



# Tips for Translation from Slovak into English

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### 1 Meaning of symbols used

- ☹☹ awful; grammatically and/or semantically incorrect; avoid at all costs
- ☹ not good style; usually best avoided
- ☺ OK, not actually wrong, but could be improved on
- ☺ good; try to translate like this
- ☺☺ really good

## 2 Introduction

Guides to writing clear English are basically designed for people drafting in English. However, the advice they give is also relevant when translating into English. This is because languages differ when it comes to what is considered good style. Good modern English style focuses on making the message clear for the reader. In general, this means keeping sentences short and logical and avoiding unnecessarily complicated grammar and vocabulary.

Useful sites include:

**How to Write Clearly** brochure produced by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Translation:

[http://ec.europa.eu/translation/writing/clear\\_writing/how\\_to\\_write\\_clearly\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/translation/writing/clear_writing/how_to_write_clearly_en.pdf)

**The Economist** Style Guide: <http://www.economist.com/research/styleguide/>

**Plain English Campaign:** <http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/>

Particularly useful pages are the list of alternative words:

<http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/files/alternative.pdf> and

the **How to write in plain English** guide: <http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/files/howto.pdf>

## 3 Ways of keeping your English clear and concise

### 3.1 Use verbs instead of nouns

On the whole, English prefers verbs to nouns.

Instead of this:

☹ by the introduction of

☹ for the allocation of

☹ of the provision of

Say this:

☺ by introducing

☺ for allocating

☺ of providing

Sometimes in an expression involving a verb and a noun, the real information is in the noun, whereas the verb is semantically empty. In such cases, it is neater just to use the verb corresponding to the noun:

Instead of this:

☹ to submit an application for

☹ to carry out an evaluation of

☹ to implement an investigation of

☹ to conduct a review of

☹ to perform an assessment of

☹ to effect payment of

Say this:

☺ to apply for

☺ to evaluate

☺ to investigate

☺ to review

☺ to assess

☺ to pay

A sentence like this:

☺/☹ *The committee **came to an agreement** to the effect that **a study should be carried out** by the consultants into the feasibility of **the provision of** national funding.*

can be improved like this:

☺ *The committee **agreed** that the consultants should **study** the feasibility of **providing** national funding.*

Slovak also has a number of verbs that tend not to carry much semantic information. Words to look out for include: *uskutočniť*, *realizovať*, *vykonať*, *dôjsť k*, *pristúpiť k*, *zabezpečiť*, *prebiehať*, *dosiahnuť*.

*Vývoj bankovníctva prebieha dynamickým tempom*

☹ *The development of banking is proceeding at a dynamic tempo.*

☺ *Banking is developing very fast.*

*Nedošlo k zmenám na rozsahu zákona.*

☹ *Changes to the scope of the Act did not come about.*

☺ *The scope of the Act was not changed.*

*Financovanie projektov sa môže realizovať rôznymi spôsobmi.*

☹ *The financing of projects may be implemented in different ways.*

☺ *Projects may be financed in different ways.*

*V prípade potreby dodatočného overenia pristúpi orgán auditu k výkonu auditu operácií aj u ďalších príjemcov*

☹ *In case of the need for additional checking the audit body will proceed to the performance of an audit of operations also at other beneficiaries.*

☺ *If any additional checks are required, the audit body will audit other beneficiaries' operations as well.*

*So vzorkou by sa v laboratóriu malo zaobchádzať tak, aby sa dosiahlo, že sa všetky zložky potravín dôkladne zmiešajú.*

☹ *The sample should be handled by the laboratory in such a way that thorough mixing of all the food elements is achieved.*

☺ *In handling the sample, the laboratory should thoroughly mix all the ingredients.*

The preposition *pri* + noun can often be translated by a clause with *when* or *on* + gerund:

*pri príležitosti vstupu do eurozóny SR...*

☹ *on the occasion of the entry of SR to the eurozone*

☺ *when it joined the eurozone, Slovakia...*

☺ *on joining the eurozone, Slovakia...*

### 3.2 Use pronouns and get personal

When addressing the reader some languages prefer to talk in the third person (*the applicant, the European Commission*), whereas in English it is stylistically acceptable and often more

natural to use the second person (*you, your*) if it is clear from the context who is meant. Likewise, it is often good style for the party addressing the reader to refer to itself in the first person (*I, we, our, us* etc.).

Imagine a letter from the Commission sending instructions to applicants:

*Žiadosti sa musia predložiť Komisii najneskôr do konca roka.*

☺ *Applications must be submitted to the Commission by the end of the year.*

☺ **You must send us your application by the end of the year.**

*Žiadateľ musí poskytnúť spolu so žiadosťou doklady, ktoré potvrdzujú, že je v súlade s odsekom 1.*

☺ *The applicant must provide with his/her application documentary evidence that he/she complies with the first paragraph.*

☺ **With your application you must provide documentary evidence that you comply with the first paragraph.**

Here the use of the second person is not only clearer and more natural, but it also helps avoid the problem of gender-specific language, making it unnecessary to use ugly expressions like *his/her*. (See section on **Gender-neutral language**).

Even in an official letter, it is acceptable to use first and second person pronouns:

*Listom zo dňa 18. mája 2009, bola Slovenskej republike doručená žiadosť Európskej komisie o objasnenie transpozície čl. 132 ods. 1 písm. a) Smernice Rady 2006/112/ES. K žiadosti Európskej komisie Slovenská republika uvádza nasledovné stanovisko.*

☺ *Further to the letter of 18 May 2009 by which the European Commission asked the Slovak Republic to provide clarification of the transposition of Article 132(1)(a) of Council Directive 2006/112/EC, the Slovak Republic would like to provide the following opinion.*

☺ *Please find enclosed our response to your letter of 18 May 2009 asking us for more information on the transposition of Article 132(1)(a) of Council Directive 2006/112/EC.*

### 3.3 Use personalisations

Don't be afraid to make an inanimate object the agent of the verb. This is taboo in some other languages, but correct in English.

