Slovak House, provided Slovak companies and innovators with an international platform and functioned as an informal embassy of Slovak creativity and innovation. Other major event formats include the annual Slovak PRO Summits, the Slovak Tech Conference, held twice to date, and the earlier Slovaks Meet Slovaks event with President Zuzana Čaputová.

Leaders gather at the Slovak House at SXSW in 2025. From left to right: Ambassador Radovan Javorcik, Josef Hrusovsky, Texas Secretary of State Jane Nelson, Andrea Hrusovska, and Honorary Consul to Texas Martin Valko.

From community networking toward professional exchange, international presentation, and support for Slovakia's global talent.

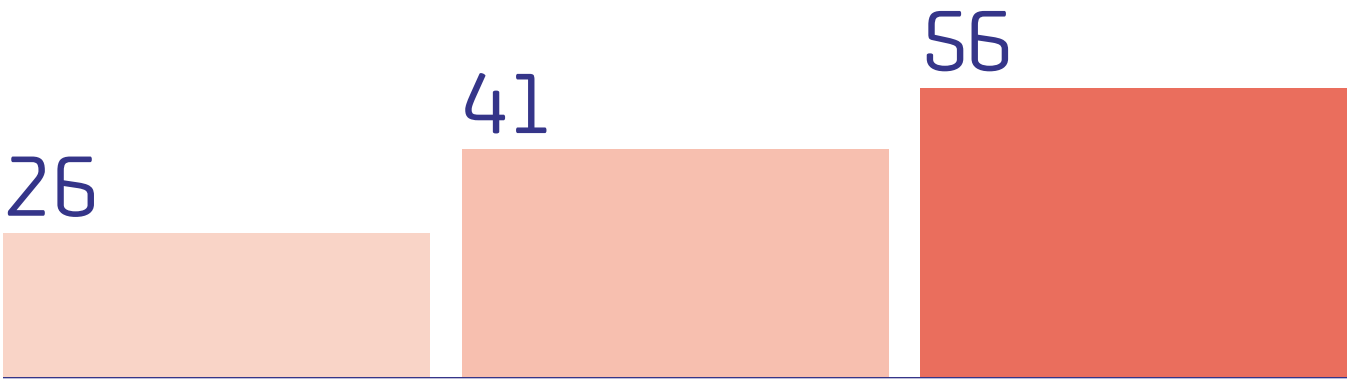
DRIVEN BY COMMITMENT

A Volunteer-Built Organization



Slovak PRO is an organization driven by the members' love for Slovakia and for their fellow Slovaks.

ACTIVE VOLUNTEER LEADERS



For more than 25 years, Slovak PRO has preserved the founding idea of professional solidarity while repeatedly adapting it to new circumstances.

Slovak PRO's development has depended not only on its three presidents, Board members, advisers, diplomats, and chapter leaders, but also on dozens of volunteers whose work is often less visible. They arrange venues, prepare programs, manage finances, negotiate partnerships, communicate with participants, photograph events, maintain digital platforms, and welcome newcomers.

In 2024, Slovak PRO had 26 volunteers and no full-time employees. The team grew to 41 in 2025 and to 56 active volunteer leaders by October 2026. The value of the work completed by this team of volunteers over Slovak PRO's history is immeasurable — and most certainly represents an investment of human capital and resources many times greater than the organization's annual operating budget.

This volunteer model explains both Slovak PRO's achievements and its distinctive character. It is not a centrally administered institution with a permanent professional staff, but a distributed community in which responsibility is shared across cities, generations, and professions. It is truly an organization driven by its members' love for Slovakia and for their fellow Slovaks.

Over more than 25 years, Slovak PRO has preserved the founding idea of professional solidarity while repeatedly adapting it to new circumstances. Oto Raček built the original community and safeguarded its continuity; Vladimír Lackovič transformed it into a structured, influential, national organization; and Michal Šimkovič has led its expansion into a broader international and professionally specialized platform. Alongside them, volunteers, advisers, partner institutions, and dedicated Slovak diplomats have helped to turn a New York initiative into a global network connecting Slovak talent with opportunity — and Slovaks abroad with one another and with Slovakia.

PARTNERS IN PURPOSE

Events and Convenings



The locally driven model has enabled Slovak PRO to offer relevant programs while maintaining a common mission and identity.



