

## **Annual Implementation Report of the Program of the Presidency of the Slovak Republic in the Visegrad Group (1 July 2010 – 30 June 2011)**

### ***Table of contents:***

- 0/ **2010/2011 Annual Report (pp. 1–19)**
- 1/ Summary of the Main V4 Events and Contact Activities (pp. 20–23)
- 2/ Selected Texts of Documents and Joint Declarations Adopted during the V4 Slovak Presidency (pp. 24–63)
- 3/ List/summary of selected major public diplomacy events organized as a part of diplomatic missions of V4 – Slovak Embassies abroad (pp. 64–70)

Slovakia held its Visegrad Group (V4) Presidency in a year commemorating the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Visegrad Group and the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the International Visegrad Fund. The priorities of its Program reflected the needs and interests of the region and its citizens as well as both European and global challenges. Performing the Program of the Slovak Presidency, the following principles were respected: Continuity, Cohesion, Solidarity and Awareness.

The Presidency Program and the cooperation content were also influenced by external factors - the global financial and economic crisis, euro area problems and the new dynamic development in the EU neighbourhood. On the other hand, the Slovak Presidency could build on the achievements of the foregoing Hungarian and Polish Presidencies which made the V4 cooperation more dynamic and gave it a new dimension.

When implementing its Program, the Slovak Presidency focused on the following goals:

- **to intensify the dialogue** when looking for synergies of national activities within the V4 and carrying out its plans on the EU level as well as on a broader international level; using in this respect the potential of the “**Central Europe’s Year in the EU**” (synergies between the Hungarian and Polish EU Presidencies and the Slovak and Czech V4 Presidencies) when forming European policies;
- **to foster common values** of the V4 countries sharing one geopolitical area with the aim to stabilize and deepen the cooperation in our neighbourhood (mainly the **integration and reform ambitions** of the Western Balkans and the Eastern Partnership countries);
- **to support the civic dimension of cooperation, to strengthen the civic comfort and safety of our citizens in the V4 region**;
- **to share and develop the cultural heritage**, emphasizing its diversity.

**The Slovak V4 Presidency continued in meeting the strategic objective to strengthen the Central-European region and to strengthen our cohesion and position within the EU.** It focused on key issues, such as energy and transport infrastructure, energy security, future multi-annual financial framework, EU Cohesion Policy, environment, and competitiveness boosting. With the aim to strengthen the V4’s voice in the European agenda, the Slovak Presidency reinforced consultation mechanisms on both the political and expert level. **It introduced regular consultation meetings of V4 Prime Ministers before the European Council meetings** (*in September 2010 with H. Van Rompuy, the President of the European Council, and in December 2010 with J. M. Barroso, the President of the European*

*Commission*). The V4 countries demonstrated their interest to contribute constructively to the functioning of the EU and accepting responsible and the best possible decisions.

During the Slovak Presidency it was achieved to enhance the V4 foreign-policy profile and the perception of the V4 as a respected supporter of the EU enlargement to the Western Balkans, strengthening its cooperation with Eastern partners of the EU and also by offering the V4 transformation experience to some countries in the Southern Neighbourhood.

The following were key and from many points of view historical events of the Slovak V4 Presidency:

- **Summit of V4 Prime Ministers** (15 February 2011) with the Chancellor of Germany, the Chancellor of Austria and the Prime Minister of Ukraine, commemorating the 20th anniversary of the V4 establishment. The Summit and its format not only confirmed that V4 is accepted and respected by its key partners within the EU, but also sent a clear signal regarding the V4 policy towards the Eastern Partnership countries (Ukraine). The V4 Prime Ministers signed the **Bratislava Declaration** which assessed the V4 results and identified main future challenges. Within the extended format of V4 Prime Ministers, Germany and Austria, the Prime Ministers of 6 EU Member States adopted a joint declaration towards Belarus in which they called on Belarus authorities to immediately release political prisoners and to respect human rights and freedoms. Moreover, the participation of three Prime Ministers of countries neighbouring the Visegrad region confirmed a high credit of the Visegrad trademark on a regional and European scale.  
A working meeting with the V4 Prime Ministers and Moldova was held on the occasion of the summit of the V4 Prime Ministers (16 June 2011) at the end of the Slovak V4 Presidency;
- **Extended Ministerial meeting of V4 and Western Balkans countries** with the participation of Š. Füle, Commissioner for Enlargement and ENP (22 October 2010), confirmed the high interest of V4 countries to support integration and transformation processes in the Western Balkans; it also helped to keep the enlargement issue on the EU level (*this significantly helped Montenegro to be granted the status of a candidate country and to finalize accession negotiations with Croatia*). Creation of space for a dialogue between Belgrade and Prishtina was also the added value of this meeting;
- **Extended Ministerial meeting of V4, Germany and Eastern Partnership countries** in the presence of EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy C. Ashton, German Minister of Foreign Affairs G. Westerwelle and Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy Š. Füle (3 March 2011). In addition to supporting the transformation processes, the meeting clearly pointed out to a direct proportion between cooperation and respecting the basic democratic values. Several significant political messages were adopted at the meeting. Based on the Slovak Presidency initiative, the V4 Foreign Affairs Ministers supported the proposal to enhance the V4 cooperation and to strengthen its synergy within the Eastern Partnership Program, using the tools of the International Visegrad Fund (IVF), including the increase of the IVF budget from 2012 on;

- **creating a High-Level Working Group (HLWG) on Energy**, the aim of which is to make the North-South Energy Interconnections one of the priorities of the European policy, on the basis of the V4 Economy Ministers;
- **agreement of the Defence Ministers on creating a common EU Battle Group** after 2015 (12 May 2011, Levoča).

The Slovak Presidency organized a dignified commemoration of the **20th anniversary of the Visegrad cooperation establishment**. Apart from the mentioned extended meeting of the Prime Ministers there was a panel discussion “Quo vadis, Visegrad” held (21 March 2011, Brussels) as well as a gala concert of artists from V4 countries as a part of the Bratislava Music Festival (BHS) on 28 November 2010. As a part of the anniversary commemoration a jubilee 2-euro-coin and a Visegrad postage stamp were issued (*in cooperation with the National Bank of Slovakia and the Slovak Post/Pofis*).

After the V4 Slovak Presidency has finished, it may be said that:

- **V4 is more consolidated inwards**, showing possibilities how to boost cooperation among citizens, carrying out infrastructural and regional projects contributing to the civil comfort (bridges, road connections) but also to enhancing security (judicial cooperation, energy);
- **V4 is more consistent towards the EU** – it can clearly formulate its statements, use added value as well as implement regional priorities in the context of European-wide interests. The credit of the V4 trademark has definitely increased, as has the respect for this format by EU partners. This is also true for the capacity to reflect and implement a value-based foreign policy of V4 countries, which was demonstrated by a clear attitude towards the situation in Belarus (*political declaration*), or by supporting democratic movements in the Southern Partnership/North Africa countries;
- **V4 is more attractive for non-EU partners** – in particular for Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership countries – during its Slovak Presidency the V4’s activities helped to accelerate the integration processes of Croatia, Montenegro and Macedonia; to intensify the dialogue with Ukraine and Moldova; to fix a tradition of meetings of Foreign Ministers of the V4 and Western Balkans / Eastern Partnership countries in autumn or spring period;
- **V4 has come closer to citizens** – countries were searching for possibilities how to improve the quality and to extend the provision of services to citizens (*of V4 as well as of third countries*) abroad, while cutting costs and improving the efficiency of resources spent (*consular services, visa granting*).

Slovakia has brought new dynamics in the Visegrad cooperation. In the year of its 20th anniversary and after the accession of new governments in the region, it managed to add more life and energy to the Visegrad Group. It is handing over the V4 Presidency relay to the Czech Republic **in a very good condition, more vital and respected**, with clear aims and exact results. The quality of dialogue and cooperation is given by a political will of all V4 partners, who make it possible to perform presidency priorities, and determined by a natural need and indisputable added value of regional cooperation.

## EUROPEAN AND FOREIGN POLICIES

**Joint action of V4 countries** in several areas enabled a more efficient coordination of their positions in key issues of European policies; **it pointed out to the added value of regional cooperation and also helped to increase the quality and efficiency of decision-making procedures within the EU. During the Slovak Presidency in the first half-year of 2011, the V4 supported the Hungarian EU Presidency** and its priorities, which emphasized the **added value of Central Europe (V4)** within the EU, more particularly in specific issues related to our region (*macro-regional cooperation, Danube Strategy, Roma Strategy, Enlargement Policy*).

### ***Preparation of the European Council and FAC (Foreign Affairs Council)/GAC (General Affairs Council) meetings***

**V4 Prime Ministers** regularly met before the European Council meetings (*16 September 2010, 28 October 2010, 16 December 2010, 3 February 2011*) with the aim to harmonize their standpoints and compare their positions (*energy, budget review, EU Cohesion Policy, Lisbon Treaty change, foodstuff prices, tax harmonization, economic governance, considering pension reform costs when evaluating the deficit of euro area countries / applying the Stability and Growth Pact*).

**Foreign Affairs Ministers** used new forms of communication (teleconferences) to discuss EU foreign policy issues (*enlargement, Croatia, Montenegro, protection of the rights of EU citizens abroad*). Both formats, i.e. on the level of the Prime Ministers as well as Foreign Ministers pointed out to the added value of such communication (*better presentation of interests*) and enhanced the importance of Central European countries within the EU.

At an informal **working meeting** (*14 September 2010, Bratislava*) the **Ministers of Foreign Affairs** discussed **the preparation of V4 countries for negotiations held on reviewing the EU budget and on the future multi-annual EU financial framework for 2014-2020**. The discussion confirmed the interest in identifying common positions and subsequent joint actions with the aim to advocate strategic interests of V4 countries. It also confirmed several common interests, particularly in relation to the EU Cohesion Policy, agriculture and the EU Neighbourhood Policy. The meeting was also focused on energy security and cooperation of V4 countries within the EU, after the new governments took office in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia. On the same day the V4 Ministers jointly took an active part in the international conference of GLOBSEC 2010; their panel was called the "Visegrad Four (V4) – Energized".

### ***Energy***

One of the key EU issues of the Slovak Presidency was energy. Slovakia actively defended common interests in the development of energy infrastructure with the aim to make V4 countries more energy-safe.

One of examples of coordination within the V4 was a joint **letter of the V4 Economy Ministers sent to the European Commissioner for Energy, G. Oettinger**, (September 2010), informing him about joint projects of energy infrastructure development and about their attitude to the announcement of regional initiatives. In May 2011 an informal meeting of the Energy Council was held where a joint V4 candidature to the position of the Secretary General of the Energy Charter Secretariat was announced.

Conclusions of an extraordinary European Council meeting held on 4 February 2011 where the **Energy Strategy for Europe, 2011-2020** was formally approved, confirmed the importance of infrastructure development in the V4 region and retained the possibility to finance energy projects from public resources. In the perspective of preparing a new multi-annual financial framework for 2014-2020, we advocated the provision of financial support of infrastructural projects at the EU-level, while our **priority is mainly the project of the North-South Gas Corridor**. In this respect, there was an important Agreement signed by the Prime Ministers of Slovakia and Hungary on 28 January 2011 between the Government of the Slovak Republic and the Government of the Republic of Hungary on cooperation in construction, operation, maintenance, reconstruction and operational recovery after breakdown of the hydrocarbon transmission pipelines crossing the common state borders.

### **Foreign Policy**

As for foreign policy, the Slovak V4 Presidency focused on priorities outlined in its Program, shared by all partners and particularly important during the “Visegrad Year” in the EU when two of the Member States hold subsequent Presidency in the EU Council. The emphasis on cooperation with Western Balkan countries and the EU enlargement, as well as the Eastern Partnership were the main issues which we were keeping on the EU agenda and to which we were contributing to. After 20 years of its existence, V4 is a respected group which is taken into consideration by its partners and which proves the ability to be more and more efficient in advocating its common interests within the EU and beyond.

V4 is not only a respected partner, but increasingly more and more a model of a successful regional cooperation, and it is ready to share its experience in this area with partners from the South-East and Eastern Europe.

### ***Western Balkans***

The informal meeting of V4 Foreign Ministers with their Western-Balkans partners held on 22 October 2010 was a continuation of a format which can assemble all partners from the region (EU - Western-Balkan meetings were held in Hlboká in the Czech Republic in the first half-year of 2009 and in Sarajevo in June 2010, the V4 – Western-Balkans meeting in Budapest in October 2009). The presence of the EU Commissioner for Enlargement and the European Neighbourhood Policy, Štefan Füle, and the State Secretary of Belgium, a country holding the EU Presidency at that time, helped to emphasize the importance of the EU enlargement in the context of the final stage of accession negotiations between the EU and Croatia, the expected European Commission opinions on Montenegro and Albania, and the positive development of EU-Serbia relations. In their final statements, the V4 Ministers supported visa liberalisation for citizens of Western-Balkan countries, the EU and NATO enlargement, and settlement of some pending regional problems. After a positive European Commission opinion on Montenegro’s application for EU membership, the V4 Foreign Affairs Ministers wrote a joint letter declaring their support for Montenegro being granted the candidate country status. This successful initiative opened a scope for continuing the enlargement process in the Western Balkans.

Additionally to the meeting of Foreign Affairs Ministers of the V4 and Western-Balkans, there was a conference “*EU Enlargement in 2011 – Make not Break*” held, enabling representatives of the European Commission, Foreign Affairs Ministries and NGOs to share their experience and discuss the future of the countries in South-Eastern Europe.

### ***The Eastern Partnership***

The Extended Ministerial meeting of the Visegrad Group and Germany with the partner countries of the Eastern Partnership in the presence of EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy C. Ashton and Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy Š. Füle, held on 3 March 2011, confirmed the Eastern partners ambitions to enhance cooperation and integration with the EU. Ministers assessed implementation of the Eastern Partnership Program and formulated expectations for the future, also in relation to the Eastern Partnership summit which is being prepared by the Polish EU Presidency in autumn 2011. The Ministers explored possibilities how to make the cooperation in the implementation of the Eastern Partnership projects more efficient and more politically visible. The meeting also reflected a changing position of the Eastern Partnership under the European Neighbourhood Policy review and development in the Southern Neighbourhood. The Ministers have agreed that a more clear response was needed against the violation of human rights and freedoms in Belarus.

Additionally to the ministerial meeting there was an international GLOBSEC conference held (2 – 4 March 2011) where significant representatives of international politics, EU and NGOs discussed key issues of the Security Policy.

### ***International Visegrad Fund (IVF)***

In harmony with the strategic priorities of the International Visegrad Fund proposed by the Slovak V4 Presidency, the main target of the IVF activities in the past period was to support the Visegrad identity, fellowship and relations within the civic society, the development of regional cooperation and exchanges by means of joint cultural, artistic, scientific, research and educational projects, exchanges of artists and young people, supporting the cross-border cooperation and the tourism development. Last year the IVF significantly helped to reinforce the internal V4 cohesion and also to present the Visegrad idea on the occasion of the V4's 20th anniversary in a broader view - not only within the V4, but on a broader, mainly European scale. Its added value is represented by projects focused on the support of democracy and civic society in the Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership countries of priority.

For more than 10 years of IVF's successful existence, it has helped to bring together citizens, V4's social and non-governmental organizations, including our neighbours and partners, and to enhance their mutual understanding. Thanks to its project tools and budget, the IVF has carried out more than 3,000 projects, granted more than 1,000 scholarships and supported the performance of 100 residential programs of young V4 artists since it was established in June 2000.

### ***V4 Cooperation in Providing the Official Development Assistance (ODA)***

On 1 April 2011 a **Conference of the V4 Finance Ministries and Foreign Affairs Ministries** was held, focused on the issue of **providing the Official Development Assistance (ODA)**. The discussed areas covered the division of labour and competencies in ODA between the V4 Foreign Affairs Ministries and Finance Ministries, cooperation when negotiating the EU's multi-annual financial framework for 2014-2020, experience with 'trust funds' management as well as geographic priorities of the V4 countries, with the aim to identify countries which may potentially cooperate with V4.

Representatives of the V4 Foreign Affairs Ministries and Finance Ministries agreed that they will strive to at least partially fulfil the international ODA obligations, in view of enhancing the effectiveness provided by ODA. The V4 countries will endeavour to find a common synergy in areas where they have an added value in the donor community. In this

respect they mainly concentrate on using their transition experience. The V4 agreed that they will jointly strive for greater involvement of entrepreneurial subjects in ODA, as well as in using the EU tools in the area of developmental cooperation.

