

Visegrad 4
Integration
& Cohesion



Polish Presidency of the Visegrad Group
July 2012–June 2013

Programme of the Presidency

PROGRAMME
OF THE POLISH PRESIDENCY
OF THE VISEGRAD GROUP
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Visegrad 4 for Integration and Cohesion

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Introductory remarks

Poland's Presidency¹ of the Visegrad Group /V4/ (July 2012 – June 2013) comes at a time of serious economic and political challenges for the European Union and globally. We are seeing this difficult period occur almost a quarter of a century after our countries, owing to their solidarity and years of struggle, had torn down the Iron Curtain and overcome the political division imposed on Europe by force, in the wake of World War II. The post-war decisions foisted on us had divested us of the right to self-determination and democracy and, consequently, doomed us to ever worsening backwardness and separation from the mainstream of a European civilisation that is founded on a respect for human rights. In a relatively short time, we have managed to not only bridge a significant gap in the distance separating us from the rest of Europe, but also to become responsible and active members of both the North Atlantic Alliance and the European Union. The current, multifaceted crisis – which is both financial and identity-related – confronts Europe with new challenges and the risk of renewed division of our continent. Criticism of the implemented changes is becoming more pronounced. The Visegrad states, and indeed all of Central Europe, must not remain indifferent to these risks. The global competitive success of our countries – and of Europe as a whole – hinges on the continuation of the ongoing process of reuniting our continent and deepening this unity.

The goal of the Polish Presidency of the Visegrad Group is to further strengthen the position of our countries within international forums and to consolidate the achievements of EU enlargement and the successes enjoyed by the “Central-European” Presidencies of the Council of the European Union (i.e. the Czech, Hungarian and Polish presidencies). The Visegrad Group has come to epitomise successful systemic transformation, while intra-group cooperation has been acclaimed as an important, constructive element of the European integration process. In our commitment to the unification of the Continent, we must strive to fashion the European agenda appropriately, defend achievements in the field of civil liberties and freedoms, deepen the single market, continue enlargement policy and expand neighbourhood policy. The persisting crisis hampers consensus building and encourages the revival of national egoisms. The societies of the Visegrad states (the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia) continue to have confidence in the integration process, despite the problems

¹ This is Poland's fourth Presidency. Previous Polish Presidencies: 2000/1, 2004/5 and 2008/9.

associated with the crisis, the costs of transformation, and the burdens shouldered by V4 societies in aligning with EU requirements.

As part of its contribution to the continuing integration of Europe, the Visegrad Group will support initiatives designed to enhance the cohesion and internal integration of our region. During the initial period of growth after the fall of the Iron Curtain and accession to NATO and the EU, the Visegrad states altered their socio-economic structures while comprehensively switching to new avenues of international cooperation. A natural outcome of this was the increase of hitherto artificially obstructed contacts with Western partners, often at the expense of stronger cooperation in the region. Consequently, the region experienced a certain deficit of infrastructural and regional cooperation in the economic, cultural and social spheres, a circumstance which hampers V4 growth and adversely influences our security, as seen for example in the energy sector.

We should, therefore, place a greater emphasis on improving infrastructure which facilitates contacts between our societies and on further developing our economic, cultural and scientific ties. It is necessary to support exchanges of young people, students and academic staff. We need better understanding between our societies – which remain affected by historical stereotypes – and to make better use of our geographic location to attract new investments, spur economic growth and reinforce national security. We must also make full use in our region of all those factors that bear out the practical value of the Union's *acquis communautaire* and the fundamental freedoms of European integration (free movement of goods, capital, services and people). Moreover, greater cohesion and the ensuing stronger cooperation should help to enhance our region's attractiveness.

International infrastructure connections in the region, particularly along the north-south axis, are of key significance. In Poland's view, there is a need for new investments in transport due to the continuing deterioration of existing connections caused by the political changes in the 1980s and 1990s, which gave rise to new hubs in economic and socio-political relations. The Visegrad Group states will enjoy new opportunities by developing transport routes along the EU's eastern border and by establishing better links between the Visegrad countries and the other partners in the region, leading in turn to permanent transport connections between the Baltic region and the Adriatic and Black Sea regions.

Our countries' geopolitical position means that we are natural actors supporting further effectiveness and the sustainability of the EU project, the EU enlargement process and the development of neighbourhood policy. We should enhance our role in the Eastern Partnership area, supporting the development of civil society, the democratisation processes and the approximation to European Union standards. The successful completion of the European integration process in the Western Balkans also

requires further transformation, a field where the experience of Visegrad countries can play a key role.