Young Slovak Professionals meeting Slovak Ambassador to the United States Martin Butora, Hotel Giraffe rooftop, Manhattan. Date: August 9, 2002 (Martin Butora's farewell).

Since 2001, events have been Slovak PRO's principal means of connecting people, sharing professional experience, supporting newcomers, and maintaining ties with Slovakia. The preceding chapter describes the organization's development, leadership, geographic expansion, and institutional partnerships. The annual Slovak PRO Summit, held since 2023, is presented within their own chapter. This chapter therefore focuses on the main forms and practical value of Slovak PRO's year-round activities beyond the annual Summit.

From networking to professional platforms

Slovak PRO's earliest activities were informal meetings of young Slovaks in New York. Over time, these gatherings developed into a varied program combining professional exchange, community building, culture, and engagement with Slovakia. Regular meetings brought together entrepreneurs, scientists, students, artists, public officials, and other professionals, while cooperation with Slovak diplomatic and community institutions expanded access to speakers, venues, and visiting delegations.

As local chapters developed, events became increasingly shaped by each city's character. New York emphasized business, finance, diplomacy, and culture; San Francisco, technology, start-ups, and investment; Austin, entrepreneurship and the Texas economy; Boston, science, medicine, and academia; Seattle, technology and research; and Washington, D.C., public policy and international affairs. This locally-driven model enabled Slovak PRO to offer relevant programs while maintaining a common mission and identity.

EVENTS AND CONVENINGS

Business, technology, and innovation



Connecting Slovak founders, investors, and technology leaders with the U.S. market

Business and entrepreneurship are central to Slovak PRO's convening activities. Company presentations, finance discussions, start-up showcases, and meetings with investors and advisers help Slovak businesses and professionals understand and enter the North American market.

Among the most ambitious initiatives was Slovak PRO House at South by Southwest (SXSW) in Austin in 2024, 2025, and 2026. Conceived as an informal Slovak "embassy of innovation," it provided Slovak technology and creative companies with opportunities to present their work and build contacts in the Austin business ecosystem. The second edition, Going BIG in Texas: Slovak House, was co-organized with SARIO and the Slovak Embassy in Washington. It attracted more than 250 participants and featured 15 Slovak small and medium-sized companies.

The Slovak Tech Conference, held in San Francisco in 2025 and 2026, created a specialized platform connecting Slovak founders, investors, technology leaders, and companies with Silicon Valley. Similar goals were pursued through Slovak Finance Conferences in New York, programs connected with SF Tech Week and TechCrunch Disrupt, and the Slovak & Czech Investment Forum in New York. These activities illustrate Slovak PRO's progression from general networking toward practical support for professional partnerships and market entry.

GOING BIG IN TEXAS: SLOVAK HOUSE

250+
participants

15
Slovak small and medium-sized companies

2024–2026
Slovak PRO House at SXSW, Austin



Slovak PRO House at SXSW, 2024

Science, education, and expert communities

Slovak PRO also provides a platform for Slovak scientists and experts working at leading North American universities, research institutions, and technology companies. Events have included Slovak Astrophysicists in Boston at Harvard University, Slovak Science Coffee at the University of Washington, biotechnology meetings, and discussions on artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, medicine, and space research.

Universities including Harvard, Stanford, MIT, Columbia, Georgetown, and the University of Washington have served as important venues and partners. Industry groups in bio and health, finance, and legal affairs further enable experts, companies, start-up founders, students, and recent graduates to meet within focused professional communities.

On the left: Ambassador of Slovakia in the U.S, Andrej Droba, at the Slovak PRO Tech Conference, San Francisco, 2026

EVENTS AND CONVENINGS

Culture and community life







Slovak PRO events from the left: San Diego, Austin and Bratislava

An accessible entry point for newcomers and families, and a space for practical advice about work and life in a new city

Alongside professional programs, Slovak PRO organizes cultural evenings, musical performances, heritage events, holiday gatherings, and commemorations. In 2024, chapters in several cities marked the 35th anniversary of the Velvet Revolution, linking the network's community life with shared democratic values and historical memory.

