

Žilina Self-Governing Region, Slovakia

Natural beauty in
the Western Tatras in
Slovakia

General overview

The Žilina Self-Governing Region is situated in the north-western part of Slovakia, bordering the Czech Republic and Poland. The Region comprises 5 subregions (Horné Považie, Kysuce, Liptov, Orava and Turiec) that are divided into 11 districts. Covering an area of 6809 km² (14% of the territory of the Slovak Republic), the Region has a total population of 690 778 and a population density of 101.4 inhabitants/km² (1).

Of the total population of the Žilina Region, 19% are over the age of 60 and 12.5% are over 65. The average age of the population is 38.9 years. The proportion of people of working age (15–64 years) is 74.5%. In the period 2003–2013, the number of people in this age group increased by 8030 (1.5%). Average life expectancy in the Žilina Region is 73.7 years for men and 80.4 years for women. The most common cause of death in the Region for both sexes is cardiovascular disease (54.5%), followed by cancer and respiratory diseases (2).

Nature in the Region is pristine and there are many places of interest to tourists, including national parks, landscape areas, nature reserves, natural monuments, national natural landmarks and protected areas. The Region also has several

thermal and mineral springs that are used in spas and regenerative treatment centres. The health-enhancing (preventive) treatment offered in these centres is often included in post-surgery rehabilitation programmes. The springs are considered a natural wealth in the Region owing to their beneficial effects on human health (1).

The health-care system in Slovakia is administered by the Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic. The core values of the health system are the principles of solidarity, responsibility and equality regarding access to health care for every citizen. Article 40 of the Constitution of the Slovak Republic guarantees the right to free health care under conditions stipulated by law. Health care is financed through compulsory health insurance (3,4).

The Žilina Region has seven hospitals and a polyclinic. Two of the hospitals are directly managed by the Ministry of Health, one falls under the Ministry of Defence, and the remaining four hospitals and the polyclinic are under the direct administration of the Žilina Self-Governing Region (5). The Region has 3919 hospital beds, 1262 health-care providers and 236 pharmacies.

One of the medical faculties in the Region, the Jessenius Faculty of Medicine located in

Martin city, is a leader in post-graduate medical education in Slovakia and one of the top medical schools in Central Europe. Its programme includes English-language master's and PhD courses for foreign students.

There is one national insurance company in Slovakia with a market share of about 60%,

and two private insurance companies. Health care includes outpatient, institutional and pharmaceutical care, as well as nursing care in assisted facilities. It is provided either by the state, or by private providers and health-care professionals, according to specified conditions (3,4).



Strengths

The Žilina Self-Governing Region has the following strengths:

- ✓ a strategic geographical position in relation to the important corridors of the international road network that lead to the Region;
- ✓ a clean environment and atmosphere (influenced by the mountains), many natural springs and spas;
- ✓ a well-developed network of university education;
- ✓ screening programmes for newborns;
- ✓ highly qualified health professionals.



Aspirations

The key priorities of the health care system in the Žilina Self-Governing Region are to:

- ✓ improve population health;
- ✓ provide affordable, quality and effective health care as one of the basic public services;
- ✓ influence national health policy, taking regional specificities into account;
- ✓ ensure the adherence of health insurance companies to the provisions in their insurance agreements;
- ✓ create intelligent health care in information technology;
- ✓ implement measures to support young doctors and nurses at the start of their working lives;
- ✓ set an effective minimum network of health-care providers, taking demographic trends into account;
- ✓ contribute meaningfully to the work of the Ministry of Health and interdepartmental groups.

Challenges

These are:

- ✓ significantly increasing morbidity rates and decreasing birth rates;
- ✓ decreasing interest in working in the health care system at the regional (and national) level;
- ✓ high average age of doctors and nurses;
- ✓ decreasing numbers of health-care professionals;
- ✓ low remuneration of health-care professionals.

Potential areas of collaboration

The Žilina Self-Governing Region is interested in collaborating with other regions on:

- ✓ monitoring morbidity and mortality, establishing prevention programmes and comparing the Region's prevention outcomes with those of the other regions;
- ✓ setting up a full range of health and medical care from prevention, through diagnosis to treatment and therapy, and from primary through secondary to tertiary care;
- ✓ analysing successful preventive measures implemented in other regions to set targets for the Region;
- ✓ increasing prevention in Slovakia;
- ✓ stabilizing human resources by reducing the fluctuation of health professionals among regions.

Working groups

The Žilina Self-Governing Region is interested in participating in working groups on:

- ✓ the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (6)/ equity;
- ✓ health systems/primary health care;
- ✓ the all-of-government approach intersectoral action;
- ✓ women's/men's and children's health

People active in the Regions for Health Network (RHN)

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