With over two decades worth of achievements, the Visegrad Group reflects the mutual bonds and common interests of countries that possess shared historical experiences and challenges. In recent years, after some ups and downs in the first decade of development, Visegrad cooperation has attained an impressive degree of intensity. This allows the V4 to be increasingly effective in tackling ever more challenging problems linked to globalisation. Owing to this enhanced cooperation, the Visegrad Group – a Central-European heartland and a role model for other partners, including non-European ones – has earned its due place in our political, social and cultural awareness and in the planning of economic projects. In speaking of the Visegrad Group, we speak of a community of interests, although we know that this does not mean unanimity. However, it is no less important that the development of Visegrad cooperation has strengthened the EU belief that this cooperation brings added value to regional cohesion and stability, while being beneficial for the EU as a whole. A strong, effective and resolved Visegrad Group successfully strengthens the European Union.

Importantly, the V4 countries – spuriously isolated from the rest of democratic Europe for over half a century – have, since rejoining Europe, markedly augmented the European Union's growth potential and opened up, before the EU, a better perspective of coping with the challenges posed by globalisation and the rapid changes in the global balance of power. This optimised use of Europe's potential is becoming a key factor in facing up to the severe aftermath of the crisis – globally and within the EU.

The Visegrad Group, demonstrating an ever stronger regional identity in spite of the natural differences between Member States, has become a role model for successful regional cooperation. It is an antidote of sorts to the newly voiced scepticism to integration.

Poland's Presidency of the V4 will seek to further streamline constructive regional cooperation for the benefit of an integrated Europe. We would like the Visegrad Group to be an increasingly effective advocate of the interests of the Central European EU Member States and to enable these Member States to articulate policy ideas important to the region and the entire EU. The Visegrad Group offers them an opportunity to enhance their sense of participation in European affairs and to highlight the EU-wide political significance of Central European cooperation. Essential factors will include communication, new ways to synchronise the pursuit of V4 interests, and emphasis on the objective community of these interests and the role of broadly conceived regional and V4 cohesion. The V4 should, among other things, strive for the adoption of the maximum number of solutions by the entire EU – not just the eurozone. We count on the opportunity to highlight V4 needs during the Cypriot and Irish Presidencies of the Council of the European Union.

During Poland's V4 Presidency, we would like Visegrad cooperation to help build a regional community of countries. It will thus be necessary to step up actions for stronger contacts between our societies and to promote and disseminate the culture and history of Central European states through educational and scientific projects, conferences, scholarships, grants and youth exchanges. The International Visegrad Fund (IVF) will play an indispensable role here.

We wish to push ahead with the good examples set by past Presidencies and build on their experiences. We aim to include other partners in our cooperation to the furthest possible extent, based on the proven "V4+" format. This will help to further consolidate the achievements of the enlargement process and to harness the potential of Central-Eastern Europe with a view to boosting European integration.

Foreign Policy Priorities

Within the foreign policy framework, the Polish Presidency of the V4 will focus on current **European affairs**. It will take action to coordinate V4 positions in the run-up to European Council meetings, the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) and the General Affairs Council (GAC). The tradition of holding V4 consultations prior to important EU meetings will be maintained and the Permanent Representations of the V4 countries to the EU in Brussels will be encouraged to work more closely together. The V4 Presidency will orientate its activities around V4 sectoral cooperation on issues such as the future of cohesion policy, regional development policy and strategic programming.

The period during which Poland presides over V4 will be crucial for placing the final pieces of the anti-crisis strategy. The major task of V4 will be to promote an ambitious EU growth agenda as an indispensable element of overcoming the sovereign debt crisis. In particular, the V4 partners should cooperate closely to pursue the most important initiatives with the biggest growth potential, such as completion of the Single Market and building the digital market. In the context of the ongoing efforts to improve the architecture and governance of the Economic and Monetary Union the V4, as a forum that gathers both non-euro and euro area Member States, is well suited to come up with and promote solutions that are inclusive and based on the community method, so that the EMU emerges from the crisis as a stronger, more integrated and competitive actor in the global economy.

Poland's V4 Presidency coincides with a host of key decisions covering EU funds and policies. Therefore, a major task will be to articulate a consistent position of V4 states in negotiations on the **multiannual financial framework (MFF) 2014-2020**. The Presidency will focus primarily on drafting and promoting common V4 positions on all key elements of the MFF – first and foremost on cohesion policy. Within this scope, the Presidency will also strive to ensure the compatibility of activities undertaken in the V4 framework and the Friends of Cohesion Policy Group. To this end, the V4 expert-

-level coordination mechanism will be widely employed. It will be important for the V4 to support the Cypriot Presidency of the EU Council in its efforts to secure a final compromise, which should be as close as possible to the V4 vision of Europe. The V4 will necessarily be required to collaborate with the Cypriot and/or Irish Presidencies in the MFF negotiations with the European Parliament, and to continue to collaborate closely at the technical level in negotiations on specific solutions in terms of implementation instruments under the negotiated MFF political compromise. V4 cooperation, in the context of EU budgeting decisions for 2014 and 2015, is equally essential. Poland's Presidency will endeavour to work out a common V4 position on annual EU budgeting procedures, in particular, to maintain support for cohesion policy funds and the overall size of the EU budget for 2013 and 2014.