Informal gatherings, such as happy hours, picnics, lunches, summer meetings, and celebrations known as 'Pri kapustnici', are equally important. They offer an accessible entry point for newcomers and families and create space for practical advice about work and life in a new city. Online discussions extend this support across geographic boundaries and address topics such as career development, entrepreneurship, cooperation with Slovakia, and returning to Slovakia from the United States.

Joint Slovak and Czech events, including picnics, technology programs, investment forums, and cultural activities, reflect the continuing closeness of the communities and strengthen their shared visibility in North America.

Slovak PRO organizes cultural events, including concerts and art exhibitions, that bring Slovak artists and audiences together. In New York, the organization has supported and partnered with Martin Valihora and his Oneness Festival on the Slovaks in Concert flagship events at Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center.



Slovak Professionals networking event, Bohemian National Hall, Manhattan. Date: June 2, 2018

EVENTS AND CONVENINGS

Convening with practical impact

Slovak PRO sees an event not as an isolated program but as the beginning of a longer relationship. Meetings can lead to introductions between companies and investors, mentoring, professional advice, scientific cooperation, cultural projects, and new partnerships. Informal conversations and targeted introductions are often as valuable as public presentations.

The annual Summit gives Slovak PRO a highly visible focal point, but its year-round events sustain the organization as a living network. They enable members to exchange knowledge, create opportunities, support one another, and remain actively connected with Slovakia.

Slovak PRO sees an event not as an isolated program, but as the beginning of a longer relationship.

EVENTS AND CONVENINGS

The Slovak PRO Summit



The Slovak PRO Summit became the organization's flagship annual event and the clearest expression of its ambition to connect successful Slovaks abroad with one another and with Slovakia.

Slovak PRO Summit 2025, New York City









Scenes from the Slovak PRO Summits, 2023–2025

80
participants, 2023

100+
participants, 2024

200+
participants, 2025

As the Slovak PRO network grew in reach, focus, and prominence, its leadership saw an opportunity to amplify its work through hosting a national gathering to convene top Slovak professionals across North America and Slovakia.

The Slovak PRO Summit became the organization's flagship annual event and the clearest expression of its ambition to connect successful Slovaks abroad with one another and with Slovakia. Between 2023 and 2025, the Summit grew from an intimate gathering of around 80 participants into an established professional forum attended by more than 200 people. It has brought together business leaders, entrepreneurs, investors, scientists, academics, artists, civil society representatives, diplomats, and top public officials from North America and Slovakia.

Although each Summit has a unique theme, the central conviction remains steadfast: Slovak talent abroad is not lost to Slovakia. The diaspora's experience, knowledge, contacts, and resources can contribute to innovation, investment, mentoring, research, public life, and stronger relations between Slovakia and North America.



Slovak PRO Summit 2023, Discussion with President Zuzana Čaputová

2023 SLOVAK PRO SUMMIT:

Defining the Mission

The first Slovak PRO Summit took place in New York on September 19, 2023, and brought together more than 80 Slovak professionals, primarily from the United States. It was organized by Slovak PRO in cooperation with the Consulate General of Slovakia in New York, led by Consul General Milan Vrbovský, and was held under the auspices of President Zuzana Čaputová. Partner organizations included Friends of Slovakia, BrainBoard, Slovak Global Network, and LEAF.

The inaugural Summit sought to connect the modern Slovak diaspora more effectively, strengthen its relationship with Slovakia, and explore practical ways in which Slovaks abroad could contribute to the country's development. President Zuzana Čaputová opened the event and led a fruitful discussion with participants, while former Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Ivan Mikloš delivered the keynote address.

The program reflected the diversity of the professional diaspora. A business and innovation panel moderated by Michaela Kršková featured Ivica Labuda, Jana Hranaiová, Peter Gajdoš, and Ondrej Krehel. "TED Talk"-style presentations by Martin Viecha of Tesla and astronomer Peter Vereš highlighted Slovak achievement in technology and science.

The principal outcome was the Slovak PRO Summit 2023 Declaration, an offer of cooperation in building a better and more modern Slovakia. It identified major challenges — including demographic aging, climate change, digital transformation, the departure of young people, and declining economic competitiveness — and offered the expertise, contacts, and international experience of Slovaks abroad as part of the response.