*V smernici sa vyžaduje, aby členské štáty uskutočňovali podľa harmonizovaného postupu inšpekcie lietadiel.*

☺ *In the Directive it is required that Member States effect inspections of aircraft in accordance with the harmonised procedure.*

☺ *The Directive calls upon Member States to inspect aircraft using the harmonised procedure.*

*V kapitole 6 je zhrnutá....*

☹ *In Chapter 6 there is contained...*

☺ *Chapter 6 contains....*

*v tabuľke sa zobrazí...*

☹ *In the table there is displayed...*

☺ *The table displays...*

*v článku 20 základného nariadenia sa uviedlo, že..*

☹ *In Article 20 of the basic regulation it was stated that...*

☺ *Article 20 of the basic regulation stated that...*

### **3.4 Gender-neutral language**

You can avoid irritating half your readers by replacing gender-specific words with gender-neutral words. For example, replace "layman" by "lay person"; "salesgirl" by "sales assistant"; "workman" by "worker" etc. Many English words are gender-neutral anyway: teacher, doctor, artist etc. However, there is still a problem when it comes to pronouns. In ordinary text, forms like *he/she* or *s/he* or *he or she* are clumsy and not good style. A good way of avoiding this gender problem is to use the plural, which stylistically sounds more natural and less formal in English anyway:

*Žiadateľ musí poskytnúť spolu so žiadosťou doklady, ktoré potvrdzujú, že je v súlade s odsekom 1.*

☹ *With his/her application the applicant must provide documentary evidence that he/she complies with the first paragraph.*

☺ *Applicants must attach documentary evidence that they comply with the first paragraph.*

*Z novelizovaného ustanovenia vyplýva, že horeuvedenú daňovú povinnosť možno preniesť len na právnickú osobu alebo fyzickú osobu, ktorá má v SR sídlo, miesto podnikania, alebo bydlisko.*

☹ *The amended provision implies that the above-mentioned tax liability may only be transferred to a legal entity or natural person who has his/her/its registered office, place of business or place of residence in SR.*

☺ *The amended provision means that this tax liability may be transferred only to taxable persons and legal entities who have their registered office, place of business or place of residence in Slovakia.*

In some texts the problem can be avoided by reformulating the sentence. For example in manuals or sets of instructions, it is more natural in English to address the reader directly using the second-person form or even the imperative, so the example above could (in an appropriate context) be translated as:

*You must attach documentary evidence that you comply with the first paragraph.*

*Attach documentary evidence that you comply with the first paragraph.*

Where it's clear from the context who is doing what, another way of reformulating the sentence could be to make the whole thing impersonal. This would involve omitting the agent, using the passive and replacing the verb *comply* with the noun *compliance*:

*Applications must be accompanied by documentary evidence of compliance with the first paragraph.*

However, generally speaking it is better to name the agent, avoid the passive and use verbs rather than nouns (see relevant sections).

Note also that it is nowadays quite common, particularly in speech, to use the plural pronoun *they* (and *them*, *their*) as a singular general, non-gender-specific pronoun (although not everybody considers this grammatically correct or acceptable in writing):

*The applicant must provide documentary evidence that they comply with the first paragraph.*

In some cases, the plural pronoun has to be used. For example, to translate *Každý má svoj názor o tom, však?* there is no real alternative to *Everyone has their own opinion on this, don't they?*, since *Everyone has his own opinion on this, doesn't he?* sounds very old-fashioned and pedantic.

### 3.5 Referring expressions)

#### 3.5.1 Ignore "ďalej len"

The English expression *hereinafter referred to as* is much less common than the Slovak expression *ďalej len*. It is highly formal and may be found in legal texts, such as treaties and contracts, but it is stylistically inappropriate in most normal contexts and usually unnecessary as well, since English has other means of referring. It can usually be left out.

*Vzhľadom na to, že na území Slovenskej republiky v poslednom období narastá počet podvodov pri prevodoch nehnuteľností, rozhodlo sa Ministerstvo spravodlivosti Slovenskej republiky (ďalej len „ministerstvo“) tento problém riešiť. Preto ministerstvo predložilo do legislatívneho procesu ako iniciatívny materiál návrh zákona, ktorý mal zabezpečiť, že prevody nehnuteľností budú môcť realizovať len dve právnické profesie na území Slovenskej republiky - notári a advokáti.*

⊗ *In view of the fact that there has recently been an increase in the number of cases of fraud involving transfer of property within the territory of the Slovak Republic, the Ministry of Justice (**hereinafter referred to as "the Ministry"**) decided to resolve this problem. To this end, **the Ministry** submitted by way of initiating material a draft law which would have ensured that transfers of property would be able to be carried out within the territory of the Slovak Republic only by the two legal professions of notary and lawyer.*

☺ Given the growing number of cases of conveyancing fraud recently seen in Slovakia, the Ministry of Justice decided to do something about it. To this end, **the Ministry** launched a bill which would have restricted conveyancing in Slovakia to the two legal professions of notary and lawyer.

☺☺ Given the growing number of cases of conveyancing fraud recently seen in Slovakia, the Ministry of Justice decided to do something about it: **it** launched a bill to restrict conveyancing in Slovakia to the two legal professions of notary and lawyer.