V4 cooperation in the scope of spatial development is of equal importance, as this issue is directly linked to the strengthening of Central European cohesion (updating and fine-tuning programme documents published to-date, such as the Common Spatial Development Document of the V4+2 format in the context of defining a common catalogue of regional needs). The Presidency believes in the importance of continuing V4+ discussions on implementing a new Polish spatial development concept, complete with cooperation prospects and implications for the development of Central European infrastructure. Special emphasis will apply to consultations on cross-border infrastructure discontinuities along the development axes in the V4 area (and, more broadly, in the V4+ region), the removal of barriers to spatial development and the strengthening of spatial cohesion through territorial cooperation instruments (also in the context of developing macro-regional strategies).

Energy security will be a key cooperation issue under the Polish Presidency. A major task is to ensure broad-based political support for the construction of a North-South gas transport corridor. The Presidency also intends to tackle the issue of shale gas extraction. It will initiate and endeavour to expand V4 cooperation in nuclear power. V4 discussions should also cover the security of oil supplies and the coordination of EU energy and climate policies.

One of the top priorities of Poland's V4 Presidency will be to further promote and enhance V4 cooperation to cover tasks and projects which support the development and implementation of the **Eastern Partnership (EaP)** as a long-term V4 priority. The Presidency is planning to broaden the **V4+EaP** cooperation formats to include sectoral meetings on selected issues and to enlarge, in line with accepted practices, the number of participants by inviting other EU countries which have an interest in EaP development. The Presidency will continue to develop the process started during the previous Czech and Slovak Presidencies; in particular a V4 presence in the region and the IVF's special EaP programme, which should pinpoint key fields for cooperation. The Presidency believes it desirable to hold consultations between the International Visegrad Fund and the European External Action Service, with the participation of the

competent Commission Directorate (DG DEVCO) to coordinate future EaP projects. One key Presidency task will consist in sharing transformation experiences with EaP countries and aligning laws with EU standards, a significant step connected to the rollout of Comprehensive Institution Building Programmes (CIB) for individual EaP countries.

V4 cooperation should serve to better coordinate the V4 countries' positions with regard to EU policy towards EaP countries, in particular **Ukraine** and **Belarus**. The Polish Presidency intends to boost V4 cooperation with representatives of Belarusian civil society.

In view of the fact that Poland's V4 Presidency comes at a key time for finalising Croatia's EU accession, scheduled for 1st July 2013, this process and the EU aspirations of other **Western Balkan (WB)** countries, as a part of the EU enlargement process, will continue to receive strong political support.

In relations with the Western Balkans, it will be helpful – wherever justifiable – to cooperate in the V4+ format, and to extend the format to include Croatia (following this country's accession to the EU). A key task for V4 countries should be to share their experiences with WB states in matters relating to EU accession and the initial stages of EU membership. The Presidency will propound the idea of establishing a permanent V4 pool of experts on EU accession negotiations. Their expertise would back V4 contacts and projects supporting WB countries on their path towards European integration. An idea worth considering consists of initiating sectoral meetings between the V4 and the WB states. With a view to supporting Western Balkan states' sense of regional ownership, the Visegrad Group will continue to encourage these states to establish a core funding mechanism, patterned on the IVF, to strengthen their regional cooperation.

Close cooperation will also continue under Poland's Presidency in respect of coordinating the positions of V4 countries on **Common Foreign and Security Policy** and, where possible, presenting V4's shared positions on issues of common interest. Topics to be discussed include the representation of V4 states in the staffing of the European External Action Service (EEAS), joint actions to second V4 diplomats serving in their national foreign services to the EEAS, experience sharing, and consultations on how to improve EEAS efficiency.

One of the tasks the Polish Presidency has set itself is to deepen EU **security and defence** cooperation and ensure complementary relations with NATO, based on the principle of partnership. Closer V4 cooperation in developing the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) serves this purpose. It would be valuable to draw up and present to selected organizations (the UN, EU, NATO, OSCE) the V4's shared positions on issues of common interest. Another objective will be to strengthen ties with

Eastern partners in the field of CSDP. In this respect, the Presidency will support the implementation of initiatives directed towards Eastern partners.

It would be advisable to carry out a review of V4 defence cooperation in order to give this cooperation the right momentum. Special emphasis should be given to the preparation of the V4 Battle Group, to be on stand-by in the first semester of 2016. There will be a need for V4 consultations on NATO-Russian relations, a V4 common position on Missile Defence and on the Russian response, on NATO cooperation with Ukraine and Georgia, consultations on CFE and force deployment in the region, consultations, in the broader format of V4+ Baltic states + Romania and Bulgaria, on common security issues, and with regard to cyber security and energy security.