The first Summit established Slovak PRO as an organized partner capable of bringing the professional diaspora into direct dialogue with Slovakia's highest representatives and institutions.

2024 SLOVAK PRO SUMMIT:

Giving Back

The second Summit was a two-day event held in New York on September 23–24, 2024. A networking evening was followed by the main program at the Consulate General of Slovakia. More than 100 participants attended. Partners included Friends of Slovakia, Mayer Brown, KInIT, the Pontis Foundation, Slovak Global Network, and the Slovak-American Cultural Center.

The theme, From Goals to Greatness: Celebrating Slovak Success and Giving Back, emphasized the responsibility of successful professionals to share their time, experience, contacts, and support with their community, Slovakia, and the next generation.

Former New York Rangers NHL player Marián Gáborík delivered the keynote address. Other contributors included Barbara Pivnicka, Joseph Seliga, Michal Šimkovič, Sabina Sabados, MIT scientist Dominika Ďurovčíková, KInIT founder Mária Bieliková, Martina Kolesárová of the Pontis Foundation, and University of Chicago professor Ľuboš Pástor. Their participation represented the Summit's broad reach across sport, business, science, academia, philanthropy, and civil society.

The program concluded with President Peter Pellegrini, who had taken office in June 2024. His participation demonstrated continuity in the relationship between Slovak PRO and the Office of the President, despite the change of head of state.

The second edition transformed the inaugural Summit into a recurring annual forum. It introduced a two-day format, broadened institutional partnerships, and placed greater emphasis on mentoring, solidarity, and practical forms of "giving back." It also reflected Slovak PRO's rapid growth: during 2024, the organization held more than 40 events, expanded to seven U.S. cities.



Slovak PRO Summit 2024; Audience Reacts to a Question



The Betting on Slovakia panel, Slovak PRO Summit 2025.

2025 SLOVAK PRO SUMMIT:

Expansion and Professionalization

The third Summit took place on September 23–24, 2025, at IBM One Madison in Manhattan and was moderated by Braňo Vargic. More than 200 professionals, entrepreneurs, investors, scientists, artists, and community leaders attended, more than doubling the participation of the inaugural year.

The theme was Resilience — resilience of the individual and the community. The program placed particular emphasis on what keeps our community strong, including entrepreneurship, investment, innovation, leadership, and the transfer of experience between Slovakia and North America.

Consul General Beatrice Szabóová welcomed participants, and Slovak PRO President Michal Šimkovič presented the organization's progress and future direction. Among the principal speakers were Anton Zajac, co-founder of ESET and investor in Klein Vision; Peter Komorník, co-founder of Slido, in conversation with Eva Šimeková; and the Betting on Slovakia panel brought together Bob Lesko, Tatiana Ondrejková, and Andrej Kiska Jr. under the moderation of Vladimír Lackovič. Miroslav Gašpárek presented Sensible Biotechnologies, while another panel focused on the hard work behind Slovak success stories featured Maroš Ferenčík, Kristína "Kickie" Chudíková, and Katarína Bridová, moderated by Dominika Glueck.

The program also included a conversation with IBM representatives Kristína Sojaková and Riccardo Forlenza, a presentation by Bratislava Mayor Matúš Vallo, and a discussion with musician Martin Valihora, moderated by Lenka Molčányiová. President Peter Pellegrini returned for a concluding discussion moderated by Lucia Kapogiannopolous. Closing remarks were delivered by Slovak PRO founder and President Emeritus Oto Raček and Slovak Ambassador to the United States Radovan Javorčík.

IBM hosted the Summit, with FCSU Financial as platinum partner, ESET as gold partner, and Sparring as bronze partner. Other partners included KInIT, Slovak Global Network, and the Consulate General of Slovakia in New York.

The third Summit marked a major step in Slovak PRO's professionalization. Its prestigious venue, increased attendance, stronger participation from Slovakia, and wider range of business and investment topics confirmed that the Summit had developed beyond a community gathering into an important platform for Slovak-American professional relations.

