

[Yoga In Eastern Europe](#)

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Schools in Slovakia are using yoga to help kids cope with stress and improve concentration

As of January, 2000, children in Slovakia from kindergarten to high school can now practice yoga as part of their public school's official physical education program. It's one of the latest accomplishments of Swami Maheshwarananda in his over 30 years of dedicated work in Eastern Europe. He now has more than 100 yoga centers in Slovakia teaching Yoga in Daily Life. This system has been used successfully in therapy and rehabilitation in hundreds of health institutions and spas all over Slovakia since 1987.

The school program he inspired helps students cope with stress, improve concentration and gain inner harmony through a set of physical, breathing and relaxation exercises. Several hundred school teachers have enrolled in training courses being conducted from October until December in ten Slovak towns. Textbooks are also being prepared by Swami's organization. The project reflects a major shift in policy toward religion and spirituality for a country that just 12 years ago was communist and officially atheistic.

"We highly appreciate your great work and publication activities," said Dr. Milan Ftacnik, Minister of Education, in a letter to Swami, "and want to express our gratitude for the

systematic professional help in introducing Yoga in Daily Life to our schools. I expect this training program will positively influence the children, improving both their health and their inner balance."

On June 26, 2000, Swami inaugurated a yoga center in Slovakia's capital, Bratislava. The town's mayor, Jozef Moravcik, presided, expressing his delight at the opening. The dozens of reporters who covered the event were especially curious about yoga and vegetarianism. Tobor Shagat, the Minister of Health, wrote, "We strongly believe that the opening of the yoga center in Bratislava will contribute to resolving some of the problems of health in our city's inhabitants and at the same time will support a positive preventative approach." After dinner at the center, the mayor invited Swamiji and over 500 guests from the government, diplomatic corps, media, science, medicine, education and international yoga delegates to a reception at the Primate's Palace, Bratislava's renowned civic building.

Slovakia is an ancient country, which from 1918 to 1992 comprised part of Czechoslovakia, located just south of Poland. The landlocked country of 5.5 million people comprises 19,000 square miles. In 1993, three years after the collapse of communist rule, the country gained its independence. Government-mandated atheism had ended in 1989, with religion immediately regaining popularity. About three-fifths of the citizens are Roman Catholic, various Protestant denominations form a significant minority, and Eastern religions are growing steadily.

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