The V4 Foreign Affairs Ministries and Finance Ministries agreed on further steps to be taken when performing their joint projects in their partnership countries of priority (Western Balkans, Eastern Partnership) and adopted a joint communiqué. Its particular outcome will be a joint **V4 project** carried out in the area of developmental cooperation, while **Moldova was determined as a territorial priority.**

#### ***V4 Cooperation in International Organizations (UN, OSCE)***

The expert dialogue focused on the UN top agenda continued: assessment of the 65th session of the UN General Assembly and new challenges preceding the 66th session, assessment of the efficiency of the V4 membership in international organizations, V4 countries' candidatures, Peace Process in the Middle East, budget issues including voluntary contributions in the UN funds and programmes, participation in the UN peace missions, the Alliance of Civilizations and the Community of Democracies.

When pursuing its joint interests, V4 cooperated on the OSCE level, including issues connected with the future of the regime of inspecting conventional armed forces and the energy security issue.

#### ***V4 and Third Countries (V4+ format), V4+ Activities and Ministerial Meetings***

During the Slovak Presidency, the V4+ format was used efficiently when pursuing foreign-policy dialogue with important partners of the V4 countries.

As for relationships to EU-partners, contacts with Germany were particularly dynamic. On 15 February 2011 an extended **summit of the V4 Prime Ministers with partners from Germany, Austria and Ukraine** took place in Bratislava. Invited by the Slovak Prime Minister, the meeting was attended by the V4 Prime Ministers, the German Chancellor A. Merkel, the Austrian Chancellor W. Faymann and the Ukrainian Prime Minister M. Azarov. As a part of the meeting, a joint declaration of the V4 Prime Ministers, Germany and Austria regarding the situation in Belarus was adopted.

On the occasion of the V4 Prime Ministers' meeting at the end of the Slovak V4 Presidency on 16 June 2011, a separate working meeting was held in the format of Prime Ministers of the V4 countries and Moldova.

On 3 March 2011 a meeting of **Foreign Ministers of V4 and Germany** was held in Bratislava, attended by the Foreign Minister and Vice-Chancellor G. Westerwelle. The V4 countries and Germany jointly responded to the development in the Southern Neighbourhood in their joint declaration adopted on 3 March in Bratislava. All V4 countries participated in the international conference in London where readiness to share relevant experience from transformation with countries of the Southern Neighbourhood was expressed. Participation of Poland in the Contact Group on Libya meetings created a space for further intensive communication enabling assessment of current developments.

On 24 October 2010 an informal working **meeting of V4 and Benelux Ministers of Foreign Affairs** was held in Luxembourg.

On 6 June 2011 a **ministerial meeting of V4 and Japanese Ministers of Foreign Affairs** was held on the margins of the ASEM meeting, confirming a special statute of cooperation aimed at economic dimension, innovation (*workshop – International Innovation*

*Round Table - V4 and Japan, 9 May 2011), climate changes (workshop of V4 and Japan – Climate Change - Energy Savings in Building Sector, 12 November 2010).*

Expert cooperation of V4 and its and strategic partners (USA) continued. The Slovak Presidency carried on with an active diplomacy also at the level of political directors of Ministries of Foreign Affairs who jointly visited the USA, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Ukraine. Consultations with Israel were also held on this level. In view of the development in the Southern Neighbourhood, the V4 countries agreed on using this form of joint activities in a more intensive way.

### ***V4 and Consular – Diplomatic Cooperation***

On the basis of the agreement of V4 Foreign Affairs Ministers (14 September, Bratislava), the **letters were exchanged among the V4 Foreign Affairs Ministers** in which they informed each other about the current status of the network of diplomatic representations of V4 abroad and possibilities for a more efficient, even shared, utilisation of premises and buildings owned by our countries. The possibilities of mutual cooperation in this field were identified in 2 directions – establishing V4 houses or receiving/sending V4 diplomats and consular officials on V4 diplomatic missions to territories where no other Visegrad country has an efficient diplomatic/consular representation.

On the basis of a leasing contract of V4 Foreign Affairs Ministries, the first Visegrad House in Cape Town in South Africa has been active and successfully developed since March 2010. Expert-level discussions were launched about a potential V4 House establishment in Ukraine.

During the Slovak Presidency a Working Group established by the V4 Foreign Affairs Ministers in the area of **cooperation in using diplomatic networks and in consular and visa assistance**.

## **V4 SECTORAL COOPERATION**

### **ECONOMY**

#### ***Energy***

Energy was a regular subject of discussions of the Prime Ministers. The activities reached their peak during an extraordinary EU summit devoted to this area (4 February 2011) and at the meeting of Ministers responsible for Energy held in Bratislava.

**The discussion of the Ministers responsible for Energy was of crucial importance** (25 January 2011); it covered issues of cooperation of the V4 region in the areas of electric energy, oil and gas industry, exchange of viewpoints on strategic EU documents related to energy (Energy 2020, Energy Infrastructure Priorities) and the support of energy science and research. The Ministers approved conclusions drawn from discussions of individual V4 Working Groups.

The political support in the area of energy was emphasized in a declaration adopted by the V4 Ministers in January 2011 in Bratislava. The Declaration calls on the V4 countries to support a higher dynamics when implementing projects in the gas or oil industry or electric energy, and to set a preliminary technical design of the North-South Gas Interconnections. In addition, the Declaration invites to support the cooperation in science and research, mainly in the area of nuclear energy and clear technologies.

In order to enhance the coordination in EU issues, an independent V4 Working Group



on European Affairs and Strategic Issues was established in April 2011.

The joint **letter of the V4 Ministers of Economy helped** to make infrastructural projects in the region one of the top EU priorities. This resulted in establishing a **High Level Working Group on North-South Interconnections**, coordinated by the European Commission (EC). EC adopted various activities in the area of preparation of projects carried out in the V4 format.

**The High Level Working Group** on North-South Interconnections is going to draw up an Action Plan in the course of 2011 with diversified projects in the areas of gas industry, electric energy and oil. V4, Bulgaria and Romania are members of the group; Croatia has a status of an observer. As a part of the EC initiative, some sectoral Working Groups (oil, electric energy, gas) were established with representatives of Ministries, regulators and operators of transmission networks and systems.

With the aim to pursue priorities of the conclusions of the Budapest summit which clearly defined the support of the North-South Gas Interconnection project, the Ministers responsible for Energy sent a **joint letter to the Commissioner for Energy** on 15 September 2010. On the basis of the letter, the EC included the North-South Interconnections in Central Europe and in the gas and electric energy industry among its top priorities in its announcement “*Energy Infrastructure Priorities until 2020 and beyond*”.

The Ministers’ activities were detailed at meetings of **particular Working Groups**. At the first meeting of the V4 Working Group on North-South Interconnection (22 September 2010 in Bratislava) in the format of V4+Croatia, the delegations agreed on the need to prepare background documentation to the project of such interconnection, in order to ***ask the EU for financial assistance as a part of the new financial framework for 2014-2020***. Experts of the state sector and gas industry also declared their willingness to prepare a preliminary technical design of partial interconnections in the course of 2011.

In October 2010 Bratislava hosted discussions of Working Groups on Energy Security in the gas and oil industries. The participants agreed that it is necessary to ***create joint prevention plans and risk analyses***; their creation results from the regulation to safeguard security of the natural gas supply made in 2010. The regulation lays a particular emphasis on regional cooperation when supplying gas in emergencies. In the area of oil, the delegations agreed that it is necessary to look for ***alternatives to the oil supplied by Druzha pipeline***.

The **V4 Working Group on European Affairs and Strategic Issues** (11 April 2011, Bratislava) mainly discussed **the EU Energy Efficiency Action Plan**, a regulation to ensure integrity and transparency of energy markets, as well as exchanged their opinions on the Transition Plan to the Low-Carbon Economy until 2050 and its impacts on the energy sector. It discussed Mr. U. Rusnák’s candidature to the position of the Secretary General of the Energy Charter and expressed its support for it.

At the second meeting of the Working Group on North-South Interconnection (12 April 2011), the Slovak Presidency presented data acquired from questionnaires; the aim was to draw up a technical interconnection design and scenarios related to the role of the North-South Interconnection in the case of a complete disruption of natural gas supplies from Ukraine.

### ***Industry and Innovation***

As a part of establishing contacts between small and medium enterprises (SMEs), several activities were initiated and meetings held during the V4 Slovak Presidency which

took place under the auspices of the **National Agency for Development of Small and Medium Enterprises**.

As for the industry and innovation development support, cooperation was focused on projects of cross-border and regional cooperation with the aim to create a scope for supporting and coordinating innovation development in the V4 countries. Clusters represent a suitable tool for cooperation in the V4 region; they should ensure a competitive and sustainable knowledge-based economy. The main aim of the “CLUSTER COOP“ Project (*signed in 2009, coordinated by Hungary*) is to create and improve framework conditions for an efficient multinational cooperation among clusters in the Central-European countries, with the aim to improve the usage of innovation capacities, to enhance the competitiveness of the countries and their position.

### ***Consumer Protection***

During the Slovak Presidency the **economic departments of V4 countries** cooperated to prepare a new legislation, mainly to **review the Directive 2001/95/EC on General Product Safety** and to prepare mandates for the European Committee for Standardization – CEN, related to safety requirements on products. Market surveillance bodies continued to exchange information on detected dangerous products, including dangerous toys.

Preparation of a draft of a **Directive on Consumer Rights** is an important area of V4 cooperation. Cooperation with European Consumer Centres continued.

### ***Internal Market***

In view of a common action to be taken when meeting the requirements of the EU Directive 2006/123/EC on Services in the Internal Market, there was an intensive V4 cooperation in exchanging information and services by means of the **Internal Market Information System**.

### ***Standards, Metrology and Testing***

Cooperation in this area mainly developed in the form of transfer of knowledge and of sharing experience, with a practical application of the principle of a mutual recognition of standards and results of product tests. Cooperation in methodical counselling was pursued by means of the network of product contact points in line with the EC Regulation 764/2008. This cooperation, initiated mainly by the Slovak product contact point at the Standards, Metrology and Testing Office of the SR and the Polish point of contact, was mainly focused on practical aspects of the procedure of mutual recognition of products in the single market and its aim is to make the mentioned procedures more efficient, and thus to simplify the access of entrepreneurial subjects to the EU single market.

## **FINANCE**

### ***EU Budget Review and the Next Multi-Annual Financial Framework (MAFF)***

The Slovak Presidency paid a special attention to preparing discussions on the new MAFF, mainly at the expert level. Regular consultations were held, mainly focused on the pre-negotiation stage and the negotiation preparation. Ministers of Foreign Affairs and of Finance also dealt with the issues of budget preparation and the new MAFF preparation.

On 21 November 2010, during the Slovak Presidency, an **expert discussion of G11** (10 new EU Members and Portugal) and the European Commission was held in Brussels focused on the issues of the Common Agricultural Policy and structural funds.

Between 16 – 17 June 2011, the Slovak Ministry of Finance in cooperation with the Slovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs organized an expert meeting of Working Groups responsible for coordination of negotiations related to the EU MAFF after 2013. The aim of the meeting was to discuss areas of cooperation and positions before the planned disclosure of the MAFF draft to the European Commission (late June 2011).

### ***EU Funds***

Between 27 – 29 April 2011, the Slovak Ministry of Finance organized a **meeting of V4 Certification Bodies** where also representatives from Romania, Bulgaria and Croatia had been invited. The meeting took place in the High Tatras and the following topics were discussed: status of implementation of structural funds and the Cohesion Fund, concluding the Program period of 2004-2006, reviewing financial plans of operational programmes, discrepancies and financial corrections, certification procedures, future look of the financial management of the EU funds after 2013.

### ***Informatization of Society***

Expert conferences organized in the monitored period became platforms for exchanging experience, such as ITAPA 2010 and the planned IDEME 2011 where traditionally successful eGovernment solutions from V4 countries are presented, while mainly Czech organizations can boast of a strong representation.

***Customs*** – consultations and cooperation focused mainly on the following areas:

- **eCustoms development** – eCustoms development in the area of import (ICS), export (ECS), transit (NCTS), excise tax administration (EMCS), uniform record-keeping of subjects (EOS), etc. was carried out under the leadership of the European Commission in all EU countries.
- **Prevention of violations of customs regulations**, as well as violations in the area of excise tax administration. Cooperation in the area of violation of customs and excise duty regulations was mainly done with V4 countries with external borders (Hungary, Poland). The Slovak Customs Head Office intensively cooperates with Hungarian customs and financial patrol.
- **Protection of intellectual property rights.**
- Prevention, detection and investigation of **criminal activity of a cross-border character** - V4 countries were cooperating mainly in the form of mutual exchange of operational information which was or could have been further used on the territory of the particular state. Several working meetings of customs administration staff were held in the monitored period, mainly on a regional level and in border areas.
- **Building relationships with Ukraine**, especially in defining common requirements for the exchange of information, assisting road and rail carriers in submitting interim customs declarations, and building up a uniform technical solution for goods control on EU external borders by V4 countries aimed at preventing smuggling and illicit imports into the EU through the territory of V4 countries, as well as in facilitating trade and maximizing border crossing points' vehicle throughput capacity.
- **Establishing contact points of cross-border cooperation** to enhance effectiveness and coordinate cooperation in joint operations, operational exchange of information, in particular on the smuggling of goods subject to excise duties, as well as closer

collaboration between mobile inspection units and competent authorities in the V4 countries.

### **Taxes**

On 6 October 2010 in Portorož (Slovenia) and 18 May 2011 in Prague, meetings of V4 + Slovenia and Austria were held. The main expert topics of the meeting were: *“Tax frauds; and How cooperation among countries may help combat tax frauds”*.

## **TRANSPORT AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

The working **meeting of the V4 Transport Ministers** before the TTE Council session – Transport (Brussels, 15 October 2010) was focused on the EU agenda in transportation. The V4 Transport Ministers talked about preparing a review of the TEN-T network, the White Paper on EU Transport Policy for 2010 – 2020 which is under preparation, and the future EU Presidency of Hungary and Poland.

The meeting of **Ministers responsible for the EU countries’ Cohesion Policy of V4 + Bulgaria, Romania and Slovenia** (Bratislava, 14 – 15 November 2010), with the Commission representative responsible for the EU Regional Policy, J. Hahn, adopted **conclusions related to the future of the EU Cohesion Policy** as a joint viewpoint of the V4 countries on the given issue. The conclusions were sent to the EU institutions (European Commission, Council of the EU) and to the EU member states. They were also presented at an informal meeting of Ministers responsible for the EU Cohesion Policy during BE PRES (22 – 23 November 2010 in Liège).

### **Regional Development of Slovakia in view of the EU Cohesion Policy**

On 24 May 2011 the Slovak Ministry of Transport, Construction and Regional Development organized in Bratislava a national conference with international participation: "Regional Development of Slovakia in view of the EU Cohesion Policy" to which also V4 representatives had been invited. Their aim was to evaluate the experience gathered until then from implementing the EU Cohesion Policy and to introduce their opinion on its look after 2013. The experience gathered by individual countries showed that it is necessary to continue simplifying the implementation procedure of the EU Cohesion Policy. It is also desirable to make sure that the EU Cohesion Policy management is flexible in view of internal situations of particular regions. The conclusions of the meeting confirmed that the Cohesion Policy should mainly be about making underdeveloped regions use their strong points. At the same time, it is important to efficiently use and reasonably direct financial resources where most necessary.

The main topic of the **meeting of V4 Transport Ministers** (High Tatras, 25 - 26 November 2010) was **competitiveness and transport interconnection** within the V4 and the European Union.

The following topics were discussed:

- Information on the conclusions of the V4+3 Ministers responsible for the Regional Policy related to the 5<sup>th</sup> cohesion;
- Presentation of Hungarian and Polish priorities for the EU Presidency and information of the Czech delegation on their experience during the Presidency;
- **European rail network** to foster competitive freight transport, ERTMS, cooperation possibilities;
- Implementation of the regulation on personal transport services;

- **White Paper on European Transport Policy** with the aim to formulate a common position for the discussion in the Council of Transport Ministers;
- **TEN-T review Policy** (*with the aim to achieve a common attitude in technical discussions with the Commission*) and a common coordination of transport investment with the aim to remove cross-border bottlenecks;
- **road toll system**, best experience from introducing intelligent transport systems and potential V4 cooperation in this area, possible applications of Galileo services;
- **EU Road Safety Action Plan**;
- **Intermodal transport** – measures for shifting freight transport from roads to rail and inland water transportation.

The V4 Transport Ministers declared their interest to draft the **TRANS-EUROPEAN NETWORK FOR TRANSPORT (TEN-T)** plan in such a way that it would consider differences among Member States from the point of view of their economic development, the level of infrastructure or geographic location. Conclusions about the common attitude to the TEN-T review and Transport Policy were drawn at the meeting and they were handed over to the Commissioner Kallas.