THE SLOVAK PRO SUMMIT

Three Years of Growth

The three editions of the Slovak PRO Summit illustrate the organization's development in stages:



2023 – defining the mission: connecting the modern diaspora with Slovakia and issuing a public offer of cooperation

2024 – building a culture of giving back: strengthening community, mentoring, solidarity, and institutional partnerships

2025 – expansion and professionalization: bringing together more than 200 participants and establishing the Summit as a leading forum for professional and economic cooperation

The Slovak PRO Summit represents a new model of Slovakia's relationship with its diaspora: not as a distant community of compatriots, but as an active professional, intellectual, and economic partner.

Over this period, attendance more than doubled from 80 individuals to over 200. The Summit evolved from a pilot initiative into an established annual event, from a declaration of intent into a practical professional network, and from a predominantly Slovak-American gathering into a platform connecting North America, Slovakia, and an increasingly international community.

The regular participation of Presidents Zuzana Čaputová and Peter Pellegrini has given the Summit national visibility and affirmed the importance of the modern Slovak diaspora. Similarly, close cooperation with the Consulate General in New York under Milan Vrbovský and Beatrice Szabóová and partnership with other diplomatic and community stakeholders has provided essential institutional continuity.

25

25TH ANNIVERSARY OF SLOVAK PRO

250

250TH ANNIVERSARY OF U.S. INDEPENDENCE

AN ANNIVERSARY

Slovak PRO Summit 2026: A Silver Jubilee in Washington D.C.

The fourth Slovak PRO Summit is planned for October 23, 2026, in Washington, D.C. It will commemorate the 25th anniversary of Slovak PRO in the symbolic year of the 250th anniversary of the independence of the United States — the country in which the organization was founded and developed.

The 2026 Summit will be organized in cooperation with the Embassy of the Slovak Republic in Washington, D.C. It will provide an opportunity to reflect on a quarter-century of Slovak PRO, to recognize the people and institutions behind its growth, and to define the organization's priorities for its next chapter.



A VOLUNTEER-DRIVEN ORGANIZATION

Funding, Donors, and Partners



Slovak PRO Summit 2025 Keynote address by Anton Zajac – CEO of ESET, New York City, 2025

Slovak PRO's greatest resource has never been money, but the voluntary commitment of its members. From its beginnings as the Young Slovak Professionals Network, it has relied on people who donate their time, expertise, contacts, and organizational skills. Volunteers run local chapters, organize events, manage communications and finances, secure partners and venues, and prepare major initiatives such as the Slovak PRO Summit and Slovak PRO House at SXSW.

Currently, the organization has no paid staff, and its officers receive no compensation. In 2024, Slovak PRO reported 26 active volunteers; by 2026, the team had grown to more than 50. The organization estimated that replacing the annual work of these volunteers with paid personnel would have required several times its actual operating budget. Volunteerism is therefore not simply an element of Slovak PRO's model — it is the very foundation that makes its activities possible.

Since receiving U.S. federal tax-exempt status under Section 501(c)(3) in August 2022, Slovak PRO has gradually developed a more systematic financial structure. Its monetary income is driven primarily by individual donations, corporate and event sponsorships, ticket sales, and participant contributions. Revenue rose from $55,872 in 2024 to $132,944 in 2025, reflecting the expansion of the network and its programs. Yet the organization remained lean: in 2025, about 94% of its expenditure went directly to events, while administrative costs accounted for only about 6% of expenses.

Financial and in-kind support comes from members of the Slovak professional and entrepreneurial community, companies, and partner institutions. Important sponsors and hosts have included FCSU Financial, ESET, IBM, Mayer Brown, Sparring, and The Spot. Slovak diplomatic institutions — especially the Embassy of the Slovak Republic in Washington D.C., the Consulate General of Slovakia in New York, and the Permanent Mission of the Slovak Republic to the United Nations — have contributed venues, contacts, visibility, and organizational support.

REVENUE



$55,872

2024



$132,944

2025

EXPENDITURE, 2025



97%
events

3%
administrative costs

Slovak PRO's annual reports and website publicly acknowledge a group of individual and family donors. The 2025 list included: Kusik Family Foundation, Lesko Family, Peter Komorník, Anton Zajac, Rastislav Hlaváč, Andrej Kiska Jr., Michal Šimkovič, Rastislav Turek, Miroslav Tenkl, Jana Trnovcová Ragucci, Dominik Zane, Matej Hreščák, Martin Michalko, Ivan Stano, Tomáš Virgl, Ján and Mária Hrabčák, Katarína Štefániková, and Vladimír Hruda.