In **counter-terrorism**, the Polish Presidency believes that it is imperative to consistently reinforce and improve coordination between the counter-terrorism systems of the V4 states while responding to the tasks set forth in relevant counter-terrorism strategies.

The Presidency shall continue V4 dialogue with the **United States** on such issues as international security (cooperation within NATO and in Afghanistan, maintaining military commitment to Europe), energy – including energy security, energy-producing raw minerals (shale gas), nuclear power, renewable energy, as well as the democratic process in the Eastern Partnership region and North Africa (Egypt, Tunisia, Libya) – including the application of V4 transition experiences and the effective coordination of aid projects by the V4 and the USA (including projects under the US Emerging Donors Challenge Fund). V4-US dialogue will also cover other issues of international significance (Western Balkans, Eastern Europe), in line with ongoing needs. The plan is to hold a consultation meeting of the V4 foreign ministries' political directors with their US partners (first half of 2013) within this dialogue format. We also intend to continue to pursue the V4 Fellow Exchange Programme co-organised by the US Centre for European Policy Analysis (CEPA).

Another important aspect of V4 cooperation under the Polish Presidency concerns the **"V4+ third countries"** format, focusing on countries in Central-Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, but also on other regions. It is essential to develop cooperation with Japan (energy sector), Israel (also on the EU-Israel dialogue platform) and Egypt (energy, tourism, the environment and the economy). V4 contacts will continue to be developed with China, Taiwan and the Republic of Korea, in order to promote all of Central-Eastern Europe, with likely positive impacts on exchanges in the fields of science, culture, investment, trade and tourism. The V4+ cooperation format will be used to analyse options for developing V4 dialogue with regional groups – the Nordic Council of Ministers, the Benelux countries and the Baltic states.

The Polish Presidency also intends to intensify the V4 cooperation format in the **United Nations** forum. In this context, the Presidency proposes to hold consultations of the

V4 heads of missions to the UN and Warsaw – based consultations of the directors of Foreign Ministry departments for the UN – and maintain current V4 expert-level contacts with regard to issues on the agenda of the Security Council, the General Assembly and its Committees, and specialized UN agencies and bodies.

The Presidency will focus on interactions with V4 partners in the field of **development cooperation** with emphasis on greater effectiveness of development aid – to be achieved through better coordination. The Polish Presidency intends to build on the V4's development cooperation and transition experience initiatives, addressed in particular to the EaP and Western Balkan countries. Closer V4 cooperation, with special focus on the EaP states, would give it greater political and financial importance, in view of the distinctive yet similar transition experiences of the individual V4 states, particularly with regard to Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova. However, development cooperation with the other EaP and Western Balkan states will remain equally important for the V4 countries. The Presidency also perceives the need to hold discussions on the respective positions towards the EU development policy agenda, in particular on such key themes as the financial instruments for external support under the MFF for 2014-2020 – particularly DCI, EDF the ENPI and IPA, as well as the European Endowment for Democracy.

With regard to **consular cooperation**, the Polish Presidency intends to take actions aimed at intensifying and broadening this cooperation by tapping all possible options for V4 collaboration, for example the shared rental of buildings for diplomatic or consular use. Consideration should be given to adopting comparable executive standards across all V4 countries (e.g. for Directors/Secretaries-General, possibly consular departments), ensuring continuity of working relationships, and – as in the case of DG/SG offices – to providing a broader sweep of institutional change in the diplomatic mission networks of the individual countries. The Polish Presidency is in favour of developing the concept of “*Visegrad Houses*” (modelled on the “House” in Cape Town, RSA). We shall support the development of consular cooperation in Ukraine. We also intend to step up consular cooperation in other third (non-EU) countries, particularly based on mutual visa representation agreements between the V4 states. Equally, greater coordination in the forums of EU consular issue working groups (i.e. COCON and VISA) will be advised.

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Development of Civil Society Contacts – Priorities

The Polish Presidency proposes to consider developing a number of projects to support broadly conceived civil society contacts.

The first of these provides for establishing the **Visegrad Clubs Network** in all types of schools in the territories of Visegrad Group countries (with the subsequent intention of inviting schools from Eastern Partnership states and the Mediterranean region). The purpose of the project is to build a network of partners promoting the history and culture of the V4 states and to initiate new regional interschool cooperation programmes. These Clubs – operating as extracurricular classes – will engage in cultural and artistic activities promoting common Visegrad themes.