### 3.5.2 Make the most of articles and pronouns

Slovak often uses referring expressions such as *uvedený*, *spomínaný*, *príslušný*, *dotknutý*, *daný*, *predmetný*, *vecný*, whereas in English expressions like "the aforementioned", "the said", "the...in question" etc. are too formal for most ordinary contexts or just stylistically unnecessary. It is more natural to use a personal or demonstrative pronoun.

*[Vzhľadom na to, že na území Slovenskej republiky v poslednom období narastá počet podvodov pri prevodoch nehnuteľností, rozhodlo sa Ministerstvo spravodlivosti Slovenskej republiky (ďalej len „ministerstvo“) tento problém riešiť. Preto ministerstvo predložilo do legislatívneho procesu ako iniciatívny materiál návrh zákona, ktorý mal zabezpečiť, že prevody nehnuteľností budú môcť realizovať len dve právnické profesie na území Slovenskej republiky - notári a advokáti.] Uvedené právnické profesie môžu v zmysle vnútroštátneho právneho poriadku ako jediné na území Slovenskej republiky poskytovať právne služby za odmenu.*

☺ Within the meaning of the country-internal legislation, the **mentioned** legal professions are the only ones entitled to provide legal services within the territory of the Slovak Republic for remuneration.

☺ Under national legislation, **these** legal professions are the only ones entitled to provide legal services in Slovakia for remuneration.

### 3.5.3 Avoid abbreviations and acronyms

**Tip: Don't coin *ad hoc* abbreviations or acronyms that will be unfamiliar to the reader**

Usage and frequency of abbreviations and acronyms varies from language to language. *SR* is commonly used in Slovak to mean *Slovenská republika*, whereas *SR* is meaningless to an English-speaking reader. It is better just to say *Slovakia*. Likewise, *UK* is commonly used in English to refer to the United Kingdom, whereas it would be strange to use *SK* in Slovak to mean *Spojené kráľovstvo*.

**Tip: Don't use an abbreviation or acronym just because the original does.**



It is often simply unnecessary to use an abbreviation or acronym, particularly if the expression only appears a few times in the document, in which case it is better to spell the words out in full.

**Tip: Keep abbreviations and acronyms to a minimum by using alternative referring strategies.**

Even when an expression occurs frequently in a text, there are neater ways of referring to it than using an abbreviation or acronym. Imagine a text about the EU emissions trading scheme, where the phrase "emissions trading scheme" appears 150 times. Instead of littering the text with ETS, ETS, ETS, ETS, ETS..., it is better to use the expression in full the first time and then just refer to it as "the scheme" or "it" (See the section on **Making the most of articles and pronouns**).

This:

☹ *The emissions trading scheme (ETS) is now in operation throughout the EU. The ETS will involve constant monitoring of emissions trading activities. In this way, the ETS should enable the EU to meet its Kyoto target.*

can be improved like this:

☺ *The emissions trading scheme is now in operation throughout the EU **The scheme** will involve constant monitoring of emissions trading activities. In this way, **it** should enable the EU to meet its Kyoto target.*

**Tip: Avoid strings of abbreviations/acronyms**

If you see this:

*OMFKVA MF SR pošle Európskej komisii len jedno oznámenie.*

and you discover (for example, by using the internet) that *OMFKVA* is *odbor metodiky finančnej kontroly a vnútroného auditu*, don't do this:

☹ ☹ *FCMIAD MF SR will send the European Commission only one notification.*

It's ungrammatical, ugly and hard to understand.

This would be grammatical (but still ugly and hard to understand):

☹ *The FCMIAD of the MF of the SR will send the European Commission only one notification.*

It is much better to spell everything out:

☺ *The Financial Control Methodology and Internal Audit Department of the Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic will send the European Commission only one notification.*

If the text continues to use *OMFKVA MF SR*, you can just call it *the Department*. If the text is a letter from the Financial Control Methodology and Internal Audit Department of the Ministry of Finance of the Slovak Republic to the European Commission, you may be able to avoid the abbreviation problem completely by using the pronouns *we* and *you* (see section on using pronouns).

### 3.5.3.1 Use of articles with abbreviations

If the expression being abbreviated is used with a definite article, the corresponding acronym also usually requires the article:

*at **the** United Nations*                      *at **the** UN*  
*in **the** United Kingdom*                      *in **the** UK*

However, where the acronym can be pronounced as a word, the definite article is not usually used:

***the** North Atlantic Treaty Organisation*, but *NATO* (not ***the** NATO*)

- v SR      ☹ ☹ *in SR* (grammatically incorrect)  
            ☹ *in the SR* (grammatically correct, but unlikely to be understood)  
            ☹ *in the Slovak republic* (grammatically correct, but spelt wrong)  
            ☺ *in the Slovak Republic* (grammatically correct, correctly spelt, but in most cases unnecessarily formal)  
            ☺ *in Slovakia* (the clearest and usually most stylistically appropriate form)

In the case of the indefinite article, the rule is not "*a* before a consonant, *an* before a vowel", but "*a* before a consonant **sound**, *an* before a vowel **sound**":

*a UN resolution*  
*a UFO*  
*an EU project*  
*an SMS*

### 3.5.3.2 Pluralising abbreviations and acronyms

If the abbreviated expression is in the plural, the abbreviation also needs to be pluralised:

*SMEs*                      *small and medium-sized enterprises*  
*UFOs*                      *identified flying objects*

### 3.6 *Limit use of the passive*

In very general terms, the active voice is usually preferable to the passive voice, i.e. it is better to be concrete and say who is doing what.

