

A MUNICIPAL POLICY PROPOSAL · PIEŠŤANY, SLOVAKIA

Where Slovakia *recovers.* Where Slovakia trains.

*A phased public recreation initiative for the
next generation of Slovak citizens.*

Prepared for

The Mayor & City Council of Piešťany · The Trnava Self-Governing Region
and the Public Officials of the Slovak Republic

A phased proposal to establish Piešťany as Slovakia's leading destination for both wellness and youth athletic development — beginning by expanding access to existing facilities, and culminating in a modern municipal recreation center.

SECTION 01

The Request

This proposal is not simply about constructing another building. It is about defining the future identity of Piešťany.

We respectfully request the adoption of a **phased public recreation initiative** — one that begins by expanding access to facilities that already exist, and culminates in the construction of a modern municipal recreation center serving Piešťany and the surrounding region. Piešťany is already where Slovakia recovers. Now it has the opportunity to become where Slovakia trains.

Phase 1 • Open existing facilities

0-6 MONTHS

- Public hours at Diplomat Arena outside training & competition
- A modest €3-€4 access fee per session
- After-school access blocks with schools & clubs
- Zero new construction — an existing public asset

Phase 2 • Measure demand & plan

6-18 MONTHS

- Track attendance, membership & youth participation
- Survey residents, schools, clubs & physicians
- Commission a feasibility study & master plan
- Build the evidence base for national & EU funding

Phase 3 • Build the center

18+ MONTHS

- Indoor courts, swimming pool & fitness centre
- Outdoor football, tennis & pickleball facilities
- Community rooms integrated with the wellness sector
- EU, national, regional & private funding

SECTION 02

Investing in Youth

Every champion started as a child.

Every Olympic champion. Every NHL player. Every football star. Every world champion — before they were champions, they were children walking into a local gym, pool, or field for the very first time.

No child is born an elite athlete. Champions are built through thousands of hours of practice, repetition, coaching, and perseverance.

Governments cannot create talent. **But governments can create opportunity.** Every child deserves the chance to discover what they are capable of.

Every municipality has children with extraordinary potential. Some will become

doctors. Some teachers. Some entrepreneurs. Some may one day represent Slovakia on the world's biggest stages.

A recreation center is not simply a building. It is an investment in the next generation of Slovak citizens — and the question is only whether they will be given the opportunity to discover that potential.

SLOVAKIA ALREADY PRODUCES WORLD-CLASS ATHLETES

Juraj Slafkovský ICE HOCKEY First overall pick in the NHL Draft.	Peter Sagan CYCLING One of the greatest cyclists of his generation.
Petra Vlhová ALPINE SKIING Olympic champion.	Marek Hamšík FOOTBALL One of Slovakia's greatest footballers.

For a nation of just over five million, Slovakia has never lacked talent. But how many gifted children never reach their potential — not for lack of ability, but because there was nowhere nearby to practice after school?

Talent is distributed equally.
Opportunity is not.

THE GAP THIS INITIATIVE EXISTS TO CLOSE

SECTION 03

Why Piešťany?

The wellness capital that could also become the training capital.

Piešťany has earned international recognition for health. People travel here to recover, to rehabilitate, to become stronger. **But recovery is only half of wellness. The other half is movement — exercise, strength, sport, lifelong physical activity.** Adding active recreation is not a departure from the city's identity. It completes it.

IDENTITY	A globally recognised wellness brand — nothing to invent.
GEOGRAPHY	The geographic centre of western Slovakia — within one hour of Bratislava, Trnava, Nitra, and Trenčín.
ASSETS	Diplomat Arena, spa hotels, restaurants, and event capacity already in place.
DEMOGRAPHICS	Young families, retirees, and international visitors — all of whom benefit from public recreation.

Recovery and recreation belong together. That combination could become Piešťany's defining identity for generations to come — a municipality where wellness is not only restored, but built.

SECTION 04

The Missing Piece

Despite its reputation, Piešťany lacks one of the most important pieces of modern municipal infrastructure — a public recreation centre. Imagine growing up in a city without:

— a public indoor basketball court	— open gym hours
— a municipal recreation center	— indoor facilities during winter
— public weight rooms	— affordable places to exercise together

Outdoor facilities are valuable — but weather, darkness, and winter limit access for months every year.

Children cannot develop their skills if they have nowhere to practice. Communities cannot become healthier if facilities simply do not exist. Infrastructure creates opportunity. Today, that opportunity is missing.

SECTION 05

More Than a Building

A recreation center is an investment — not an expense.

i.