The second project is the **Visegrad Creative City Label**, to be implemented in 2014-2018. This will contribute to the advancement of V4 cities and cultures by highlighting the best solutions that combine creativity, innovation and high standards of living, and support mutual understanding and cooperation between V4 citizens. The programme is to be addressed to V4 cities that will compete for the “Creative City” Label. In their contest application, the candidate cities will need to describe, among other things, their multinational activity programmes for cultural and scientific collaboration, tailored to the “V4 Creative City” criteria and corresponding to the IVF concept, and to demonstrate their cities’ innovative and creative accomplishments and initiatives in the realms of culture, science, management, economics and international contacts.

The third project is the **Academy of Visegrad Cities**, designed to expand regional cooperation between urban movements, scientists, urban planners and activists, and to transfer practical know-how about decision-making, to boost citizens’ inclusion in local democratic decision-making, and to build a sense of co-responsibility for the

public space. Such activities will help to establish a multilateral collaborative framework and will mark the first step on the way to applying innovative approaches to citizens' involvement in the lives of their cities. The programme will attract representatives of social organisations, urban movements and research institutes from the V4 states (possibly also under the V4+ format). Through imaginative cross-fertilisation, they will design urban projects to set and promote best standards. This initiative is also expected to broaden the number of communities engaged in the Visegrad process, thus diversifying future applications and applicants for V4 grants.

The Polish Presidency, furthermore, supports measures aimed at launching **a master's course in international relations, with a major in "European integration in the Visegrad perspective"**. The aim of this project is to reinforce competencies in the interdisciplinary domain of international relations, with emphasis on the economic, political, social and cultural implications of European integration for V4 countries. Graduates will thus command practical and theoretical knowledge of the impact of European integration on the Visegrad region.

Sectoral priorities

1 Education

Education, Volunteering, Youth

- working meeting “V4 Youth Roundtable” with the participation of directors for youth, experts, youth representatives (from youth councils) and NGO representatives – V4+EaP+Russia format – December 2012 – as a forum for sharing best practices and planning future projects. Support for V4 countries’ youth cooperation with countries in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus. Sharing of best practices in implementing the Conclusions of the EU Council for Education, Youth, Culture and Sport on the eastern dimension of youth participation and mobility;
- working meeting of V4 experts assigned to EU working bodies (Education Committee, Working Party on Youth) on the subject of EU next generation programmes for education, training, youth and sport, leading to a V4 common position on the “Erasmus for All” programme as proposed by the European Commission (working session to draw up a V4 common position for negotiations on the programme conducted with the European Commission and Parliament);
- organisation of a seminar with V4 representatives on the mutual perception of V4 societies among representatives of the young generation.

2 Finances

Customs Cooperation

- organisation of a periodic meeting of the V4 states’ heads of customs services (2013);
- organisation of a meeting of the Fuel Task Force;
- continuation of joint actions in the area of “Prevention of fiscal fraud in connection with intra-community mineral oil movements”;
- presentation of the National X-Ray Centre of the Polish Customs Service (interpretation of images) with the aim of using its capabilities for the benefit of V4 countries.

Cooperation of Fiscal Administrations

- organisation of a meeting of the V4 heads of Central Liaison Offices: V4+ Austria and Slovenia.

Cooperation on Climate Change Funding

- V4 consultations on climate change financing, including the debate on the new financial perspective and on mitigating climate change in the context of global negotiations.

3 Economy

Competitiveness and Innovation

- cooperation to boost the competitiveness and innovation of V4 national economies:

- integration of V4 science centres; enhanced cross-border collaboration between research centres, universities and companies to spur the transfer and application of new technologies in industry; strengthening cooperation between regional innovation and business centres providing services supporting development of innovative business (e.g. matching innovation companies with investors); enhanced cooperation between V4 industrial property offices; making use of EU programmes to support trans-regional innovation cooperation (e.g. FP7 Regions of Knowledge, EEN); making use of EU programmes to finance “green technology” projects e.g. in the area of power generation and services for the environment;
- closer cooperation between clusters in V4 countries;
- facilitation of connectivity of SMEs in the V4 framework focusing on supply chain systems;
- developing cooperation and exchange of experience on the implementation and application of the European navigation satellite systems EGNOS and Galileo in the economy and society;
- improvement of the internal markets of V4 countries through joint actions for developing a flexible, competitive and productive V4 economy.

Consumer protection

V4 cooperation in the field of consumer protection shall focus on product safety, specifically on:

- cooperation in the drafting of legislation to ensure consumer safety in the field of non-food consumer products in the non-harmonised area;
- joint activities in the field of market surveillance;
- coordinated action at Member States’ meetings in the field of general consumer product safety.

Internal market and Services

V4 cooperation shall focus on those areas that correspond to the priorities of the EU Competitiveness Council and will be reflected in:

- better access to practical information for the providers and recipients of services, thus enabling them to become aware of their rights and obligations;

- administrative cooperation between the authorities of Member States on the implementation and application of internal market rules, as well as problem-solving;
- exchange of information and experience on the application of Directive 2006/123/EC on Services in the Internal Market to improve the business environment (mainly by reducing administrative burden and regulation), and also in relation to Directive 2005/36/EC on the Recognition of Professional Qualifications.