There is no need to systematically avoid the passive at all costs. Sometimes it is useful:

1. If you want to focus attention on the receiver of the action by putting that first: *One of the most controversial members of the Parliament has been interviewed by the press about the proposal.*
2. If you want to position old or known information at the start of the sentence, so you can put new or surprising information at the end: *After the seminar the teacher was bitten by a mad dog.* Notice here that the old, known information is signalled by the definite article ("the teacher", i.e. the one we are already talking about or know about). It would sound strange to say: *After the seminar a mad dog bit the teacher.* (See section on **Word order and information flow**.)

### 3.7 *Word order and information flow*

English word order is basically fixed, whereas word order in Slovak is freer. Changes in word order in English change meaning, whereas changes in word order in Slovak change emphasis.

For example: *The dog bit the postman* does not mean the same as *The postman bit the dog*.

*Pes hryzol poštára* and *Poštára hryzol pes* have the same semantic meaning, but the emphasis is slightly different. The same effect can be achieved in English by other means. For example, depending on the emphasis we want to give, instead of saying *The dog bit the postman*, we might say:

*The postman was bitten by the dog.*

*It was the dog that bit the postman. (The animal that bit the postman was the dog)*

*It was the postman who the dog bit.*

*It was the postman who was bitten by the dog. (The person who was bitten by the dog was the postman.)*

**Tip: A Slovak sentence where the object is placed before the subject will often be best translated by a passive sentence in English: *Poštára hryzol pes* = *The postman was bitten by the dog*.**

The order of the elements in a sentence is important for the flow of information. It is usual for old or known information to be placed at the beginning of the sentence or clause and new or surprising information to be placed at the end. This makes it much easier for the reader to follow the logic.

There is something awkward about the flow of information in this paragraph:

⊗ *The Court of Auditors' report criticises agricultural spending and proposes some new measures to prevent fraud. The setting up of a special task force with powers to search*

*farms is included in their proposals. Commission officials are not normally granted such powers, but the EU's main priorities now include fraud prevention.*

The flow of information is clumsy:

*The Court of Auditors' report criticises agricultural spending and proposes some new measures to prevent fraud.*

NEW INFORMATION *The setting up of a special task force with powers to search farms is included*

OLD INFORMATION *in their proposals.*

NEW INFORMATION *Commission officials are not normally granted*

OLD INFORMATION *such powers,*

NEW INFORMATION *but the EU's main priorities now include*

OLD INFORMATION *fraud prevention.*

The links are much clearer if the paragraph is expressed like this, proceeding from known information to new information:

☺ *The Court of Auditors' report criticises agricultural spending and proposes some new measures to prevent fraud. The proposals include setting up a special task force with powers to search farms. Such powers are not normally granted to Commission officials, but fraud prevention is now one of the EU's main priorities.*

*The Court of Auditors' report criticises agricultural spending and proposes some new measures to prevent fraud.*

OLD INFORMATION *The proposals*

NEW INFORMATION *include setting up a special task force with powers to search farms*

OLD INFORMATION *Such powers*

NEW INFORMATION *are not normally granted to Commission officials,*

OLD INFORMATION *but fraud prevention*

NEW INFORMATION *is now one of the EU's main priorities.*

### **3.8 Make the most of prepositions**

Prepositions in English can often bear more semantic weight than prepositions in other languages, which tend to use wordier expressions. For example, *podujatia určené pre širokú verejnosť* could be translated as *events intended for the public* or *events designed for the public* or *events aimed at the public*, but it is quite adequate to say just *events for the public*. The word *for* carries enough information and does not need to be made more explicit.

Typical Slovak expressions and their (shorter) English equivalents:

adresované (niekomu)	to
na území (SR)	in (Slovakia)
určené pre	for
v oblasti (niečoho)	in
v podmienkach (niečoho)	in; for

v prospech (niečoho)	for
v rámci (niečoho)	in; under; during
v rozsahu (niečoho)	in; within; under
vo sfére	in
v zmysle (niečoho)	under

Some examples:

*oznámenia, ktoré pochádzajú od colných úradov alebo sú im adresované*

☹ *communications coming from or addressed to customs offices*

☺ *communications from or to customs offices*

*Keďže s praktickou realizáciou programu biopalív v podmienkach SR sa začalo až v II. polroku 2006, v zmysle pravidiel EÚ môže trvať až 3 roky, kým sa vytvorí významný domáci trh s biopalivami*

☹ *As practical implementation of the biofuels programme **in the circumstances prevailing in SR** did not begin until the second half of 2006, **within the meaning of the EU rules** it may take as long as three years for a significant domestic market to develop*

☺ *As practical implementation of the biofuels programme **in** Slovakia did not begin until the second half of 2006, **under** EU rules it may take as long as three years for a significant domestic market to develop*

*Tento cieľ bol síce správny, ale v podmienkach SR príliš ambiciózny.*

☹ *Although this goal was the right one, it was too **ambitious given the conditions obtaining in** Slovakia.*

☺ *Although this goal was the right one, it was too ambitious **for** Slovakia.*

*Dávky budú mať zamýšľaný účinok v rozsahu okolností, ktoré sa pravdepodobne vyskytnú v praxi.*

☹ *The doses will have the intended effect **within the range of** circumstances likely to be encountered in practice*

☺ *The doses will have the intended effect **in** the circumstances likely to be encountered in practice*

*v rozsahu svojich právomocí*

☹ ***within the scope of** their powers*

☺ ***within** their powers*

*Pracuje v oblasti počítačov.*

☹ *She works **in the field of** computers.*

☺ *She works **in** computers.*

Sometimes there's no need for a preposition at all:

*opatrenia pre podporu ľudských zdrojov*

☹ *measures for the support of human resources*

☺ *human resource measures*

*akcie v prospech komerčného stavania lodí*

☹ *measures in favour of the commercial building of ships*

☺ *commercial shipbuilding measures*

*Náš podnik pôsobí vo sfére poisťovníctva.*

☹ *Our company operates in the field of insurance.*

☺ *We're an insurance company.*

☺ *Our business is insurance.*

Other common expressions that can be shortened:

*s cieľom zaručiť stálu a účinnú kontrolu uplatňovania práva Spoločenstva*

☹ *for the purpose of* guaranteeing the continuing and effective monitoring of the application of Community law

☺ *to* guarantee the continuing and effective monitoring of the application of Community law

*vzhľadom na nábeh nových výrobných kapacít*

☹ *in view of* the launching of new production capacities

☺ *with* new production capacities being launched

*Vzhľadom na to, že sú traja našich kolegov na maródke, budeme musieť zatvoriť kanceláriu*

☹ *In view of the fact that* three of our colleagues are away on sick leave, we'll have to close the office

☺ *With* three of our colleagues off sick, we'll have to close the office.

☺ *As* three of our colleagues are off sick, we'll have to close the office.

**Tip:** Try to keep your English clear and concise by cutting out unnecessary words and exploiting prepositions.

## 4 Things to watch out for (common errors and problem words)

### 4.1 Misuses of "in case"

"In case" does not mean "if".

*V prípade, že* is usually best translated as *if* or *where*. *In the event that* is also possible, but more formal and unnecessarily wordy.

*V prípade, že potrebujete akékoľvek technické informácie, postupujte, prosím, nasledovne.*

- ⊗⊗ *In case you require any technical information, please do the following.*
- ⊗ *In the event that you require any technical information, please do the following.*
- ⊗ *In the event of your requiring any technical information, please do the following*
- ⊗ *If you require any technical information, please do the following.*

"In case" means "for if", i.e. *pre prípad, že*. It is about being prepared for something that may possibly happen.

*Mali by sa ustanoviť vhodné opatrenia pre prípad, že situácia na trhu si vyžaduje zmeniť podmienky zmlúv.*

→ *Suitable measures should be laid down in case the market situation calls for the terms of the contracts to be changed.*

*Zobral som si so sebou nejakú knižku, pre prípad že by pršalo a museli sme ostať v stanoch.*

→ *I took a book along with me in case it rained and we had to stay in the tents.*

*Neviem Vám pomôcť, ale kópiu Vášho listu preposielam riaditeľovi, pre prípad, že by Vám vedel pomôcť.*

→ *I can't help you, but I'm forwarding a copy of your letter to the Director in case he can help you.*

*Pri stanovení dĺžky platnosti víza sa pridá sedem dní pre prípad, že držiteľ víza odloží vycestovanie.*

→ *Seven days are added to the validity of the visa in case the holder postpones departure.*

Notice the difference in meaning between the following two sentences:

*I'll give you the address if you need it.*

Here the idea is: *"I don't know whether you need the address or not, so I won't give it to you now, but if you do one day need it, just ask and I'll give it to you then."*

*I'll give you the address in case you need it.*

Here the idea is: *"I don't know whether you need the address or not, but you may well need it one day, so I'll give to you now just to be sure; then you will already have it if you do ever need it."*

The expression "in case" or "just in case" means "pre istotu" or "pre každý prípad" or "keby náhodou".

Where it refers to something taking place, the phrase *v prípade (niečoho)* can be translated as "in the event of" or just "in", although it is often better to use a verb (see section **Use verbs instead of nouns**):

*v prípade dažďa*

☺ *in the event of rain*  
☺☺ *if it rains*

*v prípade choroby*  
☺ *in the event of illness*  
☺☺ *if you are ill*

*v prípade požiaru*  
☺ *in the event of fire*  
☺ *in a fire*  
☺☺ *if there is a fire*

*v prípade nebezpečenstva*  
☺ *in the event of an emergency*  
☺ *in an emergency*

Phrases like "*in case of fire*" or "*in case of emergency*" are often seen on signs, but this usage should not be copied, since it is potentially misleading. As explained above, "*in case*" is usually about taking proactive or preventive measures before the event rather than reacting to a situation once it has already occurred. "*Do not use this lift in case of fire*" should really mean: "*Do not ever use this lift because there may one day be a fire*".

The phrase "*in **the** case of*" (i.e. with the definite article) has a different meaning, corresponding to Slovak phrases like *pokiaľ ide o, ohľadom* and *čo sa týka*.

## 4.2 Qualification (use of adjectives)

Different languages use different means of qualifying nouns:

Slovak, like other Slavic languages, typically uses an adjective:

- *čajový servis*
- *Bratislavský hrad*
- *dvojväzkový slovník*
- *strelná zbraň*
- *konečný produkt*

English, like other Germanic languages, will juxtapose two nouns. Depending on the word, they may be written separately, or as a compound noun, or joined by a hyphen (check a good dictionary!):

- *tea set*
- *Bratislava Castle* (no definite article! Don't say "the Bratislava Castle")



- *two-volume dictionary*
- *firearm*
- *end-product*

French, in common with other Romance languages, often joins two nouns together with a preposition:

- *service à thé*
- *le château de Bratislava*
- *dictionnaire en deux volumes*
- *arme à feu*
- *produit final*