Long-term infrastructure

It attracts youth tournaments, regional championships, sports tourism, training camps, and community events. Visitors fill hotels and restaurants; local businesses benefit; athletes return year after year.

ii.

Preventative healthcare

Exercise is one of the most effective forms of preventative medicine — reducing obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, depression, and osteoporosis. A continuation of Piešťany's mission, not a separate one.

iii.

Opportunity regardless of income

Private clubs require significant resources. Public recreation removes that barrier — so every child can shoot baskets, learn to swim, or lift weights safely. An investment in social mobility.

iv.

Stronger communities

Parents volunteer as coaches. Teenagers have somewhere safe after school. Families spend time together; older adults stay active; neighbours meet. A true community home.

SECTION 06

A Practical Path Forward

The initiative is structured to deliver early, visible community benefit long before the recreation centre itself is built. Each phase produces its own outcomes and generates the evidence needed to unlock the next — no leap of faith required.

Phase 1 · Open existing facilities

0-6 MONTHS

- Public hours at Diplomat Arena
- Modest €3-€4 access fee per session
- Publish a weekly public schedule & online booking
- After-school access blocks with schools & clubs
- Immediate community access
- Generates revenue & measures real demand

Phase 2 · Measure demand & plan

6-18 MONTHS

- Track attendance, membership & utilisation
- Survey residents, schools, clubs & physicians
- Commission feasibility & architectural master plan
- Engage Trnava Region & Ministry of Tourism & Sport
- Prepare Fond na podporu športu & Programme Slovakia applications
- Evidence-based planning replaces speculation

Phase 3 · Build the Piešťany Recreation Center

18+ MONTHS

- Indoor basketball & multi-purpose courts
- Swimming pool for lessons, lap swimming & rehab
- Fitness & weight-training centre; indoor walking track
- Outdoor football, baseball/softball, tennis & pickleball
- Community meeting rooms & classrooms
- Integrated with Piešťany's wellness sector

SECTION 07

A Vision for the Next Fifty Years

Roads connect people.

Schools educate people.

Hospitals heal people.

Recreation centers strengthen people.

Fifty years from now, no one will remember the debate over whether this was difficult. They will remember whether today's leaders chose to invest in *roads that moved cars — or places that shaped people.*

We respectfully urge the Municipality of Piešťany, the Trnava Self-Governing Region, and all relevant public partners to begin this initiative — by expanding public access to existing facilities, developing a long-term recreation master plan, and committing to a municipal recreation center worthy of Piešťany's reputation and Slovakia's future.

THE EVIDENCE BASE · APPENDIX

The case is made. Here is the proof.

Everything before this page is the argument. What follows is the evidence behind it — public-health economics, the sports economy, two comparable municipal facilities, a realistic funding pathway, and complete references. Drawn from WHO, OECD, the European Parliament, and primary municipal sources.

APPENDIX A

Public Health & Healthcare Savings

Physical inactivity is the single largest preventable driver of long-term healthcare cost across the European Union — where Piešťany's economic case begins.

US\$300bn estimated global healthcare cost of physical inactivity, 2020-2030	€8bn annual EU healthcare savings if WHO activity targets are met	10,000+ premature deaths preventable per year across the EU
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THE €1.70 RETURN

A joint OECD-WHO analysis finds that *every €1 invested in physical activity generates approximately €1.70 in economic benefits* — through reduced healthcare costs, improved workforce productivity, and increased life expectancy.

For Piešťany, this transforms the framing of the project. A recreation centre is not a cost to the municipality. It is one of the highest-return public investments a municipality can make.

Regular exercise measurably reduces the most common — and most expensive — chronic diseases in the Slovak healthcare system:

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|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cardiovascular disease — the leading cause of death in Slovakia. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Certain cancers — including colon and breast cancer. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Type 2 diabetes — a fast-growing chronic condition among adults. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Osteoporosis — particularly among older Slovak women. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Obesity — an emerging concern in children and adolescents. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Depression & anxiety — activity is now a first-line intervention. |

APPENDIX B

Economic Benefits & Sports Tourism

Sport is a genuine economic sector — one that generates jobs, tax revenue, and place-brand value for the municipalities that invest in it.

€300bn+ annual gross value added of the EU sport sector	6M jobs supported by sport across the European Union	5.9% annual growth of amateur & youth sports tourism since 2005
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WHAT TOURNAMENTS ACTUALLY GENERATE

Tournaments don't just fill gyms. *They fill hotels, restaurants, taxis, cafés, and shops* — and they do so during shoulder seasons when traditional spa tourism is quieter. Families travelling for youth sport typically stay 2-4 nights and spend at multiple local businesses per trip.