Promotion of the V4 countries' economies

- development of the concept of common promotional activities for the markets of third countries.

Energy Security

- Poland considers the enhancement of cooperation in the field of energy between V4 countries as a prerequisite for building a well-functioning regional and EU internal energy market. Bearing in mind experiences deriving from past activities and tangible results of the North – South Interconnections initiative, the Polish Presidency of V4 will focus on developments that contribute to a well-functioning regional energy market to diminish the vulnerability of the region to possible crisis situations in gas, oil and electricity sectors. In order to resolve the existing backlogs with regard to regulatory frameworks and infrastructure, Poland plans to act towards:
 - further work on the timely implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding on North South Interconnections in Central and Eastern Europe signed in Brussels on 23rd of November 2011, as well as the respective Action Plan;
 - coordination of positions on the proposal for a regulation on guidelines for a Trans-European energy infrastructure, and repealing Decision No 1364/2006/EC (COM(2011)658) in order to reflect to the maximum extent the interests of V4 countries as identified in the above mentioned documents of the NSI Initiative;
 - facilitate cooperation between transmission system operators (TSO's) and regulatory authorities as regards the implementation of actions identified to support the NSI Initiative through, *inter alia*, streamlining the work of competent authorities supervising investment processes in respective countries and promoting legal solutions that speed up the realization of identified infrastructure projects;

- deepening V4 energy cooperation with Eastern Partnership and third countries.

Regional Cooperation in Natural Gas and Oil Sectors

- V4+ cooperation in the field of oil supply security (alternatives to the Druzhba pipeline), promotion of the regional dimension of V4 energy policies: a common position on European Commission legislative and non-legislative proposals, exchanges of experience and best practices in oil stock management (implementation of the new Directive 2009/119/EC on minimum stocks of crude oil and petroleum products) and identification of the cross-border impact of national programmes of V4 MS on demand restraint measures;
- further V4+ cooperation in the field of gas supply security by improving the diversification of sources and routes, including the Southern Corridor;
- under the provisions of the Regulation concerning measures to safeguard the security of gas supplies and repealing Council Directive 2004/67/EC (Reg. 994/2010), respective Member States are bound to exchange their draft Preventive Action Plans and Emergency Plans by 3rd June 2012 and adopt and make public – where applicable – joint plans at regional level by 3rd Dec. 2012. The Polish Presidency aims at the coordination of work towards a realization of those prerequisites, engaging – where applicable – relevant partners from the NSI Initiative;
- the Polish Presidency plans to broaden cooperation in the energy sector within the EaP and Energy Community, in order to maximize the coherence of initiatives developed in the respective forums, especially towards Ukraine, Turkey and Moldova;
- coordination and exchange of positions on the main initiatives discussed on the EU agenda that will have an impact on the V4+ region: MFF 2014-2020, Connecting Europe Facility, Southern Energy Corridor, External dimension of EU energy policy, report of the EC on the functioning of the internal energy market, communication of the EC on renewables, etc.;
- the Polish Presidency plans to streamline the cooperation of competent authorities, regulators and respective TSO's, aiming at identifying short and long term initiatives towards the establishment of a regional gas market.

Regional Cooperation in the Electricity Sector

- enhancing possibilities for coordination in topics of mutual interest within the scope of CEE regional and EU cooperation, e.g. a common target model for day-ahead energy market mitigation of unplanned flows (loop-flows) in power systems, network codes and guidelines;
- cooperation in the field of electricity infrastructure development, by the exchange of information related to notification projects to the list of Projects of Common Interest (PCI) in the frame of regulation of Trans-European energy infrastructure;
- pursuing the common interests of V4 countries together and bilaterally, where this is identifiable, in projects with the prospect of benefiting from EU financial contributions, such as small hydro-renewables, energy efficiency projects, smart grids, sustainable production of biomass based solid, liquid and gaseous fuels etc.

Nuclear Power

- mainstreaming nuclear power as an equivalent source of energy (e.g. on a par with renewable or conventional – mainly coal, lignite and gas – power). Fostering V4 cooperation in nuclear R&D, with special regard to generation IV reactors;
- establishing a nuclear power working group, in order to provide for the possibility of co-operation with regard to policy-making and regulatory aspects of nuclear energy.

Telecommunication

- cooperation and elaboration of positions in the areas of:
 - International Telecommunication Union (ITU) – review of International Telecommunication Regulations (ITR) at the World Conference on International Telecommunications (WCIT-12), World Telecommunication Standardisation Assembly (WTSA-12) and a stable ITU Constitution;
 - Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020 in the field of telecommunication, including the guidelines for Trans-European telecommunication networks and the EU Data Protection Package.