Before the TTE Council meeting there was a V4 meeting held on 31 March 2011 where the 1<sup>st</sup> Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister J. Figel' signed, on the governmental level, **the CETC Agreement - CENTRAL EUROPEAN TRANSPORT CORRIDOR**. Other V4 countries signed this Agreement in June 2010. The CETC-ROUTE 65 Corridor covers an area of approximately 230,000km<sup>2</sup> (from Skåne, Southern Sweden), through the Baltic Sea (Swinoujście – Ystad), Central Europe down to the Adriatic Sea. It also includes transport junctions connecting Europe with the Middle East and Asia.

The meeting of **State Secretaries** of Ministries responsible for **Tourist Industry** in V4 countries and directors of the V4 national tourist industry organizations (Košice, 28 – 30 April 2011) was held during the ceremonial opening of the World Ice Hockey Championship in Slovakia. Heads of delegations signed a **Protocol on Tourism Cooperation** between the Ministries responsible for tourist industry in the V4 countries. The Protocol also includes a 2011 Marketing Plan signed by directors of national marketing agencies in the V4 countries.

They assessed the fulfilment of priorities of the Slovak Presidency in tourist industry and discussed the following topics:

- cooperation of national tourist industry organisations of the V4 countries as a part of the project **“European Quartet – One Melody”**;
- presentation of joint interests related to tourist industry of the V4 countries in third markets;
- creation of a uniform image of the V4 countries as a tourist destination through the renewal of the common V4 website;
- exchange of information on crisis-combating measures and solutions and the support of common interests of the V4 countries in this respect;
- necessary intensification of activities of the V4 countries with the aim to support and develop their cross-border cooperation.

## **DEFENCE**

As for defence, there were negotiations of the V4 Defence Ministers (held on 12 May 2011), Political Directors of the Defence Ministries (30 September 2010, 13 December 2010)

and 28 April 2011), National Armament Directors (9 December 2010 and 14 June 2011) and the V4 Chiefs of Defence (8 – 9 April 2011), attended also by their Ukrainian colleagues.

**Meetings of the V4 Defence Ministers and Political Directors of the Defence Ministries** were focused on current security issues including the ongoing NATO and EU operations as well as issues related to the Euro–Atlantic integration of Ukraine and the Western Balkans and the possibility to **create a common V4 EU Battle Group (V4 EU BG)** after 2015. As it was the case of previous V4 Presidencies, representatives of third countries were invited to participate in these discussions. The content of cooperation was determined by an analysis elaborated by V4 NGOs as a part of the IVF project – **VISEGRAD SECURITY COOPERATION INITIATIVE (VSCI)**, containing common recommendations of V4 experts for further cooperation of the V4 in the areas of security and defence. In view of the Hungarian and Polish Presidencies of the Council of the EU in 2011, the discussion was more focused on the current safety and defence issues within the EU.

**Meetings of National Armaments Directors and of the V4 Working Groups** were focused on the exchange of information and experience in the creation and management of armament programmes and projects, on offsets and application of the management of policy of life-cycle of individual state systems, on extending the cooperation within V4 by common procedures and the exchange of information regarding standardization, codification and state quality verification, with the aim to make the activity of some authorities more efficient.

**Meetings of the V4 Chiefs of Defence and of Working Groups** were focused on military-technical cooperation, execution of multi-national solutions for a joint development of capabilities of the V4 countries, carrying out a project for establishing a common V4 EU BG, exchanging experience from the V4 countries' participation in the crisis management operations and missions outside the territory of Slovakia and exploring other areas of potential cooperation of V4 countries (*e.g. military education*). The Slovak Armed Forces followed up on the results achieved until then in the area of processing and regular updating of the catalogue of military training areas of the V4 Armed Forces as well as in the area of utilization of military training areas and facilities of V4 countries. The mentioned catalogue was distributed to V4 and B3 countries. Discussions of the V4 Chiefs of Defence were also attended by representatives of third countries.

The Slovak Presidency focused on performing the following priorities:

- ***to improve consultations of V4 countries about the topics of their common interest in NATO and the EU;***
- ***to establish a common EU Battle Group of the V4 countries.*** The intention to make a political decision about establishing the V4 EU BG was made at the meeting of the V4 Defence Ministers in Levoča on 12 May 2011 where the establishment of this Battle Group in the first half-year of 2016 was announced, with Poland as the leading country;
- ***to create a multi-national Safety and Defence Course.*** From the academic year 2012/2013, the Academy of Armed Forces in cooperation with the University of Defence in Brno is going to open a joint pilot project on the basis of our KNB course and their General Staff Course – as a part of a joint educational programme with a defined teaching content and extent.
- ***to develop cooperation in creating capabilities and in the armament area.*** The V4 Chiefs of Defence expressed their intention to improve a coordination and consultation mechanism of the V4 Armed Forces. The debates resulted in an agreement to establish a group of experts in order to identify a common approach to the understanding of the

capabilities development in relation to the proclaimed concepts as ***Smart Defence, or Pooling and Sharing***. The leading role in this group will be rotating in line with the V4 Presidency cycle;

- Joint projects should help in such areas of capabilities where the state does not have enough internal resources for their development. The area of cooperation of National Armament Directors was extended by the areas of ***System Life Cycle Management and State Quality Verification***.

## CULTURE

The 21<sup>st</sup> meeting of the **V4 Ministers of Culture** was held (6 – 8 April 2011) in Bratislava and in Červený Kameň. The meeting of Ministers of Culture was preceded by an expert discussion about the following projects: Literary Anthology of Visegrad 4 countries, Visegrad Library, Colloquium of Library-Information Employees from the V4 countries and the Working Group on Cultural Heritage in the V4 countries.

The Ministers also discussed the following projects: Conference on the role of the theatre in V4 countries after 1989, Evaluation seminar on the utilization of EU funds in the area of culture, Conference of V4+ countries: “Inclusion of culture in the future Cohesion Policy”, Visegrad Days 2012, “Shaping The New” – Importance of residential stays of artists for the art production, promotion and support of youth literature in the V4 countries and participation of V4 countries as ‘guests of honour’ in the International Book Fair in Paris.

The V4 Ministers of Culture approved an **expert report and a joint communiqué**. In their discussion they stressed the need to increase the promotion of the V4 countries both inwardly and outwardly. They also agreed on writing a joint letter to the President of the European Commission and the Commissioner for Culture and Education requiring to retain independent programmes for culture and media. They also approved a nominee for the **International Visegrad Prize** – association VILLA DECIUS ASSOCIATION seated in Krakow.

During the meeting of the V4 Ministers of Culture a gala concert was organized on 7 April 2011 in Bratislava as a part of awarding the International Visegrad Prize for 2009 to a Slovak music composer VLADIMÍR GODÁR.-

On the occasion of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the V4 establishment a **gala concert** was organized on 28 November 2010 in the historical building of the Slovak National Theatre as a part of the 46<sup>th</sup> year of the international Bratislava Music Festival (BHS). The gala concert emphasized the need of V4 countries to cooperate in the area of culture and art and the need of mutual promotion of past and present values, having an impact on both the European and world culture. The concert was organized under the auspices of the Slovak Minister of Foreign Affairs M. Dzurinda and the Slovak Minister of Culture D. Krajcer.

The Theatre Institute organized a third stage of the 3-year project **Theatre Architecture in Central Europe - TACE**. It is a joint project of theatre institutions and museums of V4 and Slovenia based on preserving and developing common cultural heritage. The project, funded by the EU programme Culture 2000, was executed between February 2008 - February 2011.

In 2010 the Košice State Theatre and the civic association Košické Divadlo organized the 4<sup>th</sup> year of the **Festival of Central European Theatres**. Between 2 – 5 September the centre of Košice hosted 13 theatres from Slovakia, Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary with more than 300 performers – actors, dancers, singers, musicians, technical assistance, etc.

The Slovak Presidency successfully continued with joint V4 programmes in **media**. **Quartet** is a joint programme of regional TV channels, established in 1999. Eight regional

TV studios - Košice, Banská Bystrica, Rzeszov, Krakow, Ostrava, Brno, Szeged and Miskolc are involved in preparing its programmes. Between June 2010 - June 2011, 14 parts of the Quartet cycle were first-run by the Slovak TV (*UNESCO sights, Modern attractions of towns and villages, Foreigners in our region, Small entrepreneurs in current conditions, Active seniors, etc.*). Fourth year of the competition of programmes produced by TV stations themselves in different categories, from news to dramaturgy, the **Seal of Visegrad** was held in 2011 in the Košice State Theatre. The event also included a show of regional TV studios' production in the following categories: news, journalism, documentary and free creation, as well as a gala night held in the State Theatre and visited by guests from Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic, Ukraine and Slovakia. The **Quartet and the Seal of Visegrad are flagships of the IVF**.

During the Slovak V4 Presidency the regional TV news centres provided a detailed coverage on current issues, development of cooperation and on joint projects of the V4 countries in both daily news programmes as well as follow-up discussion programmes (*Saturday Dialogues, 5 minutes to 12, News and Comments*). The 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the V4 establishment had an increased coverage.

## AGRICULTURE

On 9 November 2010 Bratislava hosted one of two meetings of the **Ministers of Agriculture of V4+2** (Bulgaria and Romania). The aim of the meeting was to intensify the mutual cooperation and to discuss material issues having an impact on the future Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Having in mind the need and necessity to introduce agricultural reforms, as well as the economic condition of member states, the participants decided to adopt a joint declaration on the CAP reform at the level of the present delegation leaders, the so-called "**BRATISLAVA DECLARATION**". Protection of agricultural soil was an additional topic discussed.

Between 13 – 14 June 2011 the second meeting was held on the occasion of the end of the Slovak Presidency. This V4+2 (Bulgaria and Romania) meeting organized in Sliac was aimed at the future of CAP.

## HOME AFFAIRS

Main areas of the particular V4 cooperation – police cooperation, fire protection, civil protection, migration, Schengen area - are focused on particular projects and safety issues of citizens and at preserving freedoms within the EU. Cooperation and discussions were determined by the developments in the North African countries and the subsequent migration wave, migration of socially disadvantaged groups of citizens, mainly the Roma, and by the further evolution of the Schengen cooperation as a result of the above-mentioned happenings. Among other things, the V4 countries actively **supported the Romanian and Bulgarian effort to join the Schengen area**.

In the **area of searching for missing persons**, ad-hoc police meetings in border areas were organized between V4 and Austria to exchange their information. The **cooperation in combating extremism** continued – chaired by the Czech Republic, a meeting of the respective Working Group of V4 and Austria was held in late 2010.

Cooperation in **fire protection** was focused on maintaining continuity with the previous activities. An **international conference FIRECO 2011** was organized in **May 2011** by Slovakia in the format of V4+. In addition, cross-border cooperation of V4 neighbouring regions continues permanently, and is focused mainly on exchanging their experience as well as dealing with unusual situations.



In June the SR prepared a **meeting of V4 General Directors for Disaster Management and experts**. In line with the ongoing EU Action Plan in the CBRN safety area (chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear safety), the agenda is aimed at three main areas of action: prevention, detection and response to serious CBRN accidents/breakdowns

In 2010 the V4 countries played an active role in the final project of **Building Migration Partnerships under the leadership of the Czech Republic and in cooperation with ICMPD**. V4 countries are paying a particular attention to the preparation of the 2<sup>nd</sup> ministerial conference on Building Migration Partnerships which is going to be held in Poznan in November 2011.

## JUSTICE

During the Slovak V4 Presidency positions and standpoints of V4 member states were coordinated on the working level in relation to the drafts of EU legal acts adopted in the area of justice and the exchanged information on legislative activities in the area of civil and criminal law.

On 10 September 2010, as a part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Economic Forum held in Krynica, Poland, a **meeting of V4 Justice Ministers** was organized, where a Declaration of Cooperation was signed with the aim to increase the efficiency in justice.

On 5 May 2011 Hungary hosted the **meeting of Justice Ministers of V4+** (Croatia, Slovenia, Germany) where a Memorandum of Cooperation was signed regarding judicial training.

On the basis of the signed Agreements of Cooperation between the V4 judicial training bodies, joint activities in judicial training were carried out.

## ENVIRONMENT

Between 7 – 8 March 2011 the **17<sup>th</sup> meeting of the V4 Environment Ministers** was held in Šamorín–Čilistov. The following topics were discussed at the meeting:

- Climate change, focused on the outputs from Cancun and the emphasis on setting criteria for the Green Investment Fund.
- Preparation of a new EU financial strategy after 2013 in relation to preparation of the 7<sup>th</sup> Environmental Action Plan.
- Air protection focused on problems related to the implementation of the Directive 2008/50/EC on Ambient Air Quality and Cleaner Air for Europe, in particular with not exceeding the limit values of PM 10 and PM 2.5.
- dealing with environmental burdens in relation to soil protection.

## EDUCATION

In 2010 the 16<sup>th</sup> joint V4 sports competition for junior athletes was held – “**Olympic Hope**”.

During the Slovak V4 Presidency a meeting of the “Olympic Hope” Steering Committee was held between 22 – 23 November 2010 in Cieszyn, Poland. The Protocol on organizing the 17<sup>th</sup> “Olympic Hope” competition was approved (2011). On the basis of the Cieszyn Protocol, the 2011 sports competition of Olympic Hope will comprise 31 official sports and 12 show sports.

In the work with the youth, the main emphasis was laid on meeting the objectives of the **Youth in Action** Programme – within the cooperation of national agencies of the Programme, development of volunteering and all forms of youth mobility, support to local and regional projects, cross-border cooperation in youth work and regional youth policy – as a

part of cooperation of youth organizations from particular V4 countries, cooperation in the recognition of non-formal learning and mutual support when putting through proposal directed at the EC and CE – on the level of Youth Trade Unions of particular Ministries.

National agencies under the “Youth in Action” Programme continue with their cooperation on the “job shadowing” Programme, for EDS lecturers, for „on arrival“ volunteers.

## HEALTH CARE

Between 10 – 11 March an **informal V4 Health Ministers meeting** was held in Bratislava. The main topics of the meeting were *Generic substitution and generic prescriptions* and *Referencing of prices of medicaments*. The second main activity was organized by the Slovak Health Institute in cooperation with its V4 partners. It was a **working meeting of main hygienic officers and experts in the V4 public health care** which was held on 12 – 13 April 2011 in Častá – Papiernička. The main subject was *the issue of obesity and overweight of children and juveniles*. In conclusion a Declaration on cooperation of V4 countries in the area of public health was signed.

## SOCIAL POLICY

On 22 March 2011 Bratislava hosted an international **ministerial conference** organized by the Slovak Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family during the Slovak V4 Presidency: **“Impact of the global economic crisis on unemployment and the labour market revival”**.

The main objective of the conference was to **exchange experience on the measures adopted** in V4 countries and the EU to **mitigate the impact of the global economic crisis, to discuss attitudes** which individual countries had adopted **in the area of regulation of relations between employers and employees** in an effort to maintain the employment and to re-start the interest of employers to hire people for vacancies (Labour Codes and other legislation).

In the first part of the conference **the EU Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, L. Andor, as well as V4 Labour Ministers** informed their partners about the ways of gradual revival of the EU labour markets, mainly in the individual V4 countries. The panel discussion organized in the second part served for local and foreign experts to exchange their knowledge and experience in the area of modernization of the Labour Law and social welfare systems’ modifications. They also provided each other with the information about tools used in individual countries with the aim to support the inclusion of mainly the long-term unemployed in the labour market (active labour market policy) and to support the harmonization of work and family life. Discussions were also held on harmonizing education systems with labour market requirements.

## ROMA INCLUSION

As the V4 Presidency country, Slovakia determined its main objective - to continue with the activities of the former V4 Presidencies, including the Hungarian initiative to prepare a ”Central European Roma Strategy” document as a good starting point for the future V4 and EU cooperation in the Roma issue. The mentioned document was not finalized during the Hungarian Presidency, nevertheless, it became a starting point for the initiative of Hungary as the country holding the EU Presidency to adopt a European framework document for the Roma integration (“The EU framework for National Roma Integration Strategies”); which was fully supported by Slovakia.

Between 30 September – 1 October 2010 Slovakia hosted a **meeting of the V4 Speakers of parliaments**. The leading topic of the meeting was "SOCIAL INCLUSION OF THE ROMA". The aim of the meeting of the Speakers of the V4 parliaments was to exchange information and experience on dealing with the issue of the Roma in their countries. During its Presidency, Slovakia planned to continue with the activity of the Working Group of High V4 Representatives on the Integration of the Roma, and in March 2011 it prepared a meeting held at the Slovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs in a close cooperation with the Office of the Representative of the Slovak Government for Roma Communities. However, in the end the meeting was not held as the V4 high representatives for the Roma issues were occupied. Between 23 – 25 May 2011 both Bratislava and Košice hosted an international Conference, the "High Level Event", on the efficient use of EU funds when dealing with Roma issues.

