

# STRONG REGIONS. STRONG SLOVENIA.

Slovenia's Regional Development Strategy 2026–2050  
Executive Summary



# 1. Context

Slovenia has seen considerable rise in regional disparities in recent decades. These disparities have been driven by market forces, lack of policy coherence for development, as well as concentration of economic activities along with major cultural, political, educational and economic institutions in the Osrednjeslovenska region. The gaps in economic development, productivity and job creation between Slovenia's regions have been widening particularly rapidly, resulting in different demographic trends, uneven access to services, different size and complexity of regional economies and varying quality of life of residents across the country.

Previous approaches to regional policy have significantly contributed to improving basic

infrastructure and access to services. However, they have failed to secure a comprehensive economic transformation of Slovenia's regions, which, in turn, has led to further centralisation of the country, increased levels of daily commuting and rise in long-term development challenges in many areas.

Slovenia's Regional Development Strategy 2026–2050 is a long-term whole-of-government system-wide response to these challenges. It aims to establish a coordinated framework for promoting balanced regional development and to strengthen the role of **regions as drivers of development processes** that underpin the development of Slovenia as a whole.

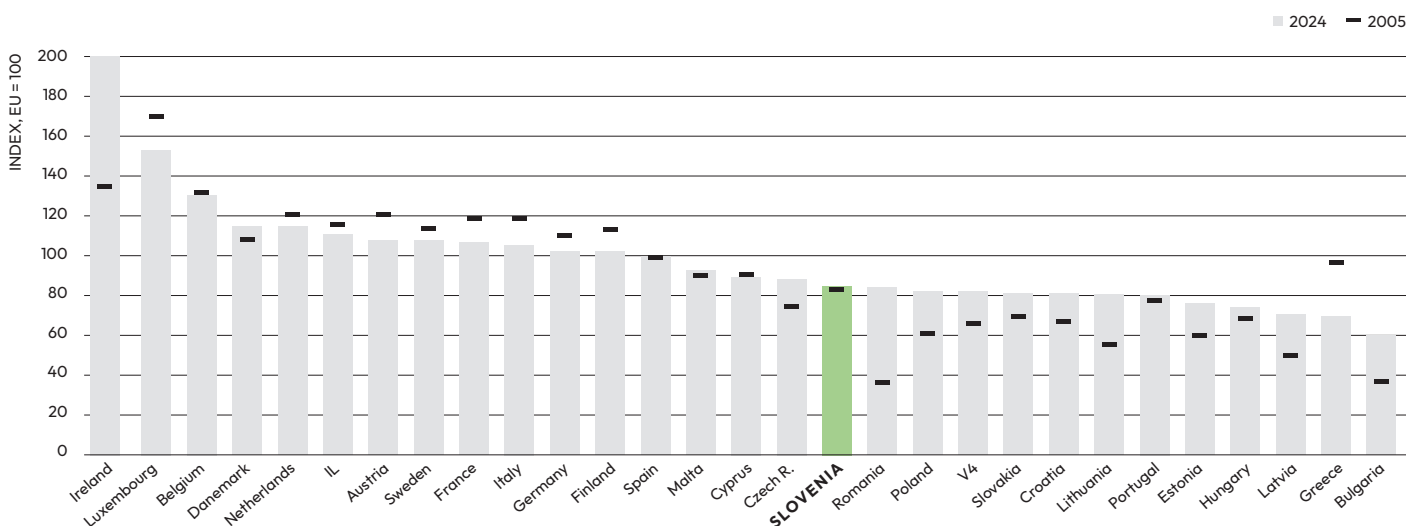


## 2. Analysis of the state of play: key findings and development issues

Slovenia remains an economically stable, moderately developed EU country, although it still lags well behind the EU in terms of labour productivity. In 2024, Slovenia's labour productivity reached 85% of the EU average, the highest level ever recorded. Further productivity gains remain essential for closing the gap with the more developed countries, as the potential for further employment growth is limited due to the already high employment rate and the decline in the working-age population (demographic change).