Sports tourism Youth tournaments, training camps & regional championships fill hotels and restaurants during shoulder seasons.	Family positioning A recreation centre shifts where families choose to buy homes, register children in schools, and pay municipal taxes.	Wellness cross-selling Piešťany's spa ecosystem can bundle recreation with wellness stays — packages unavailable anywhere else in Slovakia.
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APPENDIX C & D

Two Comparable Municipal Facilities

Both are real, publicly-operated recreation centres in cities comparable to Piešťany — proof that municipalities of this size can build and sustainably run facilities of this kind.

CARLSBAD, CALIFORNIA · POP. ~115,000

Calavera Hills Community Center

18,000 sq ft community centre with an integrated 21-acre outdoor park



FACILITIES

- Community centre with meeting/activity rooms & full gymnasium
- 3 lighted baseball/softball fields; full & half basketball courts
- Lighted tennis courts & three indoor pickleball courts
- Play area, outdoor fitness course, walking path & community garden

What Piešťany can learn — Carlsbad is a tourism-oriented coastal city that invested in resident-serving recreation and did not dilute its wellness brand. If anything, it strengthened it.

ROUND ROCK, TEXAS · POP. ~130,000

Clay Madsen Recreation Center

55,000 sq ft comprehensive indoor-plus-outdoor facility, built 2000



FACILITIES

- Two full-size gymnasiums (basketball, volleyball)
- 6-lane, 25-yard indoor lap swimming pool
- Four racquetball courts; full cardio & weight-training centre
- Group fitness studios, meeting rooms, lounge & family spaces

What Piešťany can learn — A pool, two gyms, racquet courts and fitness spaces under one roof, open 05:00–22:00. Municipal ownership with public-private operation is a proven, sustainable model at exactly this scale.

APPENDIX E

Funding Strategy

The initiative can be responsibly financed through a blended approach drawing on European, national, regional, and private sources — never a single line in the municipal budget.

SOURCE	PROGRAMME / INSTRUMENT	INDICATIVE ROLE
EUROPEAN UNION		
EU · ERDF	European Regional Development Fund — Programme Slovakia 2021–2027	Primary capital funding. Slovakia's Partnership Agreement allocates €12.8bn in total EU cohesion funding.
EU	Cohesion Fund	Complementary funding for energy efficiency, accessibility & green landscaping.
EU	Interreg SK-CZ & SK-AT 2021–2027	Cross-border cooperation for shared projects & tournament hosting.
SLOVAK REPUBLIC		
National	Fond na podporu športu — INFRA calls	Primary national mechanism. Up to €1,000,000/project; 30% minimum co-financing.
National	Ministry of Tourism & Sport — subsidy calls	Support for programming, events & sporting activities.
REGIONAL & MUNICIPAL		
Regional	Trnava Self-Governing Region	Regional co-financing, land contribution & tourism-strategy integration.
Municipal	Municipality of Piešťany capital budget	Municipal co-financing (may be reduced for smaller municipalities).
PRIVATE & OPERATIONAL		
Private	Public–private partnerships (PPP)	Operation, food service, personal-training & physiotherapy concessions.
Private	Naming rights & philanthropy	Naming of courts & halls; contributions from former Slovak athletes.
Operational	Memberships, tournaments & events	Memberships, drop-in, hosting fees, court rentals, spa-recreation packages.

APPENDIX E · CONTINUED

Sequencing the Funding Applications

A REALISTIC FINANCING STRUCTURE

EU / ERDF 50-65% · Fond na podporu športu 15-25% · Municipal + Trnava Region 10-20% · PPP / sponsorship / naming rights 5-15%. Consistent with comparable EU-funded projects — including the Slovenj Gradec sports-hall extension in Slovenia, 85% ERDF-funded through cohesion policy.

• Months 0-6	Phase 1 revenue baseline. Open Diplomat Arena public hours; collect utilisation and revenue data. Minimal cost; no external funding required.
• Months 6-12	Feasibility & master planning. Commission a feasibility study & site master plan via municipal budget and a small regional grant.
• Months 12-18	Fond na podporu športu application. Prepare and submit the INFRA application for Phase 3 construction — the primary national channel.
• Months 12-24	EU Cohesion / ERDF application. In parallel, prepare the ERDF application within Programme Slovakia 2021-2027.
• Months 18-30	Private capital & sponsorship. With EU & national funding contingent, secure corporate sponsorship, naming rights & philanthropy.
• Months 30+	Construction. Break ground on Phase 3. Anticipated construction: 24-36 months.

APPENDIX F

References

All statistics and citations are drawn from public, primary, or authoritative secondary sources as of July 2026.

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