Events:

- organising a meeting of Economy Ministers to discuss current issues on the EU Agenda and common promotional activities of the V4 countries for third markets – October 2012;
- meeting of V4 Energy Ministers to discuss current issues on the EU Agenda – January 2013;
- organising meetings of the V4 High Level Group for energy security – September 2012, December 2012, March 2013 and June 2013;
- arrangement of energy expert meetings in the V4+ format – accordingly to the agenda;
- discussing V4 offset policy directions in the context of the entry into force of Defence Directive 2009/81/EC. Meeting of ministerial representatives in charge of offset issues (at the level of department directors) to be held in Poland's Ministry of Economy towards the end of 2012;
- hosting a V4 Clusters Conference combined with a clusters trade fair and match-making – May 2013 in Warsaw.

4

Transport/Infrastructure, Spatial Planning

Transport – General Issues

- undertaking of possible joint actions during the legislative process on the *Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on Union guidelines for the development of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T)*;
- joint V4 transport cooperation under the Neighbourhood Policy (initiatives designed to integrate markets, transport links and ensure alignment of legal regulations);
- coordination of infrastructure investment projects of common interest (referring to transport routes linking at least three V4 countries: Central European Transport Corridor (CETC), Transport Corridor 6, and the Via Carpatia international road corridor);

- stocktaking of transport connections between V4 countries.

Rail Transport

- elaboration of a common V4 position and priorities for EU strategic documents on rail transport (example: revision of the First Railway Package);
- organisation of consultations on:
 - implementation of Regulation (EU) No 913/2010 concerning a European rail network for competitive freight;
 - liberalisation of domestic passenger rail markets (in accordance with the Fourth Railway Package);
 - building of High-Speed Rail lines;
 - terms of long-term maintenance contracts.

Intermodal Transport

- joint action for the renewal of the Marco Polo programme;
- elaboration of the common concept for the development of logistics in Visegrad Group countries.

Road Traffic Safety

- coordination of preparations and implementation of national road traffic safety programmes;
- sharing of experience in funding measures to improve road safety;
- information sharing on current activities ("hard core" investments – building and upgrades of road infrastructure, and "soft core" projects – public awareness campaigns and education) to improve road traffic safety (in V4 and V4+ formula).

Spatial Planning

- continuation of initiatives referring to the Common Spatial Development Document (V4+RO and BG) – multiple-level searches for cohesion gaps to better identify development axes and transport networks. Formulation of a common spatial development strategy of the V4+2 in the European context.
 - meeting of Transport Ministers – Poland, March/April 2013;
 - Road Traffic Safety Roundtable for Central and Eastern Europe countries (with participation of V4 states as well as Slovenia, Austria and Croatia) – Warsaw, September-October 2012;
 - conference “Common concept for the development of intermodal transport for the V4 countries” – Poland, April/May 2013.

5

Culture and National Heritage

- strengthening of V4 co-operation on culture in international forums, especially the EU (for example, the Cultural Affairs Committee as a preparatory body of the Education, Youth, Culture and Sports Council);
- sharing of best practices for cultural development programmes;
- enhancing V4+EaP cultural cooperation;
- preparatory expert-level consultations, establishment of a thematic working group in anticipation of the 22nd Culture Ministers Meeting in Kraków to examine the topic and define new cooperative projects, October 2012;
- 22nd V4 Culture Ministers Meeting in Kraków, during the second edition of the Heritage Forum of Central Europe, June 2013.

Intellectual Property and the Media

- cooperation between the competent institutions of V4 countries in the realm of enforcement of intellectual property rights policy, a special focus on violations of intellectual property rights in the Internet digital environment, exchange of information and practices, a joint project aimed at learning and/or social awareness;
- copyright in the digital age – sharing best practices for the digitization of copyrighted materials: i.e. exchange of information and practices concerning national solutions for orphan works and licensing in the digital online environment.

Funds for Cultural and Creative Industries

- sharing of experience on the use of EU funds, the EEA Financial Mechanism, and the Norwegian **Financial Mechanism (NFM)** between V4 partners;
- preparation of a unified position and common strategy for the negotiations of the EU 2014-20 Financial Perspective;
- analysis of the scope of development of the cultural and creative industries and of the relevant statistics in V4 states;
- analysis of the models of support for cultural and creative industries in V4 countries at regional and national levels;
- creating space for mutual communication and cooperation of film funds in V4 countries to analyze the possibility of initiating a common platform to promote film co-production projects and to develop cooperation in co-production and distribution within V4 countries;
- analysis of current challenges in digital technology, including the digitization of cinemas, and seeking appropriate solutions;
- collaboration in the field of EU Structural Funds planning: joint presentation of the cultural target- and tool-system;
- common activities for strengthening the role of culture in the EU multiannual financial planning period 2014-2020: exchange of best practices in the field of development of cultural services and infrastructure for cultural development policy.