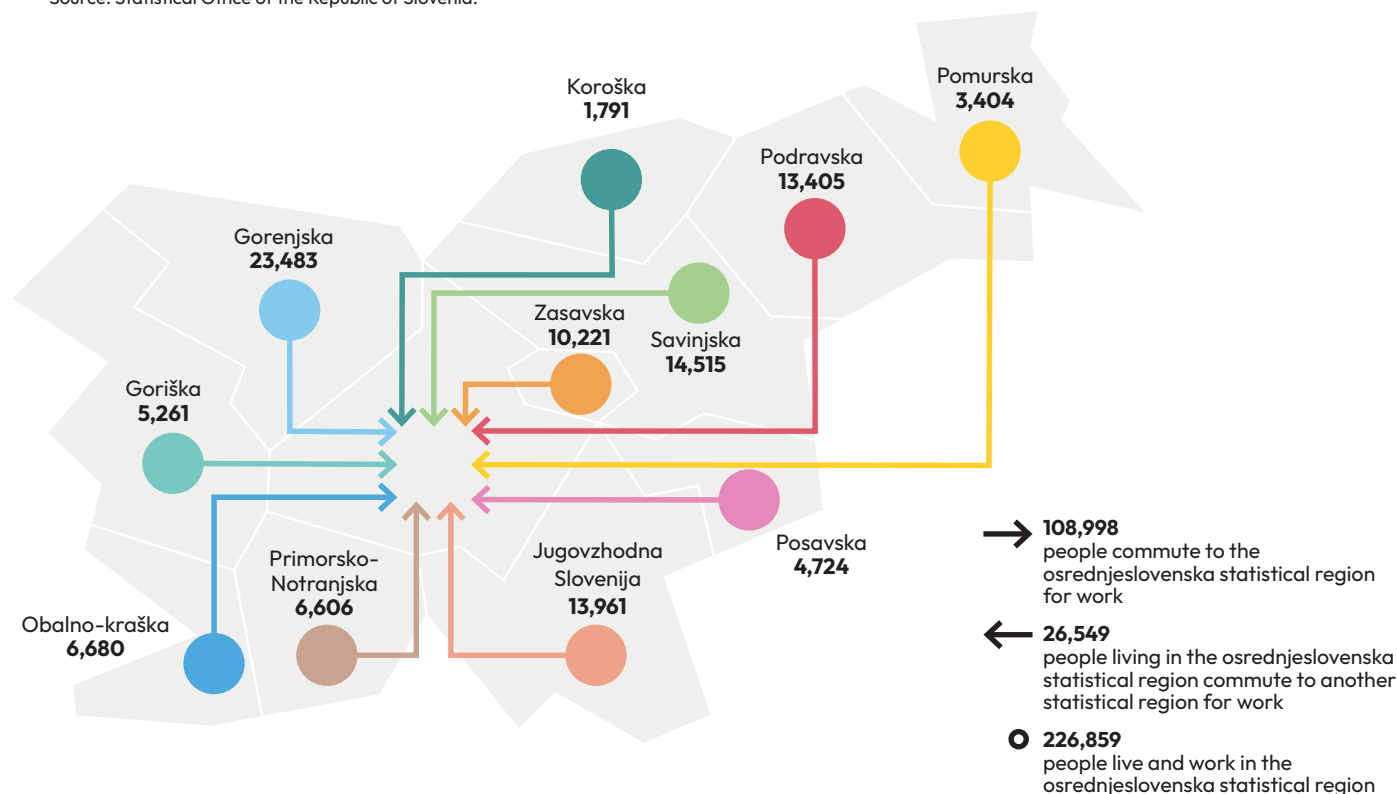
**Productivity (GDP per employee) in purchasing power standards (PPS)**

Source: Institute of Macroeconomic Analysis and Development, 2025.



## Daily commuting patterns to and from the osrednjeslovenska statistical region, 2024

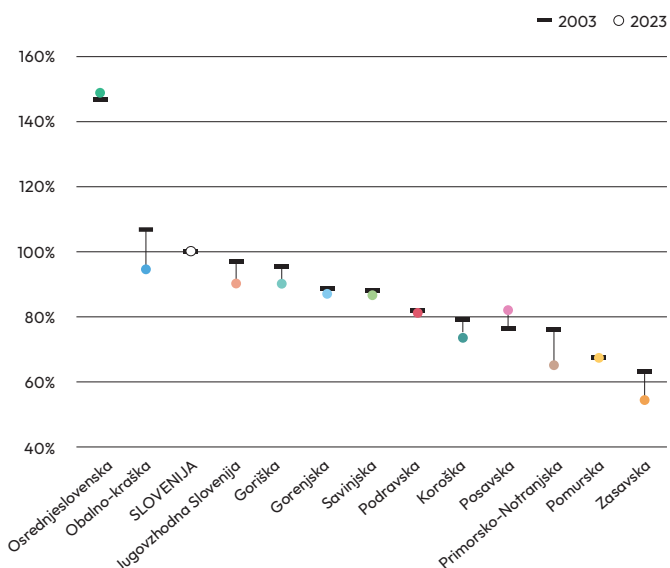
Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia.