While adjectives can be regularly formed from many nouns in Slovak, in English many nouns have no corresponding adjective. Sometimes there is an adjective, sometimes there isn't. For example, the adjective *regional* can be formed from the noun *region*, but there is no adjective from *district*:

<u>Slovak</u>	<u>English</u>	<u>French</u>
<i>okres</i>	<i>district</i>	<i>arrondissement</i>
<i>okresný súd</i>	<i>district court</i>	<i>tribunal d'arrondissement</i>
<i>kraj</i>	<i>region</i>	<i>région</i>
<i>krajský súd</i>	<i>regional court</i>	<i>tribunal régional</i>

#### 4.2.1 Non-existent adjectives

Whatever you do, don't invent adjectives! Here are examples of adjectives that don't really exist:

"touristic"

*turistická sezona*

☹☹ *touristic season*

☺ *tourist season*

*turistické topánky*

☹☹ *touristic shoes*

☺ *walking shoes; hiking boots*

Note: unlike ☹☹ *touristic*, the adjective *touristy* does exist, but it is pejorative, meaning *zaplavený turistami* or *príliš turistický*.

"urbanistic"

*urbanistický rozvoj*

☹☹ *urbanistic development*

☺ *urban development*

*urbanistické prekážky*

☹☹ *urbanistic constraints*

☺ *town planning constraints*

*urbanistický kontext*

☹☹ *urbanistic context*

☺ *the layout of the city*

☺ *the way the city is laid out*

"contentual"

*...ktoré sú v zásade obsahovo totožné...*

☹☹ *... which are basically contentually identical...*

☺ *... which are basically identical in terms of content...*

☺ *... which basically have the same content...*

"federative"

"discriminative"

#### 4.2.2 Check the meaning

Don't use an adjective just because the original does. Make sure the adjective you select has the right meaning.

Take the expression: *príspevková organizácia*. Here the adjective *príspevková* is formed from the noun *príspevok* (contribution). So the translator may be tempted to do the same in English and translate *príspevková organizácia* as *contributory organisation*, but this is potentially misleading. To see the problem, we need to investigate the **meaning** of the Slovak phrase and the English adjective and see whether they match.

Here is an explanation of what a *príspevková organizácia* is:

*Príspevkové organizácie sú financované na princípe, že čas výdavkov si hradia z vlastných príjmov a na zostatok môžu dostať zo štátneho rozpočtu príspevok. Medzi príspevkové organizácie patria napríklad divadlá, galérie a pod.*

In other words, a *príspevková organizácia* is an organisation that **receives** a contribution from the national budget.

The English word *contributory*, however, tends to refer to something that **makes** a contribution, such as in expressions like *contributory factor* (*spolupôsobiaci faktor*) or *contributory negligence* (*spoluzavinenie z nedbalosti*), so *contributory organisation* could sound as if it meant *prispievajúca organizácia* or *napomáhajúca organizácia*, which is clearly not the right meaning. To convey the meaning of *príspevková organizácia* unambiguously to an English-speaking reader, we may need to use some completely different and more explicit expression, such as *subsidised organisation*, *organisation partly funded from public money*, *organisation receiving contributions from the national budget*, *organisation co-financed from the budget* etc.

Sometimes an adjective formed from a noun has a transferred or specialised sense. It is, therefore, important to check in a good dictionary. For example, from the noun *child* we have the adjective *childish*, which means *detinský*, *pochabý* and the adjective *childlike*, which means *(detský) prostý*, *(detský) nevinný*; *typický pre dieťa*.

### 4.2.3 Correct collocation

One Slovak adjective may be rendered in very different ways in English depending on the expression. There is no one-to-one correspondence. It is often a matter of convention and usage rather than semantics as such. Again, always check. The internet, if used wisely, can be a good source for checking which words go together ("collate").

#### detský

<i>detský bicykel</i>	<i>children's bike</i>
<i>detská sedačka</i>	<i>child seat</i>
<i>detská chirurgia</i>	<i>paediatric surgery</i>
<i>detská obrna</i>	<i>polio</i>
<i>detská úmrtnosť</i>	<i>infant mortality</i>

*detská výživa*            *baby food*

*detská riekanka*        *nursery rhyme*

morský

*morský biológ*            *marine biologist*

*morské vody*             *maritime waters*

*morské plody*            *seafood*

*morský jazyk*            *sole (a type of fish)*

Check collocations using Google, but make sure the sites you are using are reliable sources of good native-speaker English, as there is a lot of bad English on the internet!. A reliable source is the British National Corpus: <http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/>

**Tips: Check in a good dictionary to make sure that the adjective you may be thinking of using:**

**(a) really exists;**

**(b) has the meaning you require in the context, and**

**(c) collates with (goes with) the noun you are using it with.**

### **4.3 Position of adjectives**

When placed before the noun, past participles used as adjectives usually denote a permanent state or essential characteristic or defining feature, whereas, when placed after the noun, they denote a temporary state and are often equivalent to a relative clause adding some extra information. For example, compare the following three sentences:

*Do you want a cooked meal or will just a sandwich be OK?*

*At the end of the day everyone on the cookery course got to taste the dishes cooked.*

*At the end of the day everyone on the cookery course got to taste the cooked dishes, but not the cold ones.*

In the first sentence, the speaker is referring to a type of meal, i.e. a cooked one as opposed to a cold one, whereas in the second sentence *the meal cooked* is equivalent to *the meal which had been cooked* or *the meal which they had cooked*. In the third sentence, *cooked* is again defining the dishes.