#### **ANNEXES:**

- 1/ Summary of the Main V4 Events and Contact Activities (**pp. 20–23**)
- 2/ Selected Texts of Documents and Joint Declarations Adopted during the V4 Slovak Presidency (**pp. 24–63**)
- 3/ List/summary of selected major public diplomacy events organized as a part of diplomatic missions of V4 – Slovak Embassies abroad (**pp. 64–70**)

## **Annex 1**

### **Summary of the Main V4 Events and Activities**

#### **2010**

##### **July**

12 July 2010, Budapest

Working meeting of V4 National Posts (POFIS)

13 July 2010, Bratislava

Meeting of National Visegrad Coordinators of V4 Foreign Affairs Ministries

##### **September**

10 September 2010, Krynica,  
Poland Economic Forum

Meeting of V4 Ministers of Justice as a part of the 20th

13 – 15 September 2010, Prague

Meeting of V4 Committees for European Affairs

14 September 2010, Bratislava

Informal meeting of V4 Ministers of Foreign Affairs

14 September 2010, Bratislava

Active participation of V4 Ministers of Foreign Affairs in the panel “Visegrad Four (V4) – Energized” at the GLOBSEC 2010 conference

16 September 2010, Brussels

Working meeting of the V4 Prime Ministers and the President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy before the European Council meeting

21 September 2010, Bratislava

Meeting of V4 representatives responsible for the EU Cohesion Policy on the national level before a High Level Group meeting

22 September 2010, Bratislava

V4 High Level Group meeting for Energy Security

22 September 2010, Bratislava

V4+ meeting of the Working Group for North-South Gas Interconnection

22 September 2010, Budapest

Meeting of National Visegrad Coordinators of Foreign Affairs Ministries

23 – 24 September 2010, Třešť  
(Czech Republic)

Forum of the V4 Academies of Sciences

30 September 2010, Bratislava

Consultation of the Directors of Territorial Departments of the V4 Foreign Affairs Ministries for the Western Balkans

20 – 21 September 2010, Warsaw

Working meeting of V4 Representatives for Regional Development

30 September 2010, Florence

Meeting of Political Directors of the V4 Defence Ministries (as a part of discussions of Political Directors of the Defence Ministries, NATO members)

##### **October**

30 September – 1 October 2010

Meeting of the Speakers of the Parliaments of the V4 countries

Častá Papiernička

6 October 2010, Portorož  
(Slovenia)

Meeting of Representatives of Tax Administrations of V4+ Slovenia and Austria

21 October 2010, Bratislava

International Expert Conference: “EU Enlargement in the Balkans in 2011”

22 October 2010, Bratislava	Informal extended meeting of V4 Ministers of Foreign Affairs and representatives of the Western Balkan region, Belgian Presidency of the Council of the EU and the European Commission
28 October 2010, Brussels	Working meeting of the V4 Prime Ministers before European Council meeting
30 October 2010, Bucharest	Expert working meeting of V4 + Romania and Bulgaria related to the project “V4+2 Common Territorial Development Document”
 <b>November</b>	
4 November 2010, Bratislava	Meeting of representatives of V4 + Romania, Bulgaria and Slovenia on the level of General Directors responsible for the EU Cohesion Policy
5 – 6 November 2010 Karlovy Vary	Summit of the V4 Presidents
9 November 2010, Bratislava	Meeting of Ministers of Agriculture of V4 + Bulgaria and Romania
9 November 2010, Bratislava	Working Group for Energy Security (with sub-groups for gas and oil industries)
12 November 2010, Bratislava	Seminar on climate change, V4 + Japanese experts
15 November 2010, Bratislava	Informal meeting of V4 Ministers + Romania, Bulgaria and Slovenia regarding the 5 <sup>th</sup> Report on the Economic, Social and Territorial Coherence, and preparation for an informal Ministerial meeting organized by the Belgian Presidency in Liège
22 – 23 November 2010, Cieszyn (Poland)	17 <sup>th</sup> session of the V4 Steering Committee regarding sports competitions “Olympic Hope”
25 – 26 November 2010, High Tatras	Meeting of V4 Transport Ministers
 <b>December</b>	
1 – 2 December 2010, Bratislava	Annual meetings of High Representatives of V4 Border Police Authorities with the aim to inform each other about fulfilling their common tasks and suggest areas for future cooperation
8 – 9 December 2010, Washington	V4+ USA – visit of Political Directors of V4 Ministries of Foreign Affairs in the USA
9 December 2010, Liptov. Mikuláš	Meeting of V4 National Armament Directors
13 December 2010, Bratislava	Meeting of Political Directors of the V4 Defence Ministries
15 December 2010, Bratislava	Meeting of Political Directors of Ministries of Foreign Affairs of V4 + Japan
16 December 2010, Brussels	Working meeting of the V4 Prime Ministers with the President of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso before European Council meeting

## **2011**

### **January**

12 January 2011, Bratislava	Working meeting of Directors of Consular Departments of the V4 Ministries of Foreign Affairs
12 January 2011, Prague	Meeting of National Visegrad Coordinators
12 January 2011, Brussels	Meeting of the HLG of V4 High Representatives for Energy Security with the European Commission
19 January 2011, Bratislava	Meeting of the HLG of V4+ High Representatives for Energy Security
25 January 2011, Bratislava	Meeting of the V4 Ministers responsible for Energy
26 January 2011, Bratislava	Working meeting of the UN Department Directors of the V4 Ministries of Foreign Affairs

### **February**

3 February 2011, Brussels	Working meeting of the V4 Prime Ministers before European Council meeting
15 February 2011, Bratislava	Enlarged summit of the Prime Ministers of V4 + Germany, Austria and Ukraine, commemorating the 20 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of the V4 establishment

### **March**

3 March 2011, Bratislava	Extended meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of V4, Germany, Eastern Partnership and representatives of the European Commission / European External Action Service
3 March 2011, Bratislava	Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of V4 and Germany
7 – 8 March 2011, Šamorín	Meeting of V4 Ministers of Environment
10 – 11 March 2011, Bratislava	Informal meeting of the V4 Health Ministers
18 March 2011, Bratislava	Meeting of Parliament Committees for Human Rights of V4 +
21 March 2011, Brussels	Panel Discussion regarding the 20 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Visegrad cooperation, cultural events
22 March 2011, Bratislava	V4 ministerial conference: Impact of the global economic crisis on employment, and labour market revival

### **April**

1 April 2011, Bratislava	Conference of the V4 Finance Ministries and Ministries of Foreign Affairs related to the provision of the Official Development Assistance (ODA)
6 – 8 April 2011, Červený Kameň	Meeting of the V4 Ministers of Culture

8 – 9 April 2011, Liptov. Mikuláš	Meeting of Chiefs of General Staffs of V4+Ukraine
11 April 2011, Bratislava	Discussion of the V4 Working Group for European Affairs and Strategic Issues (energy)
12 April 2011, Sofia	Working meeting of experts from V4 + Romania and Bulgaria related to the project “V4+2 Common Territorial Development Document”
12 April 2011,	Discussion of the V4 Working Group for North-South Gas Interconnection
13 – 14 April 2011, Piešťany	Meeting of representatives of V4 + Germany related to current issues of the EU Cohesion Policy
12 April 2011, Warsaw	Meeting of National Visegrad Coordinators
19 April 2011, Bratislava	Consultations of Directors of analytical departments of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of V4 and Serbia
28 April 2011, Bratislava	Meeting of Political Directors of the V4 Defence Ministries
28 – 30 April 2011, Košice	Meeting of State Secretaries of Ministries responsible for Tourism in the V4 countries and of Directors of the V4 national tourist organizations
<b>May</b>	
4 - 6 May 2011, Opole (Poland)	Meeting of Parliamentary Committees for European Affairs of the V4 countries
5 - 7 May 2011, Veszprém (Hungary)	Meeting of the V4 Justice Ministers
9 May 2011, Bratislava	Innovation workshop V4 + Japan
12 May 2011, Levoča	Meeting of Ministers of Defence of V4 + Ukraine
18 May 2011, Prague	Meeting of representatives of Tax Administrations of V4 + Slovenia and Austria
27 May 2011, Bratislava	Conference: “Further 20 years of Visegrad Cooperation”
30 May 2011, Bratislava	Joint meeting of the National Visegrad Coordinators and Coordinators of the V4 Foreign Affairs Ministers for Eastern Partnership
<b>June</b>	
1 – 3 June 2011, Bratislava	Meeting of General Directors of V4 Customs Administrations
6 June 2011, Budapest	Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of V4+ Japan
14 June 2011, Báč	Meeting of the V4 National Armaments Directors
16 June 2011, Bratislava	Summit of the V4 Prime Ministers
16 June 2011, Bratislava	Meeting of the Prime Ministers of V4 and Moldova

## **Annex 2**

### **Selected Texts of Documents and Joint Declarations Adopted during the V4 Slovak Presidency**

- The Bratislava Declaration of the Prime Ministers of the Czech Republic, the Republic of Hungary, the Republic of Poland and the Slovak Republic on the occasion of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Visegrad Group (15 February 2011, Bratislava)
- Statement by the Heads of Governments of Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia on Belarus (Bratislava, February 15, 2011)
- Communique of the Prime Ministers of the Visegrad Four (Bratislava, February 15, 2011)
- Visegrad Group Ministerial Statement on the Western Balkans (Bratislava 22 October 2010)
- The Visegrad Group and Germany Foreign Ministers Statement on the Eastern Partnership (Bratislava, March 3, 2011)
- Common Declaration of Germany and the Visegrad Group on the EU Southern Neighbourhood Policy (Bratislava, March 3, 2011)
- Statement of the Foreign Ministers of the Visegrad Group countries and Germany on the assassination of the Minister of Minorities in the Government of Pakistan, Mr. Shahbaz Bhatti (Bratislava, March 3, 2011)
- Joint Press Statement - The Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Visegrad Group countries - V4 (the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia) and Japan (Budapest, 6 June 2011)
- Declaration of the V4 energy ministers from 25 January 2011 (Bratislava)
- Communiqué from the 21<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the Ministers of Culture of the Visegrad Group Countries in Bratislava 7<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> April 2011
- Conclusions from the meeting of Ministers responsible for transport of the Visegrad Group countries (Adopted on 26<sup>th</sup> of November 2010 in Vysoké Tatry)
- CONCLUSIONS from the meeting of Ministers responsible for Cohesion Policy of the Visegrad Group countries, Bulgaria, Romania and Republic of Slovenia in the presence of the Member of European Commission responsible for Regional Policy (Adopted on 15<sup>th</sup> of November 2010 in Bratislava)
- JOINT STATEMENT of the 17<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Environment Ministers of the Visegrad Group Countries 7-8 March 2011, Šamorín – Čilistov, Slovak Republic



- Declaration by the Ministry of Justice of the Czech Republic, the Ministry of Public Administration and Justice of the Republic of Hungary the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Poland, and the Ministry of Justice of the Slovak Republic on cooperation with respect to increasing efficiency in the justice sector (Krynica, 10 September 2010)
- Memorandum of Cooperation between the Minister of Justice of the Republic of Croatia, the Minister of Justice of the Czech Republic, the Minister of Public Administration and Justice of Hungary, the Minister of Justice of the Republic of Poland and the Minister of Justice of the Slovak Republic (Veszprém, 5 May 2011)
- Joint Communiqué of the Ministers of Defence of the Visegrad Group Countries (Levoča, 12 May 2011)

**The Bratislava Declaration of the Prime Ministers of the Czech Republic, the Republic of Hungary, the Republic of Poland and the Slovak Republic on the occasion of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Visegrad Group**  
(15 February 2011, Bratislava)

The Prime Ministers of the Czech Republic, the Republic of Hungary, the Republic of Poland and the Slovak Republic, acknowledging that

- the establishment of the Visegrad Group represents an important event in the modern history of our nations and countries. It significantly contributed to overcome the division of Europe imposed after World War II and facilitating the integration of our countries into the European and Euro-Atlantic structures; the “Declaration on Cooperation between the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic, the Republic of Poland and the Republic of Hungary in Striving for European Integration”, signed in Visegrád on 15 February 1991, 20 years ago, laid the foundations and put in place a long-term framework for the modern forms of political, economic and cultural cooperation. The Visegrad Group countries seized the historic opportunity afforded by the fall of Communism in 1989, developed a successful cooperation and based their mutual relations on friendship, good neighbourliness and shared values. The Visegrad cooperation continues to enhance democracy and civil society in Central Europe;
- nowadays, the Visegrad Group is a recognised symbol of successful political and economic transformation and, in many areas, also a model for regional cooperation. The Visegrad Group (V4) countries have become constructive, responsible and respected partners in Europe in implementing EU key priorities and programmes and, through their input, have contributed and will continue to contribute towards the processes of political and economic integration in Europe, including EU and NATO enlargement, in order to promote the prosperity, security and stability of the continent;
- the 10-year successful operation of the International Visegrad Fund (IVF) provides a tangible example of support to various civic, cultural, scientific, educational and innovative projects. Hence, the V4 countries are interested in assuring that the IVF continues to contribute even further towards fostering the civic dimension of V4 cooperation and deepening mutual trust and recognition beyond the V4 boundaries.

Confirming their determination to continue and further develop mutual cooperation aimed at contributing towards a strong, stable and democratic Europe and strengthening its position in the global arena in the interest of peace and sustainable development, they intend

- to actively contribute to a strong Europe and promote and implement projects aimed at fostering cohesion and enhancing competitiveness of the V4 and EU in a global context,

so as to overcome the impacts of the global financial and economic crisis. In negotiations on the next multiannual financial framework, of which well targeted cohesion policy and reformed Common Agricultural Policy must remain an integral part, the V4 countries will advocate respect for the principles which strengthen the internal convergence and external competitiveness of the EU. We consider the cohesion policy, which should be the cornerstone of the EU budget to consolidate 2004 and 2007 EU enlargements, to be one of the main factors helping to narrow the existing regional gaps/disparities in individual Member States. Together with the support of culture, education, research and development, the cohesion policy puts the EU as a whole in a stronger competitive position on the global scene;

- to place strong emphasis on the need to foster European energy security by extending and deepening the internal energy market and by enhanced V4 regional cooperation within the EU framework, to diversify the routes, sources and suppliers of energy carriers and to develop the energy infrastructure, especially by the implementation of the North-South gas interconnections and modernisation of the oil and electricity networks;
- to promote swift development of the V4 countries' transport infrastructure (road, rail and river) strengthening thus their growth potential, the accessibility for their citizens and cross-border cooperation;
- to develop the principles expressed in the values of the four freedoms which opened up new opportunities for jobs, economic cooperation, trade, investment and contacts among citizens. The V4 countries welcome the full liberalisation of access to labour markets across the EU to be completed in 2011 and will continue to support social and educational inclusion, with special regard to the integration of the Roma communities, based on mutual responsibility;
- to enhance the visibility of the Visegrad Group in third countries both through deeper V4 cooperation within the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the EU and through activities beyond the Union level. The V4 countries will be more determined in translating their unique transitional experience and political perspective into the EU's external policies;
- to facilitate the process of enlarging the area of stability and democracy in the EU neighbourhood and actively contribute towards the implementation of European and Euro-Atlantic ambitions of the countries of Eastern Partnership and continue to support the Western Balkans countries in their EU and NATO integration. The added value of the unique know-how of the V4 and pooled resources of IVF may effectively assist partner neighbourhood countries to turn their integration and democratisation endeavours into success;
- to support and advocate the fostering of Euro-Atlantic links, including development of close strategic complementarities between NATO and the European Union, which is considered essential for the long-term security of our countries and the entire Euro-Atlantic area. The current international environment poses increasingly complex challenges of a universal nature which go far beyond the means of individual countries. The Visegrad Group will actively contribute towards international efforts in combating terrorism, human and drug trafficking, illegal migration, extremism and other security threats and challenges, including those in the area of cybersecurity, that jeopardise our values and the freedoms of our citizens; to pay significant attention to the endeavours by the EU and its Member States, as well as by the international community, to tackle

challenges arising from climate change, support the fight against poverty, and facilitate efficient provision of development assistance.

The Visegrad Group has become a well established brand and a respected partner. It will remain open to cooperation based on common values with countries and other regional groupings through the V4+ format. We are convinced that the Visegrad Group, guided by the principles of cooperation and solidarity enshrined in the Lisbon Treaty, will continue to fulfil its important regional mission.

Petr Nečas

Prime Minister of the Czech Republic

Viktor Orbán

Prime Minister of the Republic of Hungary

Donald Tusk

Prime Minister of the Republic of Poland

Iveta Radičová

Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic

**Statement by the Heads of Governments of Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany,  
Hungary, Poland and Slovakia on Belarus**

We met in Bratislava on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Visegrad Group, founded on the pillars of freedom, democracy, shared values and regional cooperation. We have a strong common interest in promoting these same values and principles in our Eastern neighbourhood. Positive steps could bring us closer together and help intensify our relationship.