According to the analysis, regional disparities in Slovenia have been widening and deepening, both between and within regions. The concentration of development has been continuously increasing in Osrednjeslovenska, the region which stands out for the highest levels of economic activity, productivity, and educational attainment and boasts the highest concentration of jobs and research and innovation activities. In fact, the relative position of most non-capital regions has deteriorated compared to the national average.

## GDP per capita relative to the national average, 2003 and 2023

Source: OECD, 2025a.



Slovenia as a whole lags behind the EU average in productivity. This suggests that the economic transformation of the country's regions has been insufficient and that their development potential has not been fully tapped. Given that economic growth is primarily driven by activities with a tendency toward concentration, many regions remain less dynamic in terms of development and continue to fall behind.

Centralisation is also reflected in spatial and functional terms. Urban Municipality of Ljubljana offers more jobs than all other regional centres combined. This intensifies daily commuting flows, placing a heavy burden on road infrastructure and exacerbating disparities in the wider hinterland.

Regional disparities in research, development and innovation are significant, with the bulk of the expenditure on research and development and research capacities concentrated in one region. This hinders the spread of innovation potential to other parts of the country.

Demographic change, particularly population decline and population ageing, also pose a serious challenge to regional development, limiting workforce availability, influencing investment priorities and shaping long-term development opportunities. Social inequalities are reflected in low levels of educational attainment and life expectancy and high rates of risk of poverty and social exclusion in certain regions.

The analysis concludes that the development model used so far has failed to sufficiently support regional

economic development, increase productivity or create quality jobs across the country. This calls for rethinking the model and a fresh take on how to foster regional development.

Slovenia can choose between two possible scenarios for the future of regional development. The first one builds on continuing centralisation. This approach can deliver greater efficiency in the long run but undermines social cohesion, sustainable development and resilience of the country in the long run. The second scenario promotes polycentric development that builds on strengthening regional centres and ensuring more evenly distributed development activities across Slovenia's regions.

By adopting this Strategy, Slovenia affirms its commitment to advancing polycentric development. This approach brings long-term stability, unlocks the full potential of Slovenia's regions, reduces pressure on Ljubljana and ensures more evenly distributed development opportunities for all residents.

### 3. Vision, objectives and guiding principles

#### VISION

Slovenia is a country of connected regions with balanced development, where residents have access to high-quality, high-value jobs within a 35-kilometre radius of their homes, as well as ensured access to high-quality public and market services. This will ensure a high quality of life for residents across all regions.

#### OVERARCHING GOALS AND GENERAL OBJECTIVES

The Strategy defines two overarching goals and three general objectives.

##### Overarching goals:

- A high quality of life for residents across all regions.
- Contribute to the country's enhanced and long-term sustainable economic growth through more efficient and strategic utilisation of regional development potentials.

##### General objectives:

- **Reducing regional development disparities**, and thus enhancing the country's stability, reducing the risk of social tensions, and facilitating more geographically balanced and sustainable growth, ultimately contributing to the country's overall development.

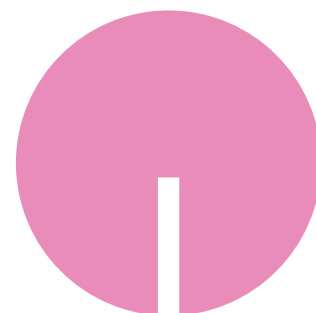


- **Catching up with European regions in terms of development** by making better use of regional potential, increasing productivity, and accelerating the transition to a green and digital economy.
- **Promoting polycentric development** as a balanced network of cities and functional urban areas that together form the backbone of the country's spatial and regional development.

#### GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The implementation of the Strategy is based on the following guiding principles:

- **Integrity of promoting balanced regional development** throughout the entire territory of the Republic of Slovenia, with a differentiated approach according to the characteristics of individual areas.
- **Multi-level approach** based on a functioning and effective multi-level governance system, with coordinated partnership between the national and local levels and the involvement of the economy, science, and civil society.
- **Programme orientation** of the implementation of regional policy based on development and spatial planning documents.
- **Monitoring and evaluation** of regional policy ensures the policy's relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, and sustainability.



## 4. Main development orientation and implementation of the Strategy

Slovenia's regional development in the 2026–2050 period is based on a balanced, sustainable and polycentric development model **grounded in territorial differentiation, partnership-based cooperation, and interconnection across various levels of governance**. The country's development depends directly on the performance of all regions, which calls for a systematic enhancement of regional policy.