*Poukazy sú platné len na vyznačenú dobu.*

☹ *Vouchers are valid only for the indicated period.*

☺ *Vouchers are valid only for the period indicated.*

*Pre každé opatrenie sa uvedie počet prijatých žiadostí, počet schválených žiadostí a zverená suma peňazí.*

☺ *For each measure, the number of received applications, the number of approved applications and the committed amount of money will be stated.*

☺ *For each measure, the number of applications received, the number of applications approved and the amount of money committed will be stated.*

Some adjectives, such as *concerned*, *involved*, *present* and *responsible*, change meaning depending on whether they precede or follow the noun they qualify.

### **concerned parents vs. parents concerned**

*Pre takmer tretinu **dotknutých rodičov** by bolo dôležité, ak by mohli ostatné hodiny dopracovať inokedy.*

→ *Almost a third of the **parents concerned** would value being allowed to work the remaining hours at some other time.*

*Riaditeľka odmietla reagovať na obavy **znepokojených rodičov**, ktorí majú pocit, že situácia na škole sa vyvíja smerom, ktorý neschvaľujú.*

→ *The head declined to respond to the fears of **concerned parents**, who felt the situation in the school was moving in a direction they did not approve of.*

### **involved issues vs. issues involved**

*V prípade každej uvažovanej možnosti posúdenie zahŕňa podrobnosti o **príslušných technických a právnych aspektoch**.*

→ *For each option considered, the assessment shall include details of the technical and legal **issues involved**.*

*Vzdelávanie a integrácia Rómov je jednou z najnáročnejších a **najzložitejších otázok** v rámci európskych sociálnych a vzdelávacích politík.*

→ *Roma education and integration is one of the most challenging and **involved issues** in European social and education policies.*

### **present members vs members present**

*Funkčné obdobie **súčasných členov** Európskeho hospodárskeho a sociálneho výboru uplynie ďalší rok.*

→ *The terms of office of the **present members** of the European Economic and Social Committee expire next year.*

*Na zvolenie je potrebné získanie hlasov dvojtretinovej väčšiny **prítomných členov**.*

→ *Election shall require a two-thirds majority of the **members present**.*

### **responsible parents vs parents responsible**

*Film je však mládeži neprístupný a tí rozvážni rodičia nemajú prečo neriadiť sa odporúčaním distribútorov.*

→ *However, the film is classified as not suitable for children, so there is no reason for responsible parents not to follow the distributors' recommendation.*

*Vinní rodičia budú potrestaní dlhým väzením.*

→ *The parents responsible will be sentenced to a lengthy prison term.*

#### 4.4 English verbs that require an object

Certain verbs in English cannot be used without an explicit object. They include: *to inform*, *to remind* and *to enable*. We have to say who is informed, reminded or enabled.

*Klaus pripomenul, že s podpisom Lisabonskej zmluvy sa nebude ponáhľať.*

☹ ☹ *Klaus reminded that he was in no hurry to sign the Lisbon Treaty.*

To get round this, you may have to use another word or add an object according to the context:

☺ *Klaus again said that he was in no hurry to sign the Lisbon Treaty.*

☺ *Klaus reiterated his position that he was in no hurry to sign the Lisbon Treaty.*

☺ *Klaus reminded his audience/the journalists/the Czech Parliament/Mr Barroso... that he was in no hurry to sign the Lisbon Treaty.*

*Kuba informovala, že obnovuje svoje diplomatické vzťahy so zastúpením EÚ v Havane.*

☹ ☹ *Cuba informed that it was renewing its diplomatic relations with the EU delegation in Havana.*

☺ *Cuba announced that it was renewing its diplomatic relations with the EU delegation in Havana.*

☺ *Cuba informed the press/the UN/Mr Barroso... that it was renewing its diplomatic relations with the EU delegation in Havana.*

*Snažili sa priniesť takú technológiu, ktorá by umožňovala v troch jednoduchých krokoch vytvoriť si webovú stránku.*

☹ ☹ *They tried to introduce technology that would enable to create a website in three simple steps.*

☺ *They tried to introduce technology that would make it possible to create a website in three simple steps.*

☺ *They tried to introduce technology that would enable people/users/their customers... to create a website in three simple steps.*

#### 4.5 pričom

The Slovak word *pričom* is often translated as *while* or *whereas*, but these are often inappropriate and there are better solutions.

The meaning can often be rendered with the simple word *and*.

*Elektrody musia byť umiestnené tak, aby zovierali mozog a srdce, pričom minimálna intenzita prúdu musí vyvolať okamžité stav bezvedomia.*  
→ *Electrodes must be placed so that they span the brain and the heart and the minimum current level used must lead to immediate loss of consciousness.*

Or, depending on the context, some other conjunction may be appropriate, such as *although*, *and yet*, *but*, *even though* etc.

*Za výber týchto pozemkov sú zodpovedné členské štáty, pričom sa však musia dodržať tieto kritéria výberu:*  
→ *The selection of these plots is the responsibility of the Member States, although the following criteria for the selection should be applied:*

*Stále každému radí, pričom tomu vôbec nerozumie.*  
→ *He's always handing out advice and yet he knows nothing about it.*  
→ *He's always handing out advice even though he knows nothing about it.*

Using a verb in the gerund form (-ing) can be a useful solution:

*Komisia vyhlási verejnú súťaž, pričom zohľadní najmä nasledujúce kritéria:*  
→ *The Commission will issue a call for tenders, taking into account the following criteria in particular:*

*Môže rozhodnúť o odňatí časti alebo celého tohto príspevku, pričom uvedie dôvody svojho rozhodnutia.*  
→ *It may decide to withhold part or all of that contribution, stating the reasons for its decision.*