Therefore, we are seriously concerned by the events that occurred in the aftermath of the fraudulent Presidential elections in Belarus on 19 December 2010. The election night was marked by violence committed by the Belarusian authorities.

We refer to the conclusions of the European Council of 4 February 2011 and of the FAC of 31 January 2011 as well as to the action taken by the EU HR C. Ashton starting with her statement on the fraudulent elections from 20 December 2010.

We extend our resolute call on the authorities in Belarus to immediately release all political prisoners and to rehabilitate them;

We demand to stop political repression and harassment of the opposition, independent media and civil society;

We request the Government of Belarus to guarantee full respect for and observance of human rights and fundamental freedoms of Belarusian citizens;

We remind the Government of Belarus of the necessity to meet all its OSCE commitments regarding free and fair elections and electoral legislation that meets democratic standards and allows a free political competition, and urge the Government of Belarus to renew the mandate for the OSCE Office in Minsk;

We endorse the travel ban and asset freeze imposed by the European Union against those representatives in Belarus who are responsible for the flawed elections and the crackdown on civil society and democratic opposition;

We praise the efforts of the people and civil society in Belarus who are actively engaged in defending democracy and the rule of law. We reiterate our strong commitment to strengthening our engagement with Belarusian civil society and to facilitating people-to-people contacts. In this regard, we refer to the results of the donor conference held in Poland on 2 February 2011.

We will continue to closely follow the situation in Belarus and remain committed to our policy of critical engagement, including through dialogue and the Eastern Partnership, conditional on the respect for the principles of democracy, the rule of law and human rights.

Bratislava, February 15, 2011

Werner Faymann

Chancellor of the Republic of Austria

Petr Nečas

Prime Minister of the Czech Republic

Angela Merkel

Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany

Viktor Orbán

Prime Minister of the Republic of Hungary

Donald Tusk

Prime Minister of the Republic of Poland

Iveta Radičová

Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic

## **Communique of the Prime Ministers of the Visegrad Four**

We, the Prime Ministers of the countries of the Visegrad Four, are determined to deal with practical problems which the citizens of our countries are confronted with every day. We are deeply concerned by a substantial global increase of food, commodity and energy prices.

We are convinced that an effective and sustainable solution on the issues connected with the most pressing problems in food and energy security and with the consequences of global food and energy prices increase can only be found at the level of EU. We encourage the EU institutions including the Council to address this issue in a timely and effective way.

**Visegrad Group Ministerial Statement on the Western Balkans (Bratislava 22 October 2010)**

On 22 October 2010, the foreign ministers of the Visegrad Group met in Bratislava under Slovak Presidency at the second ministerial meeting especially dedicated to the Western Balkans. Recalling their joint Budapest statement from 6 October 2009, the ministers firmly stated that the future of the Western Balkan countries lies within the European and Euro-Atlantic community, in line with Thessaloniki Agenda and the Stabilization and Association Process, confirmed by the EU-Western Balkans High-Level Meeting in Sarajevo on 2 June 2010. The EU enlargement is one of the main priorities for the V4. Hungary and Poland will pay special attention to that issue throughout 2011 when they hold successively the EU presidency.

The EU should focus on a successful completion of the accession talks with **Croatia** in 2011. The accession of Croatia to the EU should give an incentive to further EU enlargement in the whole region. In this respect, Western Balkan aspiring countries should advance their reforms on the basis of the Progress Reports by the European Commission, strengthen the regional cooperation and settle the open bilateral issues. Commission's opinion on the membership applications by **Montenegro** and **Albania** will pave the way to candidate status and further on to opening of the accession negotiations. Along with the progress of the integration process, strengthening the rule of law and intensifying the efforts to fight corruption and organized crime, increase the efficiency and independence of the judicial system are key areas for further reforms. The current parliamentary crisis in Albania should be solved in a way that will strengthen the democratic institutions. In line with the recommendation of the European Commission, the accession negotiations with **Macedonia** should be open as soon as possible. A swift solution to the name issue will require leadership, flexibility and commitment of both sides involved. In the meantime the focus should be on upholding the dynamics of the integration process.

The V4 expects the EU Council to submit the EU membership application of **Serbia** for the opinion of the European Commission as soon as possible. Full cooperation with the ICTY remains a key condition throughout the integration process of Serbia. The V4 ministers welcome the agreement reached by the EU and Serbia on the UN General Assembly Resolution on 9 September 2010 as a starting point for new quality of mutual relations. The newly elected political leaders of **Bosnia and Herzegovina** should focus on prompt forming of the state institutions and on key issues for its European and Euro-Atlantic integration, including the remaining 5+2 criteria for the closure of the Office of the High Representative (OHR), a reinforced EU presence, and a successful submission of the EU application. We support the continuation of the executive military role of Operation ALTHEA, under a renewed UN mandate, to support, as necessary, the OHR and maintain safe and secure environment in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The ministers express their conviction that **Kosovo**, as part of the region, also shares the European perspective. The process of dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina facilitated by the EU should start without delay. The V4 countries support the work of EULEX mission and urge all parties concerned to fully cooperate with it.



The V4 sees merit in the results gained by the visa liberalisation last year and welcomes both the fulfilment of requirements for a **visa-free** travel regime by Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina and the related European Parliament position adopted on 7 October 2010. The V4 urges the decision on a visa liberalisation for both countries by the November Council of the EU. Visa-free travel should be open to all people of the Western Balkans.

The V4 firmly supports NATO's "**open door**" policy, welcomes the entry of Montenegro into the NATO Membership Action Plan (MAP) and encourages Bosnia and Herzegovina to solve the issue of defence property as the prerequisite for the participation in MAP. As NATO members, the V4 countries will actively provide experience from their own Euro-Atlantic integration to Western Balkan partners.

After 20 years of successful activities, the V4 is open to share its know-how on efficient **regional cooperation** and on coordination of EU and NATO integration efforts. The Visegrad Group remains committed to promoting the integration efforts of the Western Balkan countries within bilateral and multilateral frameworks. V4 stands ready to assist the Western Balkan countries in their **integration processes** by transfer of relevant expertise, consultations on efficient management of IPA funds, twinning projects, joint research and student programs, and V4 twinning projects in areas such as energy security, transport, and infrastructure networks, Roma integration and others.



**The Visegrad Group and Germany Foreign Ministers Statement on the Eastern Partnership**

Bratislava, March 3, 2011

**The Foreign Ministers of the Visegrad Group, namely the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia, and Germany met in Bratislava to discuss the Eastern Partnership. The Ministers of the Visegrad Group reviewed progress in the implementation of the Eastern Partnership since their last meeting in Budapest a year ago (2 March, 2010) and appreciated the participation of Germany at the ministerial meeting and its substantial support for the Eastern Partnership. The Ministers welcomed an exchange of views on Eastern Partnership policy with the Foreign Ministers of Eastern Partnership countries, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine as well as the High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Member of the European Commission for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy.**

The Ministers reconfirmed their commitment to active engagement in the Eastern Partnership and interest to shape this process politically. They committed to continue the preparations for a successful Eastern Partnership Summit in Warsaw during the Polish EU Presidency.

The Ministers of the Visegrad Group expressed their readiness to **share experience of the Visegrad Group's countries on reform and transition with the Eastern partners**. They will seek to explore all possibilities for strengthened **Visegrad cooperation in the Eastern Partnership framework**, e.g. joint projects within a multilateral dimension, and to enhance the activity and visibility of the Visegrad Group within the Eastern Partnership, including by the International Visegrad Fund supporting Eastern Partnership initiatives. The activities of the forthcoming Czech Presidency of the Visegrad Group were highlighted in this respect.

The Ministers underlined that EU credibility as a global actor depended on its capacity and will in supporting development and reforms in stabilising its neighbourhood. They called for all EU bilateral activities and support to the Eastern partners to fall under **the aegis of the Eastern Partnership**. They urged to make the Eastern Partnership more effective and visible. They underlined the active role of the European Commission and the EEAS in the implementation of the Eastern Partnership. They stressed the **need to strengthen the EEAS structures** responsible for the Eastern Partnership and to allocate sufficient resources.

The Ministers reiterated that a strong long-term relationship between partners and the EU could only be built only on the basis of **full respect for human rights, democratic standards, and the rule of law in the Eastern Partnership countries**. Withdrawal from democratic standards in specific countries of the Eastern Partnership was a matter of serious concern. They committed to pursue an enhanced human rights dialogue with the partner countries. In this regard they appreciated the importance of the **role of the Civil Society Forum** and supported broad participation of its representatives in the activities of thematic multilateral meetings. The Ministers encouraged the establishment of national civil society platforms in partner countries. They considered a structural dialogue with civil society in the partner countries as a necessary step for their democratic modernisation.

The Ministers welcomed the determination expressed by the Eastern partners to further engage in both the bilateral and multilateral dimension of the Eastern Partnership. They acknowledged their **aspirations towards European integration**. The degree of integration will depend upon the depth of political and socio-economic reforms and EU harmonisation. The Ministers expressed support for Eastern partners' efforts to this end and encouraged them to accelerate their political association and further economic reforms which bring them closer to the EU. They stressed the principles of **differentiation and "more for more"**, meaning more EU assistance and resources for Eastern partners ready to go further and faster in fulfilment of their commitments.

The Ministers noted with satisfaction progress achieved in the bilateral track. They encouraged **Ukraine** and the European Commission to finalise negotiations on the Association Agreement, including the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA). They welcomed the determination of pro-European governments in **Republic of Moldova** and **Georgia** and their dedication to advance negotiations on the Association Agreement and to start negotiations on the DCFTA soon. They welcomed the launch of negotiations on Association Agreements with **Armenia** and **Azerbaijan**. Implementation of the Comprehensive Institution Building program will have significant importance for improving administrative capacity of the partner countries in all areas of cooperation.

Against the background of ongoing repressions and the first political conviction the Ministers reiterated their strong call on the authorities in **Belarus** to immediately release all political prisoners and to end political repression and harassment of the opposition, independent media and civil society. As stated in the conclusions of the Foreign Affairs Council of 31 January 2011, any deepening of the EU relationship with Belarus is conditional on progress towards respect by the Belarusian authorities for the principles of democracy, the rule of law and human rights. The Ministers agreed to continue the dialogue with Belarus, provided the Belarusian authorities prove their willingness to respect these principles. They expressed their readiness to consider further targeted restrictive measures as appropriate unless the regime releases all political prisoners. They committed to support a new facilitated EU visa policy to the Belarusian people. They expressed the need to increase assistance to civil society in Belarus and in this regard welcomed the results of the donor conference held in Warsaw, on 2 February 2011.

The Ministers acknowledged that in order to deepen EU political relations with the Eastern partners, **political dialogue needed to intensify**, including using the informal Gymnich, sectoral ministerial or political director meetings. They also agreed that the **Information and Coordination Group** for interested third parties should be effectively involved in boosting support and assistance for the Eastern Partnership programmes and activities.

The Ministers recognised the importance of the role of enhancing and facilitating **mobility and people-to-people contacts** for the Eastern partners and expressed their strong support to carry out gradual steps toward **full visa free regime** with individual partners subject to political and technical criteria being met. They also supported the further facilitation of the visa issuing process as well as extension of the length of stay in the EU for certain categories of citizens, among others, students and researchers. They called for enhanced cooperation on asylum, migration and border management related issues within the Eastern Partnership.

The Ministers encouraged the development of economic ties and networks with the partner countries including by promoting direct foreign investment. They welcomed the launch of the **Eastern Partners Facility** and the **Eastern Partnership Technical Assistance Trust Fund**, as well as the idea to establish the **Eastern Partnership Business Forum**. They expressed their support for partners' participation in EU programs and agencies as well as **increased sectoral cooperation** with the long-term goal of **integration into the EU internal market**. They welcomed the readiness of the partner countries to secure their energy supplies and interest to discuss specific interconnection and energy diversification projects and modernise existing transit routes.

The Ministers called for the **adequate financing of EU policy towards the Eastern partners** in the next Financial Perspective. They called for merit-based differentiation within the ENP budgeting on the basis of more transparent and objective criteria. Specific financial support should be introduced for the most advanced partners implementing the EU acquis.

The Ministers acknowledged the Eastern Partnership as added value to the **fostering multilateral cooperation**. Additional efforts by all stakeholders were needed so that multilateral platforms, panels and flagship initiatives could be more operational, target oriented, and able to deliver visible outcomes that meet interests, ambitions and efforts of both the partner countries and the EU. The Ministers supported the idea of creating and attaching to the Warsaw Summit Declaration an annex with a **list of key initiatives and projects** that should be further elaborated by the Commission and implemented in the framework of the current as well as the next Financial Perspective.

The Ministers encouraged the European Parliament to activate the **EURONEST Parliamentary Assembly** and the Committee of the Regions to establish the **Eastern Partnership Conference of Regional and Local Authorities** in order to strengthen engagement of important actors from the partner countries on implementation of the Eastern Partnership.

The Ministers of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia agreed to meet on the Eastern Partnership in the spring 2012.

**Common Declaration  
of Germany and the Visegrad Group  
on the EU Southern Neighbourhood Policy**

A. We welcome aspirations and ambitions of the peoples in the region towards democratic changes and individual freedoms and liberties. These developments provide unique chances for these countries.

B. We stand ready both bilaterally as well as through the European Union to support transformation processes in the region and to deepen and strengthen our cooperation.

C. We and the EU are committed to a new partnership. This includes increased focus on support for democratic processes, in particular through European initiatives aimed at building democracy. We are looking forward to new proposals which should among others result in more flexibility, more support to civil society and more focus on education and training.

D. The V4 countries and Germany are ready to contribute to the transition processes going on in these countries with their specific knowledge and experience gained on the path toward a society based on democracy, freedom and respect of human rights.

E. The European Union and the international community can furthermore contribute to economic and financial stabilization through further steps towards free trade.

F. In order to address the young generation we should consider to facilitate people to people contacts, exchanges and mobility.

G. We strongly condemn ongoing violence in Libya and the brutal use of force by the Libyan regime. The United Nations and the European Union have taken strong decisions on sanctions against the Libyan regime. We are increasingly concerned about the humanitarian situation of refugees coming from Libya to neighbouring countries which

calls for substantial humanitarian assistance also by the European Union. We are ready to firmly support these efforts.

**Statement of the Foreign Ministers of the Visegrad Group countries and Germany on the assassination of the Minister of Minorities in the Government of Pakistan, Mr.**

**Shahbaz Bhatti**

(Bratislava, 3 March 2011)

We, the Foreign Ministers of the Visegrad Group countries and Germany, strongly condemn assassination of the Minister of Minorities in the Government of Pakistan, Mr. Shahbaz Bhatti, on 2 March.

We call on the Pakistani authorities to investigate this crime and to bring those responsible to justice.

In this regard, we also want to stress the utmost necessity to fight against extremism and intolerance and to strengthen respect for and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, such as freedom of religion and belief.

We express our sincere condolences to Mr. Bhatti's family, to the Government and people of Pakistan.

**Joint Press Statement The Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Visegrad Group countries - V4 (the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia) and Japan**

(Budapest, 6 June 2011)

The Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the V4 countries and Japan ("V4+Japan") was held in Budapest on June 6, 2011 on the occasion of the 10<sup>th</sup> ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting. The V4+Japan Ministerial Meeting was attended by Mr. Takeaki Matsumoto, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, Mr. Mikuláš Dzurinda, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic, Mr. János Martonyi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Hungary, Mr. Radosław Sikorski, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Poland and Mr. Jiří Schneider, First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic.

The Ministers discussed the current situation and prospects of dialogues and cooperation within the framework of "V4+Japan". Recognizing shared values, the Ministers pointed out that the cooperation between Japan and V4 countries, a leading group in the Central and Eastern European region with abundant potential for further growth, is value-adding and promoting not only bilateral but also EU-Japan relations.

Overcoming the Great East Japan Earthquake and Enhancing of Nuclear Safety

1. The V4 Ministers expressed solidarity with Japan and reiterated efforts of their governments, business community and society to assist in reconstruction of the areas affected by the devastating earthquake and tsunami of March 11, 2011 as well as by the accident at

Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station. They expressed full confidence in the ability of Japan to recover from this disaster. The V4 countries admire the courage and diligence of the Japanese people facing such a difficult situation. Minister Matsumoto expressed sincere gratitude on behalf of the Government and people of Japan for the solidarity and support including relief supplies and donations provided by the governments and people of V4 countries.