Achieving the key strategic objectives of regional development requires a continued **economic transformation of development regions**, with particular emphasis on increasing productivity and competitiveness, strengthening high-value-added activities, and providing systematic support across the full spectrum of human resources. This will result in quality, high-value-added jobs in all regions. At the same time, regions must be made resilient to social, environmental, demographic, and technological shifts,

with enhanced spatial and infrastructural connectivity, and ensured access to essential services for all residents, irrespective of their place of residence.

Regional policy is based on a **territorial (place-based) approach**, which entails **targeted support to areas in accordance with their specific needs and development characteristics, focusing on the long-term orientation of economic development and quality of life**.

Priority areas:

- Promoting the economic transformation of regions, with a focus on increasing productivity and competitiveness, as well as the development of human resources.
- Ensuring adequate accessibility of public services and infrastructure within regions to achieve a high quality of life and regional economic transformation.
- Providing targeted support to border areas and areas in transition, as well as areas facing specific development challenges.
- Strengthening the governance and implementation system of all development policies at the regional level.

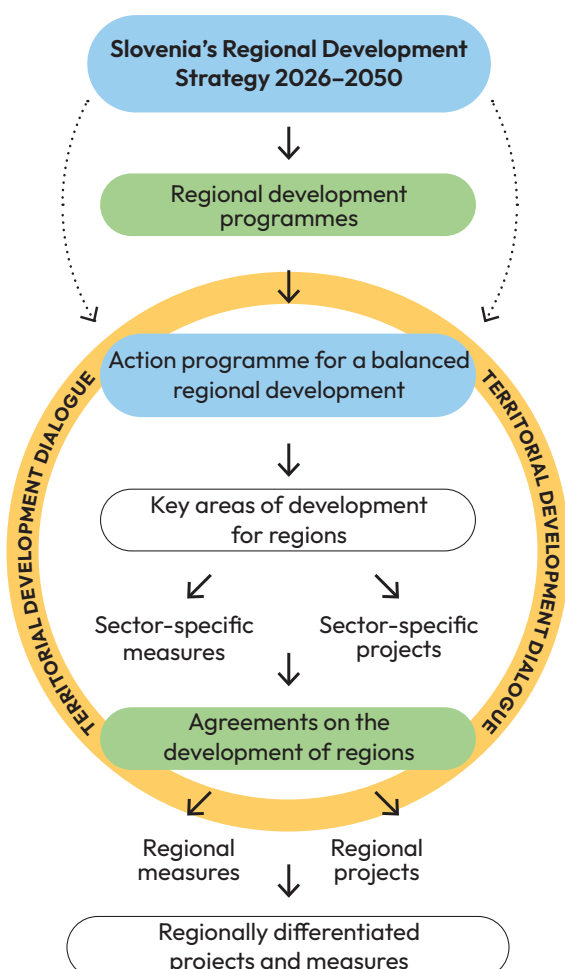
How well the new regional development model performs depends on achieving a **critical mass of capacities**, which requires strengthened horizontal and vertical coordination, as well as an effective multi-level governance system. Particular emphasis is placed on enhancing the institutional capacity of regions.

Slovenia's Regional Development Strategy 2026–2050 constitutes the overarching framework, implemented through regional development programmes, an action programme for a balanced regional development, and agreements on the development of regions. Regional development programmes represent the cornerstone of the territorial approach, while agreements on the development of regions serve as the key mechanism for translating the Strategy into concrete projects and measures with the greatest developmental impact.

The implementation of the Strategy is based on a clear division of responsibilities: the government is in charge of the Strategy's implementation, the competent ministry is responsible for coordination and monitoring, while line ministries implement individual measures. Interministerial and multi-level coordination is ensured by the governmental working group for regional development.

The implementation system is flexible and results-oriented, with continuous monitoring and the possibility of ongoing adjustments. In this way, regional policy is established as an effective instrument for reducing regional disparities and strengthening Slovenia's long-term development.

### NEW MODEL OF REGIONAL POLICY IMPLEMENTATION



## 5. Key regional policy areas

Slovenia's Regional Development Strategy 2026–2050 defines the **key areas of regional policy**, which provide the substantive framework for the implementation of measures and projects, while enabling a differentiated approach to regional development based on specific characteristics, challenges, and development potentials of individual regions.

These key areas are interrelated and jointly contribute to achieving the Strategy's objectives, while also strengthening the competitiveness and resilience of regions.