*Súhrn každého oznámenia bude uverejnený v úradných jazykoch spoločenstiev, pričom autentický je len text v pôvodnom jazyku.*  
→ *A summary of each notice will be published in the official languages of the Community, only the original text being authentic.*

or a gerund with a suitable preposition:

*Stále každému radí, pričom tomu vôbec nerozumie.*  
→ *He's always handing out advice despite not knowing anything about it.*  
→ *He's always handing out advice without knowing anything about it.*

Sometimes the best solution is to reformulate the sentence:

*V zozname mien členských štátov je potrebné dodržiavať abecedné poradie skratiek mien, pričom na prvom mieste sa vždy uvádza skratka eura.*  
→ *When listing Member State currencies, place the euro first followed by the other monetary abbreviations in alphabetical order of the currency code.*

## 4.6 *národnosť/občianstvo*

This can be a very tricky word to translate. Depending on the context, possibilities include: *ethnic group, national identity, cultural group, ethnicity, minority, race, ethnic identity* etc.

In order to avoid confusion, it is best not to use the word *nationality* as a translation of *národnosť*, since in normal usage *nationality* is usually a synonym of *citizenship*. For example, when a form asks you to state your *nationality*, it is asking you an objective legal question, i.e. what passport you hold, not what colour you are or what language you speak or which ethnic group you feel allegiance to. In this legal sense, there is no such thing as English, Scottish, Welsh or Northern Irish nationality. All British people have British nationality, although subjectively and personally they may feel and define themselves as English, Scottish, Welsh or Northern Irish. So *nationality* is the correct translation of *štátna príslušnosť* or *štátne občianstvo*.

Note that *citizenship* is also the name of a school subject, corresponding to *občianska výchova*.

The English word *citizen* is more legalistic than the Slovak word *občan* and tends not to be used as often. *Občania* is often better translated as *the public, members of the public* or just *people*. For example, this sentence:

*Nie je prijateľné, aby bremeno poplatkov za medzinárodný roaming naďalej znášali **obyčajní občania**, ktorí platia štandardné sadzby.*

could be translated like this:

☹ *It is not acceptable that the burden of international mobile roaming continues to be shouldered by ordinary **citizens** who pay standard tariffs.*

But actually the issue of citizenship (i.e. which passport you hold) is completely irrelevant to mobile phone charges, so better alternatives include:

☺ *It is not acceptable that the burden of international mobile roaming continues to be shouldered by ordinary **people** who pay standard tariffs.*

☺ *It is not acceptable that the burden of international mobile roaming continues to be shouldered by ordinary **consumers** who pay standard tariffs.*

☺ *It is not acceptable that the burden of international mobile roaming continues to be shouldered by ordinary **telephone users** who pay standard tariffs.*

## 4.7 *Subjects and subjekty*

*Subjekty* is often mistranslated as *subjects*, where this is not the appropriate word. As a noun referring to people *subject* means *poddaný*.



*Tieto subjekty sú povinné zasielať tieto správy ministerstvu.*

☹ *These subjects must send these reports to the ministry.*

☺ *These entities must send these reports to the ministry.*

However, *entity* is a rather formal word. So, if it is clear from the context what kind of entities they are, you could use that word instead.

*These taxpayers/companies/individuals/organisations... must send these reports to the ministry.*

#### **4.8 "in Slovak language"**

The phrase *in Slovak language* is grammatically incorrect. It should be *in the Slovak language*, although this is rather formal. It may be used, for example, in treaties or contracts. For most normal contexts the grammatically and stylistically correct expression is just *in Slovak*.

#### 4.9 False friends

Slovak	English	English	Slovak
evidencia	records, register, record keeping	evidence	dôkaz
kemping	campsite	camping	táborenie, stanovanie
komplexný	comprehensive, global, all-round, across-the-board	complex	zložitý, obťažný
konceptia	plan, strategy, policy, design	conception	1. poňatie, predstava 2. počatie
		concept	pojem
kontrola	check, examination, verification, inspection, review, audit, scrutiny, oversight, supervision, monitoring, policing	control	regulácia, moc, vplyv, (seba)ovládanie, disciplína, vláda, panstvo, zdržanlivosť
kontrolovať	to check, examine, verify, inspect, review, audit, scrutinise, oversee, supervise, monitor, police, see to, see to it that	to control	ovládať, mať pod kontrolou, skrotiť, riadiť, obmedziť, zastaviť šírenie, ohraničiť, nepustiť von, potlačiť, panovať
moderátor	(TV) presenter, quizmaster, talkshow host	moderator	sprostredkovateľ, vyjednávač
objekt	premises	object	1. predmet 2. cieľ
"Zákaz fajčenia v celom objekte"	"No smoking anywhere on the premises"		
v tomto objekte	here		
revanšovať sa	to return the favour, reciprocate, repay	revenge (to take revenge)	pomstiť sa
urgencia	reminder	urgency	naliehavosť, neodkladnosť

## 5 Useful websites

**English Style Guide** of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Translation:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/translation/english/guidelines/documents/styleguide\\_english\\_dgt\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/translation/english/guidelines/documents/styleguide_english_dgt_en.pdf)

**How to write clearly** brochure produced by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Translation:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/translation/writing/clear\\_writing/how\\_to\\_write\\_clearly\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/translation/writing/clear_writing/how_to_write_clearly_en.pdf)

**The Economist** Style Guide: <http://www.economist.com/research/styleguide/>

**British National Corpus**: <http://www.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/>

**Plain English Campaign**: <http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/>

Particularly useful pages are the list of alternative words: <http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/files/alternative.pdf> and the **How to write in plain English** guide: <http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/files/howto.pdf>