The Ministers shared the view that it is important for public policy responses to be based on solid scientific evidence, including in relation to goods and travel. The Ministers reiterated that the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami's impact on the supply chains was a reminder of deepened economic integration on the global scale, and also were convinced the ongoing recovery of the affected areas would contribute to the economic well-being of the world. Minister Matsumoto expressed willingness of the Government of Japan to pursue a future oriented and open reconstruction program in cooperation with the international community. The V4 Ministers expressed their readiness to support Japan with necessary contribution and participation in rebuilding programs.

Minister Matsumoto explained that Japan is continuing its full efforts to settle the situation at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station, to provide information to the international community with maximum transparency and to share with the international community the lessons learned from the accident, which will be conducive to enhancing safety of nuclear facilities around the world. The Ministers reaffirmed the utmost importance of strengthening nuclear safety and resolved to enhance international cooperation leading to the highest levels of nuclear safety. The V4 countries and Japan are fully committed to international efforts in this respect and will use every appropriate international forum, especially the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

#### V4+Japan Dialogue and Cooperation: Promoting and deepening partnership

2. The Ministers appreciated the regular political dialogue and welcomed further development of the result-oriented cooperation manifested in a number of joint projects since the last V4+Japan Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Hanoi in May 2009. The Ministers also welcomed that the V4 countries and Japan are deepening equal partnership by holding workshops and seminars on both sides.

3. The Ministers supported further strengthening of friendly ties between V4 countries and Japan. The Ministers expressed their intension to continue holding Foreign Ministers' Meetings on a biennial basis using such occasions as ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting as well as annual consultations at Political Directors' and experts' level.

The successful joint seminars and workshops, organized in the period of 2009 – 2011 in the fields of environment and climate change, economy and finance, development assistance, energy saving, tourism, innovation and small and medium enterprises have contributed to further fostering of V4+Japan economic and technological cooperation.

4. The Ministers emphasized the importance of developing collaboration, which is reflecting new challenges and delivering practical and tangible benefits to their countries in the areas such as climate change, energy supply security and efficiency, nuclear safety, trade and investment, science and technology, innovations, support of small and medium enterprises' cooperation, tourism and development assistance. In this context, the Ministers welcomed the fact that Japan and V4 member countries have been contributing together to the reconstruction and stability in Afghanistan in the framework of Japan-NATO/PRT (Provincial



Reconstruction Team) cooperation. Possible future joint projects will be considered on an ad-hoc basis.

#### European Union - Japan: Strengthening bonds of friendship and cooperation

5. The Ministers welcomed the results of the 20<sup>th</sup> EU-Japan summit held in Brussels on May 28, 2011, in particular the start of the process for parallel negotiations for a Free Trade Agreement (FTA)/Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), and for an agreement covering political, global and other sectoral cooperation. The Ministers highlighted their intention to further strengthen their political and economic ties through closely working together with a view to moving ahead with agreements.

The Ministers welcomed the fact that Japanese companies have significantly contributed to the economic growth and job creation in V4 countries and to the strengthening of economic ties between V4 and Japan. The V4 Ministers expressed their expectation for further flow of mutually beneficial investments preferably into high value-added sectors and new advanced technologies (innovations, renewable energy sources, green and energy saving technologies).

In addition to the deepening of bilateral economic integration, the Ministers welcomed further development of concrete cooperation in the other areas, including nuclear safety, energy and disaster management, which were set out following the Great East Japan Earthquake and the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station. Japan will continue to work closely with the incoming Polish Presidency. On this occasion Minister Sikorski informed about the Polish Presidency priorities.

Recognizing the important role of the science and technology for economic growth and sustainable development, the Ministers welcomed the entry into force of the Agreement between the Government of Japan and the European Community on Cooperation in Science and Technology.

6. Minister Dzurinda gave an overview on V4 activities towards the Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries, including on extended informal Foreign Ministerial meeting which took place under the current Slovak V4 Presidency in Bratislava on March 3, 2011 with participation of V4, Germany, the EaP countries and the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. Minister Matsumoto explained Japanese contribution for the consolidation of democracy and establishment of transparent market economy in EaP countries. The Ministers shared their expectation that the EaP Information and Coordination Group would contribute to appropriate coordination between the EU programs supporting the EaP countries and similar actions taken by non-EU countries.

7. The Ministers exchanged views on the regional security environment of East Asia. Reaffirming that security in Asia and Europe affect each other and both are in the interest of the international community as a whole, the Ministers shared current security concerns in the regions and confirmed to pay due consideration to those concerns.

#### Reform of the United Nations Security Council

8. The Ministers confirmed that Japan and V4 should work together to achieve reform of the UN Security Council to be more representative and effective, including enlargement in both the permanent and non-permanent categories of the Council.



## Declaration of the V4 energy ministers from 25 January 2011

The ministers of the Visegrad Four countries (Martin Kocourek, Minister for Industry and Trade of the Czech Republic, Tamás Fellegi, Minister of National Development of Hungary, Waldemar Pawlak, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economy of Poland, Juraj Miškov, Minister of Economy of Slovakia) responsible for energy support further development of regional cooperation in the energy sector.

Being aware of the utmost efficiency of regional cooperation in the energy sector during the process of creating the European Internal Energy Market and of the benefits arising from that process for EU citizens and the economies of EU Member States,

Reaffirming the importance of the Declaration of the Budapest V4+ Energy Security Summit of 24 February 2010 for development of the Visegrad cooperation in energy,

Having regard to the Communications of the European Commission:

- "Energy 2020 - A strategy for competitive, sustainable and secure energy"
- "Energy infrastructure priorities for 2020 and beyond - A Blueprint for an integrated European energy network"
- "The future Role of Regional Initiatives"

Stressing the need for the development of the energy policy of the European Union implementing the objectives as agreed in the Treaty of Lisbon,

During their meeting on the 25<sup>th</sup> of January 2011, the Ministers expressed their support for:

INCREASING the importance of energy cooperation in the region of the Visegrad Four Group (V4), the need to further develop the regional energy sector as part of the EU energy market, and for highlighting the importance of the V4 region in the European Union,

EMPHASIZING the role of the Visegrad region in the Commission Communication "Energy infrastructure priorities for 2020 and beyond" (COM(2010) 677 final), which determines the main priorities of the European Union in terms of infrastructure and proposes the establishment of a High Level Group on North-South Energy Interconnections in Central Eastern Europe. Ministers also take note of the European Commission's view to include the countries of Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia as well as Croatia as an observer in this new initiative with the mandate to devise an action plan in the course of 2011 for North-South and East-West connections in gas and oil as well as electricity while taking into account the existing institutions of regional groupings,

THE ASSUMPTION that the V4 Working Groups may establish common positions to be represented in the proposed High Level Group on North-South Energy Interconnections in Central-Eastern Europe and its working groups,

ENHANCING mutual cooperation in all areas of energy, and energy security in particular, and developing rules of cooperation in elaborating common V4 opinions in the context of EU institutions and initiatives,

ENDORSING the view that all necessary infrastructures, which would allow physical access to at least two different gas sources from outside of the European Union, should be implemented in the broader Visegrad region in order to alleviate single source dependency,

THE DEVELOPMENT of cooperation through joint projects and exchange of information on energy policies, as well as on related areas, particularly national legal and regulatory frameworks,

ACCELERATING the implementation of energy projects in oil, gas and electricity sectors within V4 countries taking account of the related EU priorities in this field;

PREPARING the preliminary design of the North-South Energy Corridor, which will require:

- the identification of potential benefits of the Corridor for V4 countries and, if applicable, for other countries involved, in terms of security of supply and new sources for enhanced competition in the region,
- the accelerated preparation of the technical documentation and the evaluation of further possibilities of regional cooperation (NETS, etc.),
- the preparation of a common schedule of V4 countries' activities carried out by 2013 which shall be finalized by the end of 2011, taking into account the process of the High Level Group on North-South Energy Interconnections in Central-Eastern Europe proposed by the Commission
- the preparation of the technical design of the necessary projects within 2011, with the aim for the whole corridor to be put into operation by 2020 at the latest.,
- the joint support of project elements in terms of potential financing methods, cost sharing principles and technical solutions,
- the implementation of further necessary actions to achieve the realization of all elements of the Corridor by the end of new financial perspective of the EU,

COORDINATION of actions aiming at maintaining stable and undisrupted crude oil supplies by the Druzhba pipeline,

THE NEED to search for possibilities to diversify oil supplies, based on the shared supply dependence of this region with regards to this strategic resource which is delivered mostly by the Druzhba oil pipeline. Such possibilities might include the upgrading of the existing Adria pipeline or the increasing of capacity of the TAL pipeline.

THE DEVELOPMENT of cooperation and identification of other projects which are necessary for interconnecting the Visegrad group with the neighbouring regions, and hence the diversification of supply routes and energy resources in the broad region,

TAKING UP the discussion on the Communication on the future Role of Regional Initiatives in a manner, which can contribute to the effective development and implementation of the EU energy policy within the broader Visegrad region,

During the meeting the Ministers also supported the need for:

- enhancing cooperation in the Research and Development field of energy, particularly with regards to the cooperation in nuclear energy and clean coal technologies, which

can – among others – be achieved by the implementation of the SET Plan of the European Union,

- performing a common analysis and risk assessment of existing and planned infrastructure projects. This could constitute a good basis for the establishment of a joint project to assess the supply risks of consumers in the region and the potential development of regional cooperation in crisis situations in the field of energy,
- strengthening the cooperation in the electricity sector aimed at enhancing the technical safety of power systems in the region. Such cooperation would contribute to the elimination of risks and enable the improvement of the regional electricity market as a part of European Internal Energy Market,
- a coordinated approach to the Regulation of Council and EP no. 994/2010 on security of gas supply, including the coordination of national Preventive Action Plans and Emergency Plans in the V4 Region, where applicable,
- reviewing possibilities for mutual cooperation and development of a solidarity mechanism in the V4 Region in case of gas supply disruption and rules of cooperation in case of electricity or oil supplies disruption
- an effective co-ordination of all activities of the Visegrad group and its energy working groups in relation to the newly established High Level Group on North-South Energy Interconnections in Central-Eastern Europe in order not to duplicate activities.

The Ministers took note of the preparation of a new energy security and infrastructure instrument deriving from Commission communication “Energy infrastructure priorities for 2020 and beyond” and consider the role of cohesion policy instruments in the energy sector as effective tools for maximising the impact of European financial intervention in energy.

Bratislava, 25 January 2011



**Communiqué**  
**from the 21<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the Ministers of Culture**  
**of the Visegrad Group Countries in Bratislava 7<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> April 2011**

The meeting of the Ministers of Culture of the V4 countries was held at Červený Kameň castle, in the municipality of Častá on 8<sup>th</sup> April 2011.

The meeting of the Ministers was preceded by a working meeting of ministerial experts which took place on 7<sup>th</sup> April 2011. In preparation for the Experts' Report for the meeting of the Ministers of Culture the following day, the following topics were discussed:

1. Progress on the implementation of cultural programmes since the 20<sup>th</sup> meeting of the ministers of culture of the V4 countries in Budapest in 2010.
2. Ongoing Colloquium of Library-Information Employees from the V4 Countries.
3. Information on the working group for cultural heritage in the V4 countries and their new proposals.
4. The follow-up of the V4 Seminar on the Use of EU Structural Funds and Programmes for Culture.
5. New project proposals.
6. The selection procedure for the “2010 International Visegrad Prize.”

**The following conclusions were adopted at the meeting of Ministers:**

1. The Ministers accepted the joint Experts' Report and expressed their satisfaction with the progress in the implementation of the individual projects and they agreed with the expert's recommendations.
2. The Ministers welcomed the information on the activities and success of the International Visegrad Fund.
3. The Ministers welcomed the projects and activities complying with the priorities of the Slovak V4 presidency.
4. The Ministers expressed their support for the strengthening of cultural cooperation within the framework of the Visegrad Group through completed, implemented and new projects.
5. New and follow-up projects such as the Conference on the Role of Theatre in V4 Countries After 1989, the organizational project of Košice – European Capital of Culture 2013, “Shaping the New – the Significance of Art Residential Stays for Art Creation”, Visegrad Days 2012, the promotion of literature for young People in the V4 Countries was supported.
6. The ministers have agreed that the V4 countries should participate in a joint presentation at the Paris Book Fair in the coming years, and that the Slovak Republic should coordinate their participation.
7. Following the discussion about the future cohesion policy, the Ministry of Culture of the Czech Republic will organize the V4+ conference “Incorporation of Culture into future Cohesion Policy” in October 2011. The Czech Ministry of Culture will

welcome the participation of Ministers or Deputy Ministers and experts from the respective countries.

8. The Ministers appreciated the ongoing Colloquium of Library-Information Employees from the V4 Countries and expressed their support for the organization of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Colloquium in Poland in 2011.
9. The Ministers expressed their appreciation of the activities of the V4 cultural heritage working group for the summer course on the Report on the UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Sites and look forward to the conference "The Heritage Forum of Central Europe," which will be held in 2011 in Krakow.
10. The significance of the EU funds for cultural infrastructure building, cultural heritage preservation and the implementation of cultural projects was emphasized. The Ministers expressed their wish to deepen cooperation in finding the ways and means for the more efficient use of EU funds for cultural purposes.
11. The Ministers supported the sharing of experience among the V4 countries with regard to the preparations of Slovak town of Košice for the title European Capital of Culture in 2013. The cooperation will be maintained around the European Capital of Culture Program in the Czech Republic in 2015 and in Poland in 2016.
12. The Ministers highly appreciated the idea of making V4 cooperation more visible within the EU countries. The Ministers welcomed the programme of the Hungarian EU presidency, particularly its emphasis of the role of culture in the implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy.
13. The Ministers underlined the importance of the national cultural policies in V4 countries dedicated to the promotion of creativity and the creation of synergies between culture and economy.
14. The Ministers support the celebration of the birth of the great composer, Franz Liszt, the great writer, Czeslaw Milosz and the great composer, Ján Cikker in 2011.
15. The Ministers have decided to address a joint letter to the President of the European Commission and the Commissioner responsible for culture and education, on the continuation of the funding programmes CULTURE and MEDIA in their present form. The aim is to strengthen the position of culture in the EU budget, as it was already mentioned in the recommendations of the Communiqué signed at the previous Meeting of the V4 Ministers of Culture in 2010.
16. In connection with the 2010 International Visegrad Prize, which shall be awarded at the following meeting, the Ministers approved the candidate Villa Decius Association in Krakow.

The parties agreed that the following meeting of the Ministers of Culture of Visegrad Group will be held in the Czech Republic in 2012.

Signed in Bratislava on 8<sup>th</sup> April 2011

**Daniel Krajcer**  
Minister of Culture of the Slovak Republic  
Republic

**František Mikeš**  
The 1<sup>st</sup> Deputy Minister of the  
Ministry of Culture of the Czech



**Géza Szócs**

Minister of State for Culture  
of the Ministry of National Resources  
Poland  
of the Republic of Hungary

**Bogdan Zdrojewski**

Minister of Culture and National  
Heritage of the Republic of

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Conclusions from the meeting of Ministers responsible for transport of the Visegrad Group countries</b></p>
---

Adopted on 26<sup>th</sup> of November 2010 in Vysoké Tatry

**The Ministers responsible for transport of the Czech Republic, the Republic of Hungary, the Republic of Poland and the Slovak Republic,**

HIGHLIGHTING the importance of an integrated, sustainable, safe and efficient transport system in the European Union market,

PURSUING the necessity to ensure fluent and seamless transport among EU Member States, as well as DESIRING to stimulate economic growth of all EU regions,

BEARING IN MIND the need to ensure interoperability of national transport networks and access to all regions of the European Union, particularly to remote and peripheral ones,

NOTING preparation of a new White Paper on future transport policy until 2020 and a joint statement of the V4 Group on this topic,

STRESSING the need to optimize the shape of the Trans-European Transport Network in order to build missing links and remove existing bottlenecks, which affect negatively the efficiency of the transport system and functioning of the internal market,

HAVING regard the publications of the 5<sup>th</sup> Cohesion report that was followed by the conclusions of the Visegrad Group countries, Bulgaria, Romania and Slovenia adopted on 15<sup>th</sup> of November 2010

**Agreed on the following conclusions:**

1. Ministers recognise that the new transport policy, including the planning of the new Trans-European Transport Network, should be designed in a way that takes into account the differences among the Member States regarding their economic development, the levels of their infrastructure network, transport services and geographical position.
2. Ministers emphasize that the forthcoming White Paper on the European transport policy should focus on a better integration among the different transport modes, elimination of missing links among infrastructure networks with different levels of development to fully support the competitiveness of the European economy.
3. As far as the revision of TEN-T is concerned, the Ministers stress that the main TEN-T policy objectives are to create a transport system for the smooth functioning of the internal market. Economic, social and territorial cohesion and access to the TEN-T shall be an important criteria for the planning of the TEN-T. This fact is also highlighted in the European Council conclusions on “Europe 2020 – a European Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.”