VALUE OF VOLUNTEER SERVICE

$1,040,000

Estimated annual value of volunteer time



50 volunteer leaders · 4 hours a week

Slovak PRO's greatest resource has never been money, but the voluntary commitment of its members.

































Other companies and organizations displayed among Slovak PRO's sponsors or business partners have included Eldison, N1, Key Visa, Crowdberry, Kaya VC, Better Stack, Credo Ventures, Rockaway Ventures, ZAKA VC, Fellow and related investors and professional-service providers. Their contributions vary by event and may include funding, speakers, venues, access to investor networks, legal assistance, or support for Slovak companies entering the American market.

Slovak PRO also cooperates with SARIO, Friends of Slovakia, the Slovak-American Cultural Center, the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library, Czech and Slovak Association, KInIT, the Pontis Foundation, LEAF, Slovak Global Network, Amcham Slovakia, BrainBoard, and other partners in Slovakia and North America. Their contribution often takes the form of speakers, expertise, promotion, professional services, or access to networks rather than direct funding.

Slovak PRO's model thus combines modest financial resources with extensive voluntary and in-kind contributions. Donations and sponsorships fund its activities, but the organization's real strength lies in a culture of giving back. Its members contribute not only money, but also time, knowledge, mentoring, introductions, and trust — making volunteerism the central pillar of Slovak PRO's success.

If you would like to join us, become a volunteer, or partner with Slovak PRO, please contact us at info@slovakpro.org. To donate to our work, visit slovakpro.org/donate.

Tools for Connection: Communication Methods and Impact

Public communication is conducted through social media, a regular newsletter, event platforms, and the organization's website, slovakpro.org.

Effective communication is essential to Slovak PRO's ability to connect its growing international community. Internal coordination takes place primarily through more than 20 digital communication groups and remote meeting platforms. Public communication is conducted through social media, a regular newsletter, event platforms, and the organization's website, www.slovakpro.org.

Slovak PRO's communications reflect the network's rapid growth. The organization holds more than 50 events annually and reaches its audience through a newsletter with approximately 3,000 subscribers, a LinkedIn page with more than 3,100 followers, and a Facebook group with over 2,600 members.

Communications around the Slovak PRO Summit, Slovak House at SXSW in Austin, the Slovak Tech Conference in San Francisco, the opening of new chapters, and the America250 celebration in Bratislava have increased the organization's visibility. Together, these channels present Slovak PRO as a dynamic international platform connecting Slovaks across business, technology, culture, and public life.

50+
events annually

3,000
newsletter subscribers

3,100+
LinkedIn followers

2,600+
Facebook group members

20+
digital communication groups

LOOKING AHEAD

Jana Ragucci Trnovcová

Executive Director, Slovak PRO



Over the past 25 remarkable years, what began as a small network of Slovak professionals in New York has grown into a respected and dynamic organization with an expanding presence across the United States, Canada, and Europe.

I have had the privilege of being personally involved with Slovak PRO in different roles and at different stages of its journey in the last 15 years, as a diplomat, an advisor, and now as its Executive Director. From this perspective, I have witnessed the organization's remarkable development and the impact it has made.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Slovak PRO's three visionary presidents, Oto, Vladimír, and Michal; its outstanding leadership team; and the many dedicated volunteers whose commitment, energy, and ideas have made the organization what it is today. I am truly looking forward to working with this amazing group of Slovak professionals, our partners, friends and supporters.

The future of Slovak PRO is bright and ambitious. Slovakia's greatest asset is its people: their talent, knowledge, creativity, experience, and ability to succeed anywhere in the world. Slovak PRO will continue to connect these people across borders, countries, and generations.

As our network expands and our organizational foundations grow stronger, Slovak PRO will become an even more vibrant home for Slovak professionals worldwide and an increasingly valuable partner for Slovakia — a natural bridge connecting the country with the wider world.

The world around us is changing rapidly, but the power of connecting people remains constant. Through these connections, new ideas take shape, new opportunities emerge, new ventures are created, and lasting friendships begin.

As we celebrate our first 25 years, we also look forward with confidence and determination. I wish Slovak PRO, and every member of our growing community, the most exciting and successful chapter yet.

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