4. Ministers agree that the comprehensive TEN-T network, respecting the principles of subsidiarity, shall ensure quality road and rail infrastructure connecting each NUTS III region in order to provide geographically balanced access to the TEN-T network.
5. Ministers confirm the joint proposal on the revision of the EU guidelines for the development of the Trans-European Transport Network submitted to EU Commissioner Mr. Kallas in April 2010 and are also prepared to accept some minor changes which may result from the ongoing process of multilateral consultations with the European Commission.
6. Ministers emphasize that the future EU financing (TEN-T Fund, Cohesion Fund and Structural Funds) has to remain available for the whole TEN-T network – core as well as comprehensive, in order to take into account different starting positions and country specificities, aiming to set up an infrastructure development plan for all Member States, which promotes growth for all. Sufficient accessibility would stimulate economic development of the whole European Union.
7. Ministers note the importance of the sea and inland navigation ports, airports and intermodal terminals which should constitute the key nodes in the future TEN-T. Therefore they RECOGNIZE the need to carefully examine the criteria for their evaluation as future elements of both core and comprehensive networks.
8. The Visegrad Countries are fully aware of the importance of external dimension of the European transport policy. In this respect particular attention should be given to the development of the North-South as well as the West–East multimodal connections and the integration of Eastern and South-Eastern EU neighbouring countries to the main transport network of the European Union.
9. Ministers agree that modern technologies have a potential in terms of the search for solutions of transport challenges. Therefore they agree that it is necessary to envisage an appropriate EU co-financing mechanism to allow a better technological integration of all the EU member states.
10. Ministers are of the opinion that implementation of the “user pays” and “polluter pays” principles could be considered as a potential additional financial resource for solving certain problems in transport sector.
11. Ministers are aware of importance of Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning a European rail network for competitive freight as regards the competitiveness of rail transport. They are therefore prepared to closely cooperate in process of making operational initial freight corridors setting up in this Regulation which are crossing V-4 countries.
12. Ministers agree that road transport safety is one of their priorities and they support the Council conclusions that will be discussed in December 2010 in the Transport Council.
13. The objective to support the growth of the least developed EU regions has to remain the main focus of the Cohesion Policy. Creation of a coherent TEN-T network facilitates

social and economic cohesion and creates the grounds for effectively functioning single European Union market.

For the Ministry of Transport  
of the Czech Republic

For the Ministry of National Development  
of the Republic of Hungary

For the Ministry of Infrastructure  
of the Republic of Poland

For the Ministry of Transport,  
Construction and Regional Development  
of the Slovak Republic  
the Slovak Republic

## **CONCLUSIONS**

**from the meeting of Ministers responsible for Cohesion Policy of the Visegrad Group countries, Bulgaria, Romania and Republic of Slovenia in the presence of the Member of European Commission responsible for Regional Policy**

Adopted on 15th of November 2010 in Bratislava

1. Ministers welcome the Communication of the Commission on the EU Budget Review. The new EU budget should be designed as one of the most important instruments to implement the Europe 2020 objectives. In this mission it has to pursue a result oriented approach while building on mutual benefits through solidarity, which is one of the cornerstones of the European Union. Ministers welcome the strategic and integrated orientation of the EU budget review as opposed to a revolutionary change based on sectoral approach. Cohesion Policy is rightly identified as an engine for the harmonious development and economic and social growth of the whole European Union.
2. Ministers welcome the publication of the 5th Cohesion Report, which shows inter alia significant contribution made by Cohesion Policy to the growth of the whole EU and to the reduction of economic, social and territorial disparities. The 5th Cohesion Report also proposes a reform of future Cohesion Policy based on its close linkage to Europe 2020 objectives, presenting a more strategic approach to Cohesion Policy.
3. Ministers welcome the proposal on reinforced strategic programming, especially the Common Strategic Framework for Cohesion Policy Funds, European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and European Fisheries Fund. As far as thematic concentration is concerned, we agree that Member States and regions need to concentrate the resources on a smaller number of priorities contributing to reduction of disparities and to the achievement of Europe 2020 objectives.
4. In this respect, the ministers wish to stress that the priorities chosen have to be selected according to the specific conditions of individual territories, in particular allowing the less developed regions the possibility to access a wider range of priorities including basic infrastructure and capacity building. This will allow to create conditions for economic growth, employment and innovation and thus directly contributing to Europe 2020 objectives.
5. Thematic concentration is directly connected with the need to focus more on outcomes of Cohesion Policy. The definition of clear national targets and quantifiable indicators during the programming phase is the basic precondition for the result oriented approach to work. In this respect, ministers wish to stress that the indicators need to be defined in a clear and predictable way and have to measure the direct effects of the investment activities cofinanced by Cohesion Policy not the impact of the investments on the global economic and social situation.
6. To achieve more visible and strengthened results of Cohesion Policy interventions it is vital to ensure a deeper integration of Cohesion Policy funds. Economic, social and territorial cohesion can be fully achieved only by integrated approach to implementation of the defined objectives with the use of European Regional Development Fund, European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund.
7. Referring to the issue of conditionalities proposed in the 5th Cohesion Report, ministers are in favour of a fair, equal and proportionate incentive mechanism, which would contribute to a more effective implementation of Cohesion Policy. We invite the

Commission to provide more concrete proposals together with Member States on how this could be put in place.

8. The objective to support the growth of the least developed EU regions and Member States has to remain the main focus of Cohesion Policy. As a development policy, Cohesion Policy has to support all EU regions in their efforts to overcome structural changes and attain growth; therefore we support the current architecture of objectives for Cohesion Policy Funding. As suggested by the European Commission, attention should also be paid to transition mechanisms in order to ensure simple and fair support system. In order to reduce unnecessary policy restrictions due to the geographical eligibility of territories within a Member State, greater flexibility in the implementation phase should be established at national level in order to allow for support of place-based approach. In this context, ministers wish to emphasize that the distribution of resources between priorities has to be decided by Member States according to their specific needs and objectives.
9. Ministers recognise the value added of local development approaches under Cohesion Policy. Therefore we need to strengthen the territorial approach as a complementary one to the sectoral approach and develop the mechanisms to address urban-rural links. For the future it is necessary to improve multi-level management and coordination between policies, ensure the reduction of regional disparities and intra-regional disparities to make better use of development potential of the territory, focusing on the integrated place-based approach.
10. Ministers are of the opinion that the evolution of management and control system for Cohesion Policy post 2013 should be based on the current experiences and in-depth assessment of the present institutional framework. In order for Cohesion Policy to be a stimulus for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth of EU regions, it is necessary to streamline and simplify the policy through a better balance between control-based and a trust-based system.
11. Ministers are of the opinion that a debate on the results of Cohesion Policy and its contribution to the implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy objectives should be carried out within the structures of the Council of Ministers. Strengthening the political system of the Cohesion Policy at the level of the Council will bring about a coordinated approach in the Cohesion Policy and will strengthen its relation to other policies.
12. Ministers welcome the ambitions of the Commission to prepare concrete proposals related to the Multiannual Financial Framework and to the policies and programmes implementing it by the end of 2011. Nevertheless they urge the Commission to present its proposals concerning the future regulatory and financial framework as soon as possible. Timely debate on the complex package of Cohesion Policy legislation (embracing rules of all its funds: European Regional Development Fund, European Social Fund and Cohesion Fund) is a prerequisite for launching the programmes of the new financial period on time, thereby contributing to delivering on our common goals for the future.

**JOINT STATEMENT**  
**of the 17<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Environment Ministers of the Visegrad Group Countries**  
**7-8 March 2011, Šamorín – Čilistov , Slovak Republic**

The Minister of Environment of the Czech Republic, Minister of Rural Development of Republic of Hungary, Under-Secretary of State of the Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Poland, Minister of Environment of the Slovak Republic representatives of the Visegrad Group Countries

- reaffirming the importance of the cooperation of the Visegrad Group countries in the field of environmental protection within the European Union,
  - bearing in mind the previous meetings of the Visegrad Group Environment Ministers,
  - considering the conclusions of the European Council in December 2010 and realizing the need for a coordinated action,
- have agreed as follows:

1. The Ministers exchanged their views on **international climate negotiations** in Cancun and underlined all positive outcomes that represent necessary steps forward. They emphasised that the Cancun Agreements constitutes a good basis to build an operational architecture for a comprehensive post-2012 framework, which ensures the continuation of the Kyoto Protocol and all its mechanisms, including Joint Implementation.

2. The Ministers acknowledged the establishment of the **Green Climate Fund**. They recognized the sensitivity but at the same time high urgency to start discussions on all decisive elements of the financial architecture and potential public, private and innovative sources of finance, criteria to define the scale and key for countries' contribution. Moreover, they stressed the significance for engagement and open dialog among public and private stakeholders from the very beginning.

3. Our positions on future financial architecture should reflect also experience with the on-going **fast-start financial mechanism**, which is an important step toward establishing the long-term framework. It is necessary to keep open dialog and exchange of experience gained from the practical implementation of the fast-start projects within the V4 group.

4. The Ministers agreed that it is necessary to re-enter in the discussion on the principles for countries' contribution to the international climate financing in the context of the establishment of the Green Climate Fund.

5. The Ministers are aware of a politically tense debate on **internal EU redistribution** of financial commitments; however they call for starting it without any delay. It is important that the EU will within short time agree on the format of this discussion so that wide participation and transparency will be ensured. One of possible option is to consider re-launching of the Friends of the Presidency Working Group on EU Internal Burden Sharing of Climate Financing.

6. The Ministers exchanged their views on the urgent need for a common EU position on the carry-over of AAUs from the first to the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol. The Ministers stressed that the EU should not support any ban on carry-over as this would penalize Parties for their overachievement of reduction targets. They also agreed that the EU should not support any carry-over option which would threaten the environmental integrity of the Protocol.

7. The Ministers also expressed the need to analyse alternative and innovative options of managing the surplus of AAUs and they invite experts to further explore them.

8. The Ministers agreed that the domestic offsetting mechanisms are useful and cost-effective tools to reduce GHG emissions within the EU. They agreed to invite the Commission to elaborate on the rules for projects, which would reduce emissions in the non-ETS sector, as stated in article 24a of the revised emission trading directive.

9. The Ministers support the Cohesion Fund to further fulfill the environmental targets within the EU.

10. The environment ministers of the V4 countries share common view on the preparation and adoption of the **7<sup>th</sup> Environmental Action Programme** of the European Union which should be adopted as soon as possible and before the final preparation of the new financial strategy of the European Union after 2013. Environmental objectives should be strongly mainstreamed especially in the cohesion and common agricultural and fishery policies. There should be a strong synergy developed between the environmental policy and efforts of the EU in the area of economic prosperity and competitiveness e.g. via resource efficiency, eco-innovation, enhancement of green economy. It is necessary to ensure the appropriate interlinkages and harmonisation between the 7<sup>th</sup> EAP and the Europe 2020 Strategy both on the EU and the national levels (e.g. through the National Reform Programmes) having in mind the overarching EU Sustainable Development Strategy.

11. The environment ministers of the V4 countries promote that the environmental aims and objectives should be taken into account in the **post-2013 financial strategy**, however without jeopardizing the amount of money invested via cohesion policy.

12. The environment ministers of the V4 countries will jointly promote natural resource efficiency, the inclusion of the protection of biodiversity and ecosystem services, water, and adaptation to climate change in the 7<sup>th</sup> EAP. The V4 countries will focus on the protection against flooding, droughts, extreme weather events and other nature disasters.

13. Any priority defined within the framework of the 7<sup>th</sup> Environmental Action Programme can only be successful if the corresponding tools and conditions are provided.

14. The ministers consider cooperation within the Visegrad countries in a **field of air quality** as a priority and due to their similar conditions they will coordinate their actions to improve the air quality.

15. V4 countries should seek a common approach concerning **source apportionment of PM 10/PM 2,5**, with the aim to provide a comparable information for thorough assessment of transboundary air pollution.

16. The Ministers believe that such cooperation will help to jointly plan actions aimed at the reduction of the concentration of PM 10/PM 2,5 in ambient air in problematic areas.

17. The ministers also agree to examine possibility of joint work on further development of dispersion models.

18. The Ministers declare that issue of **contaminated sites** is differently solved in new and old Member States, where companies have always been privately owned and it is easy to identify responsibility for contaminated sites and it is important to search for solution how to fulfill the “polluter pays” principle.



19. The V4 Ministers agreed that soil contamination is a problem of multiple dimensions: environmental, social and economic. Having in mind the common efforts towards smart sustainable and inclusive growth, the rehabilitation and revitalisation of the contaminated areas could have an important role in the enhancement of resource efficiency, protection of natural resources, introducing new technologies, meanwhile creating new jobs and strengthening green economy. Therefore V4 Ministers underline the importance of taking measures as concerns keeping the possibilities of financing reclamation of contaminated sites in future financial mechanism.

Done in Šamorín – Čilistov on 8 March 2011

His Excellency Mr. Tomáš Chalupa  
Minister of Environment  
Czech Republic

His Excellency Mr. Sándor Fazekas  
Minister of Rural Development  
Republic of Hungary

His Excellency Mr. Janusz Zaleski  
Under-Secretary of State of the Ministry of Environment  
Republic of Poland

His Excellency Mr. József Nagy  
Minister of Environment  
Slovak Republic

**Declaration**  
**by the Ministry of Justice of the Czech Republic, the Ministry of Public Administration and Justice of the Republic of Hungary the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Poland, and the Ministry of Justice of the Slovak Republic on cooperation with respect to increasing efficiency in the justice sector**

The Ministry of Justice of the Czech Republic, the Ministry of Public Administration and Justice of the Republic of Hungary, the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Poland, and the Ministry of Justice of the Slovak Republic

while recognizing the essential need to further develop and intensify cooperation in matters of judicial cooperation in order to provide mutual support to each other and to maximize the benefits arising from the increase of efficiency of justice in the Visegrád Group countries, expressing their desire and interest to build on good practices initiated by the Memorandum on cooperation with respect to information technology,

taking into account that an efficient organization of justice sector directly translates to a positive functioning of the business environment, taking into account the constitutional rules, legal traditions, and relations between organizations responsible for justice, hereby declare as follows:

The intention of the Ministers is to establish cooperation with respect to methods of increasing the institutional capacity and to ensure the efficiency of the justice sector.

The Ministers will take steps to engage in an open, constructive cooperation; and after consultation with the responsible judicial organizations to prepare the adequate measures with a view to aim towards increasing efficiency in the justice sector.

In order to provide for the close cooperation in their efforts of raising efficiency in the justice sector, Ministers wish to continue the exchange of knowledge in respect of:

- mutual exchange of information on the proposed, ongoing and implemented solutions on effective court management practices, trainings for court's employees, transparent evaluation system of courts and judges, use of modern technologies, together with the legal regulations applicable to such activities;
- exchange of experience and best practices with the aim of creating new synergies and strengthening existing ones;
- exploring the possibility of creating a joint training scheme for court employees.

**Minister of Justice  
of the Czech Republic**

**Junior Minister responsible for Justice  
of the Republic of Hungary**

**Minister of Justice  
of the Republic of Poland**

**Minister of Justice  
of the Slovak Republic**

**Memorandum of Cooperation**  
**between the Minister of Justice of the Republic of Croatia, the Minister of Justice of the Czech Republic, the Minister of Public Administration and Justice of Hungary, the Minister of Justice of the Republic of Poland and the Minister of Justice of the Slovak Republic**

The Minister of Justice of the Republic of Croatia, the Minister of Justice of the Czech Republic, the Minister of Public Administration and Justice of Hungary, the Minister of Justice of the Republic of Poland, and the Minister of Justice of the Slovak Republic (hereinafter referred to as ‘the Parties’),

recognizing the need for enhancing judicial training at European as well as at regional level, taking into account the constitutional rules, legal traditions and internal structures of each Party,

hereby declare as follows:

**Article 1**

The Parties are ready to enhance the cooperation of their judicial training bodies, which aims to cover the training of judges and prosecutors as well as other judicial staff. Details of such cooperation shall be set out in the cooperation protocol of the judicial training bodies.

**Article 2**

The Parties undertake to support to the extent possible the cooperation of their judicial training bodies the details of which shall be set out in the cooperation protocol to be signed in Budapest on 21/22 June 2011.

**Article 3**

The Parties are prepared to coordinate their efforts in order to get additional financing from European Union funds covering the needs of judicial training at a regional level jointly performed by training institutions within the framework of the cooperation protocols.

**Article 4**

The Parties shall endeavour to coordinate their positions within the decision-making bodies of the European Union on issues related to judicial training.

**Article 5**

The Parties are ready to support their training bodies, subject to availability of adequate funding, to have common training courses, seminars and exchange programs, and to share electronic learning tools.

**Article 6**

In order to effectively realize the objectives of this Memorandum the Parties shall designate a contact point in each Ministry of Justice. The Parties shall notify each other in writing of any changes concerning the contact details of such contact points. The contact points shall be in permanent contact with the respective training institutions.

**Article 7**

The Parties undertake to implement this Memorandum in line with its objectives and without prejudice to the organizational structure of the European Judicial Training Network.

**Article 8**

This Memorandum enters into force as of the date of its signature.

Done at Veszprém, on 5<sup>th</sup> May 2011 in five identical copies in the English language.

**Dražen BOŠNJAKOVIĆ**  
Minister of Justice of the Republic of Croatia

**Jiří POSPÍŠIL**  
Minister of Justice of the Czech Republic

**Tibor NAVRACSICS**

Minister of Public Administration and Justice of Hungary

**Lucia ŽITŇANSKÁ**

Minister of Justice of the Slovak Republic  
Poland

**Krzysztof KWIATKOWSKI**

Minister of Justice of the Republic of

**Joint Communiqué of the Ministers of Defence of the Visegrad Group Countries**  
**Levoča, 12 May 2011**

- We, the Ministers of Defence of the Visegrad Group, met today in Levoča, Slovakia, to discuss the possibilities of enhancing our defence cooperation. We recognise that, confronted with the budgetary pressure, mutual support is one of the most promising tools of maintaining and strengthening our defence capabilities and, consequently, our security.
- We paid homage to our troops serving our nations in missions abroad, as well as at home. We salute their achievements and thank them for their courage and sacrifice. We especially remember those who, in service of our nations, paid the ultimate price.
- We expressed our continuous support to defence reforms we are all pursuing. We heard the conclusions of the White Book on Defence of the Czech Republic and expressed our support for his undertaking. Implementing reforms in our own Armed Forces and Ministries is part of a much broader, NATO-wide efforts to guarantee Alliance's ability to conduct full spectrum of military missions.
- In this context, we stand aligned behind the ideas agreed at NATO's Lisbon Summit and embodied in the Alliance's New Strategic Concept and the Summit Declaration. We especially underline the importance of the collective defence guarantee and are determined to ensure its relevance in the eyes of our publics. In this context, the NATO exercise policy is of particular importance. Against this background, we look forward to the Steadfast Jazz exercise that is to test the NATO capability to respond to an Article 5 situation.
- In our discussions, we put a special emphasis on strengthening cooperation within the Euro-Atlantic area, as well as with partners and friends beyond. We underlined the importance of the transatlantic link and agreed to spare no effort in maintaining this vital bond.
- A real, full-fledged strategic partnership between NATO and the EU is essential for the long-term security of our countries and the entire Euro-Atlantic area. We, therefore, call upon all parties involved to strive to reach a satisfactory solution that would enhance practical NATO-EU cooperation.
- The cooperation between our countries and our neighbours will be further developed with a view to strengthening mutual friendship, trust and partnership. We support the transformational efforts of partners such as Ukraine and the Republic of Serbia and we agreed to help them on their path towards Euro-Atlantic integration.
- We emphasized the need to achieve and maintain stability, security and democracy in the Western Balkans. We also stressed the importance of the international efforts

aiming to rebuild and develop Afghanistan. The V4 countries will continue to support the stabilization process in both regions, as they remain among our top priorities.

- There is a need to protect civilians in Libya and to embark upon a path towards stability, security and democracy. We, therefore, support actions of the international community leading to the restoration of peace and creation of a free and democratic society in Libya. In this respect, we fully support the appropriate resolutions of the United Nations Security Council.
- We decided to work towards the creation of a V4 EU Battle Group in the first half of 2016. We have tasked our experts to conduct further work on practical implementation of this decision. We believe that the V4 EU Battle Group will be another concrete example of our successful cooperation. In this respect, the complementarities between the NRF and the EU Battle Group concepts will be continuously supported. We will investigate the involvement of other strategic partners with the motivation of offering them this unique transformational tool and enabling them to substantially contribute to the Common Security and Defence Policy of the EU.
- Cuts in defence budgets have resulted in a growing disparity in defence expenditures vis-à-vis our plans and previous pledges. We acknowledged that further cuts in defence budgets may jeopardise not only future development of capabilities, but also the ability to retain the existing ones. Therefore, creative multinational solutions for capability development are needed, including pooling and sharing. We discussed our possibilities here and agreed to assign the highest priority to positive development in this area. We, therefore, tasked our subject matter experts to develop concrete proposals and plans aimed at doing more together, saving resources and reaping the benefits of international cooperation.
- We thank our Slovak colleague for the hospitality extended to us at Levoča and for the work done by the Slovak V4 Presidency at this challenging, budget-constrained period. We also thank the Hungarian EU Presidency for the hard work and express our support to the upcoming Polish EU Presidency. We agreed that we would continue our formal, as well as informal contacts and we look forward to the next V4 Defence Ministers meeting in the Czech Republic.

*Jiří Šedivý*  
*on behalf of Alexander Vondra*

*Bogdan Klich*

*Csaba Hende*

*Eubomír Galko*

### **Annex 3**

## **List/Summary of Selected Major Public Diplomacy Events Organized as a Part of Diplomatic Missions of V4 – Embassies of the Slovak Republic Abroad**

<b><u>Date, Place:</u></b>	<b><u>Event name:</u></b>
8 July 2010, Nicosia	Presentation of the SK V4 PRES Programme priorities.
August 2010, Kuala Lumpur	V4 tourist presentation for Malaysian tour-operators
11 August 2010, Buenos Aires	Lecture related to the 20 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of the V4 in the European club
September 2010, Rome	Slovak Presidency presentation as a part of a state reception
September 2010, Jakarta	Presentation of the SK V4 PRES priorities and V4 history
15 September 2010, Vienna	Meeting of V4 Permanent Representatives at OSCE with a Special US Envoy for Conventional Forces in Europe, Victoria Nuland
15 September 2010, Skopje	Public discussion of V4 embassies and Macedonian journalists on the subject of “What has changed in the V4 countries after they joined the EU?”
15 – 18 September 2010, Kazan, Samara and N. Novgorod	Joint V4 presentation of the tourist industry in the V4 countries
21 September 2010, Haag	Presentation of investment possibilities in the V4 countries and a meeting of the V4 economic diplomats with representatives of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the subject of “Harmonization of the EU Member States’ Tax Systems”
21 September 2010, Moscow	Joint tourist presentation of V4 tour-operators
28 September 2010, Shahrekord	Economic presentation of the Embassies of the V4 countries in Iran
1 October 2010, Sarajevo	Presentation of foreign policy priorities of the SK V4 PRES
5 October 2010, Geneva	Reception for V4 parliament delegations on the occasion of the 123 <sup>rd</sup> Inter-parliamentary Union Assembly



18 – 22 October 2010, Moscow	Film Festival of V4 countries in the Slovak Institute
19 October 2010, Dublin	Presentation of V4 tourist possibilities
25 October 2010, Ljubljana	Lunch of the V4 Ambassadors with the Slovenian President
25 October 2010, Nicosia	V4 presentation
November 2010, Paris	Festival “Jazzycolours“ organized by V4 cultural institutes.
9 November 2010, Cape Town	Joint representation of the Embassies of the V4 countries: “V4 as a tourist destination”
11 November 2010, Rome, Bologna	Concert of a Slovak quartet presenting a contemporary and classical works of V4 composers.
24 November 2010, Buenos Aires	Participation of V4 Ambassadors in the 5 <sup>th</sup> Congress of International Relations, National University in La Plata
26 November 2010, Copenhagen	Working meeting of the V4 and BENELUX Ambassadors in the Kingdom of Denmark.
29 November 2010, Kiev	Meeting with former and current Ukrainian IVF scholarship holders
2 December 2010, Moscow	Joint tourist presentation of V4 countries tour-operators
6 December 2010, Sarajevo	Exhibition related to the V4’s 20 <sup>th</sup> anniversary “V4 – Regions and their Residential Towns”
7 December 2010, Lisbon	Christmas piano concert of D. Buranovsky playing pieces of V4 countries composers
26 January- 5 February 2011, Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta, Bangalore	Presentation of tourist possibilities in Slovakia within V4
February 2011, Moscow	Preparation and issuing of tourist-info brochure about the tourist industry in V4 countries in Russian language and preparation of the V4 web page for Russian tour-operators: <a href="http://e-learning.european-quartet.com">e-learning.european-quartet.com</a>
February 2011, Zagreb	Permanent exhibition related to the SK V4 PRES and the 20 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of V4
February – March 2011,	

Slovak Embassies and Slovak institutes	Travelling exhibition of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the SR regarding the 20 <sup>th</sup> V4 anniversary “Stronger together“
2 February 2011, Slovak Permanent Representation to the EU, Brussels	21 <sup>st</sup> EDS discussion at the Winter University 2011 „European and Regional Integration - the Role of the Youth.“ Possibilities for young people in business, politics, science - held on the occasion of the V4 20th anniversary
11 February 2011, Ljubljana	Press conference for media representatives regarding the 20 <sup>th</sup> V4 anniversary
14 -15 February 2011, Ljubljana	Celebrations of the 20 <sup>th</sup> V4 anniversary: Round table “Visegrad 4 – platform for cooperation and coordination”, attended also by V4 NGOs and academic experts; cultural event of V4 countries with mayors of V4 capitals present.
15 February 2011, Brasília	Interview with the Slovak Ambassador for SuperRadio FM, and publishing a joint article of V4 Ambassadors in the Correio Brasiliense daily.
15 February 2011, Madrid	Concert of a piano virtuoso D. Buranovský related to the 20 <sup>th</sup> V4 anniversary
15 February 2011, Prague	Interview with the Slovak Ambassador to the Czech Republic live on ČT24
15 February 2011, Pretoria	Presentation of V4 for South - African guests and diplomatic corps
16 February 2011, Nicosia	Ceremonial academy presenting the regional V4 cooperation
16 February 2011, Bucharest	Conference related to the 20 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of the V4 establishment “Contribution of V4 countries and Romania to the Eastern dimension of the European Neighbourhood Policy”
16 February 2011, Prague	Central European Jazz Connection-jazz concert
16 – 18 February 2011, Moscow	Joint tourist presentation of V4 tour-operators

17 February 2011, Washington	Ceremonial cultural – social event organized at the Slovak Embassy in Washington related to the 20 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of the V4
18 February 2011, Kishinev	Conference related to the 20 <sup>th</sup> anniversary V4: “Democratization and the European future of the Republic of Moldova”, attended also by the State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Slovak Republic
18 February 2011, Skopje	Lunch of Head of Missions of the V4 countries with the Macedonian President Gjorg Ivanov related to the 20 <sup>th</sup> anniversary of the V4
18 February 2011, Haag	Presentation of investment possibilities in the V4 countries and a meeting of the V4 economic diplomats with representatives of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the subject of “Harmonization of the EU Member States’ Tax Systems”
18 – 24 February 2011, Dubai	Presentation of the V4 in the “Gulf Research Center”
21 February 2011, NATO, Brussels	Exhibition related to the 20 <sup>th</sup> V4 anniversary -Efficient Visegrad – Continuity, Cohesion, Solidarity and Awareness
21 February 2011, Oslo	Presentation of the SK V4 PRES on the occasion of the 20 <sup>th</sup> V4 anniversary
23 February 2011, Lisbon	Interview with the Slovak Ambassador for Radio Minho on the occasion of the 20 <sup>th</sup> V4 anniversary
February – May 2011, Madrid, Alicante, Elche	Lectures of the Slovak Ambassador about the V4 history and present
March 2011, Kuala Lumpur	Interview with the Ambassador about the V4 importance and the SK V4 PRES goals, published in the Sur La Terre magazine
March 2011, Zagreb	Lectures of the Slovak Ambassador about the V4 in the Diplomatic club and the European House
8 March 2011, London	Exhibition of V4 significant towns connected with a lecture held on the occasion of the 20 <sup>th</sup> V4 anniversary
11 March 2011, Kiev	V4 meeting of the Association of Military Attaches

14 -15 March 2011, Delhi	Conference related to the 20 <sup>th</sup> V4 anniversary in Jawaharlal Nehru University
21 March 2011, EESC Brussels	Ceremonial event related to the 20 <sup>th</sup> V4 anniversary comprising several events: Panel discussion of V4 personalities “Quo Vadis Visegrad?”, photo exhibition “V4 seen with my eyes“, jazz concert of V4 musicians
21 March 2011, Helsinki	Concert of a Bratislava boy choir on the occasion of the 20 <sup>th</sup> V4 anniversary
22 – 27 March 2011, Brussels	Week of V4 films – “The best of Visegrad“
25 March 2011, Mexico City	Live TV broadcast of the lecture of the SR Ambassador on TV – lecture about V4 at the Technological Institute de Monterrey
31 March 2011, Cape Town	V4 Investment Seminar and Visegrad Film Marathon
4 April 2011, Oslo	Presentations of the SK V4 PRES on the occasion of the 20 <sup>th</sup> V4 anniversary
5 April 2011, Prague	Concert as a part of the ‘Visegrad anniversary cycle’
5 April 2011, Budapest	Concert of the artistic group of Visegrad Cello Quartet on the occasion of the 20 <sup>th</sup> V4 anniversary and introduction of the “Stronger together” exhibitions
12 April 2011, Lisbon	Economic presentation of the V4 regions for PALOP diplomats
13 April 2011, Kaliningrad	Joint presentation of the V4 tourist industry
13 – 15 April 2011, Beijing	V4 countries’ participation in the ”China Outbound Travel and Tourism Market“, WTC
15 April 2011, Mexico City	Panel conference “V4 Challenges and Opportunities” at the Santa Fe University and the exhibition of 20 years of V4 held in the Diplomatic Academy of the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs
20 April 2011, Seoul	Ceremonial concert of the Czech-Slovak chamber duo on the occasion of the 20 <sup>th</sup> V4 anniversary
24 April 2011, Ankara	Ceremonial concert and exhibition on the occasion of the 20 <sup>th</sup> V4 anniversary

May 2011, House of Europe, Paris	Round table and a 'Movie Night' organized by the V4 institutes
May 2011, Mexico City	Panel conference "V4 Challenges and Opportunities" at the Santa Fe University and the exhibition of 20 years of V4 in the Diplomatic Academy of the Mexican Ministry of Foreign Affairs
3 May 2011, Oslo	Lectures of the Slovak Ambassador about V4 and EU for Norwegian students
3 May 2011, Prague	Concert as a part of the Visegrad anniversaries cycle
10 May 2011, Cairo	Seminar of NGO experts "Transformation of the V4 countries' experience" organized by the Embassies of the V4 countries in cooperation with the European Commission Delegation
10 May 2011, Oslo	Presentations on the occasion of the 20 <sup>th</sup> V4 anniversary
11 May 2011, Kiev	Meeting of Political Directors of the V4 Ministries of Foreign Affairs with Ukrainian NGO's representatives
11 May 2011, Paris (OECD)	Social-cultural event on the occasion of the 20 <sup>th</sup> V4 anniversary attended also by the OECD Secretary General
12 May 2011, Shanghai	Economic presentation of V4 countries
14 -18 May 2011, Belarusian towns	Presentation of the International Visegrad Fund/IVF at universities and meeting with NGOs
17 May 2011, Minsk	Meeting on the occasion on appointing the 2 <sup>nd</sup> Secretary of the Embassy of the Slovak Republic in Minsk as a Honorary Trustee of the IVF in Belarus
18 May 2011, Ljubljana	Lunch of the V4 Ambassadors with the Slovenian President
27 May 2011, Beijing	Presentation of V4 Ambassadors about regional cooperation within the EU for Chinese media
28 May 2011, Cape Town	V4 Investment Seminar and Visegrad Film Marathon
29 – 31 May 2011, Cairo	Visegrad Film Festival

May - June 2011, Beijing	Presentation of V4 countries at the Peking University and panel discussions with V4 Ambassadors
June 2011, Lisbon	Cultural Days to conclude the SK V4 PRES
June 2011, Tel Aviv	Film Festival of V4 countries
2 June 2011, London	Symposium about the V4 region at the School of Slavonic and Eastern-European Studies at the University College
7 June 2011, Copenhagen	Panel discussion "Visegrad personalities who helped to tear down the iron curtain" attended by V4 personalities and the Danish ex-Minister U. Ellemann-Jensen
7 – 12 June, 2011 Astana, Karakanda	Week of the V4 countries culture
8 June 2011, Buenos Aires	V4 Ambassadors' lectures for students about V4
10 June 2011, Buenos Aires	V4 Ambassadors' lectures for students about V4
14 June 2011, Moscow	Academic seminar "V4 – history, presence, perspectives" and a classical music concert of V4 composers
16 June 2011, Sofia	International Conference: "Euro-Atlantic integration of the Western Balkans: implementing the V4 experience"