Cultural Heritage

- digitization and public availability of cultural heritage (museums, libraries, audiovisual institutes) – establishment of a V4 working group for the drafting of development programmes in this area;
- continuation of the proceedings of the Steering Committee of the Experts' Working Group for Cultural Heritage and the continuation of projects under the Training Programme and the Heritage Forum of Central Europe;
- sharing of experience and know-how in combating crimes against cultural heritage (comparative analysis of applicable legal, procedural and institutional solutions; ways of preventing crimes against heritage and combating the consequences of heritage crimes targeting historical monuments and works of art);
- search for common candidates to the UNESCO World Heritage List, and harmonisation of tentative lists of individual V4 states;
- debate on the options for establishing a regional list for the UNESCO Memory of the World Programme covering sites of special significance to V4 states;
- promoting volunteering for cultural heritage in V4 countries.

Cultural Policies – Development Programmes

- combating the crisis of readership – promotion of active reading – sharing of experiences, best practices and information on pertinent national programmes;
- standards of public cultural services (quality, accessibility, universality) – sharing of experiences, best practices and information on pertinent national programmes.

Building a Cohesive Image of V4 Cooperation

- initiation of work on the calendar of V4 anniversaries, highlighting key dates and jubilees significant to all member states;
- preparation of joint publications and events.

Continuation of V4 Projects:

- expansion and promotion of the “East European Performing Arts Platform – EEPAP” in Eastern Partnership and Western Balkan countries. Invitation of V4 states to participate in the next EEPAP Congress (autumn 2012, Lublin); V4 contribution to EEPAP programming work (example: participation in artist-in-residence programmes as partners) and participation of organisations to be selected by V4;
- (annual) Visegrad Children’s Book Prize for translation projects covering V4 languages – best children’s book competition for publishers. The Prize should take the form of a grant to finance book translation and publication in the other V4 countries;
- digitization workshops. A follow-up to the digitization workshop project (to cover general digitization issues, memory storage, management and access to heritage) to embrace national libraries and other entities: archives, museums, cinematheques and media libraries. Extension of the project to cover other disciplines, establishment of interdisciplinary working groups and implementation of international standards.

Accompanying events:

- exhibition – Europa Jagiellonica. Arts and culture in Central Europe at the dawn of the modern age – Royal Castle/National Museum in Warsaw;
- 2012 – Bruno Schulz anniversary – Adam Mickiewicz Museum of Literature/Book Institute
- Visegrad Creative City Label – project discussions and negotiations.

6 Security and Defence

General

- consultations on security and defence issues: regional security, further development of the EU’s security and defence policy and current NATO agenda (incl. cooperation between both organisations). On specific issues, the

possibility to involve other partners in the dialogue should be considered (e.g. Austria, some Western Balkan countries, Ukraine);

- possible advancement of specific political and military ideas/proposals concerning issues of common interest. In this context, one possible area worth analysing in-depth could be the further promotion of EU security and defence cooperation with Eastern partners (i.e. education and training, practical activities, Pooling and Sharing, SSR).

Defence Capabilities

- continuation of the Visegrad Battlegroup preparation process, to be available for stand-by in the first half of 2016;
- exploring pragmatic options for common V4 projects in the development of defence capabilities within the framework of Pooling and Sharing and/or Smart Defence initiatives. This can be supplemented by further examination of possibilities for practical cooperation in the Regional Round Table format (V4+3).

Missions and Operations

- exchange of *lessons learned* and best practices in operations, based on experience from participation in international crisis management activities;
- reflection (in cooperation with MFA) on civil-military synergies in operations, especially on legal regulations and practical aspects of the secondment of civilian personnel to military operations and military personnel to civilian missions.

Events:

- Defence Policy Directors meeting (early Autumn 2012),
- Chiefs of Defence meeting (Spring 2013),
- Defence Ministers meeting (late Spring 2013),
- series of expert meetings on various aspects of defence cooperation (throughout the Presidency period).

7 Labour and Social Policy

V4 Multilateral Cooperation on Employment and Social Issues

- sharing experiences and highlighting positions.
- lowering unemployment: finding solutions for lowering the level of unemployment and sharing best practices.

Partnership for Mobility

- supporting currently negotiated agreements, analysing potential new partners and possibly recommending them.

V4+ China

- analysis of challenges faced, sharing of experiences and best practices in employing Chinese nationals;
- secondment of employees in the framework of cross-border services provided by third countries.

Implementation of the “European Disability Strategy 2010-2020: A Renewed Commitment to a Barrier-Free Europe”, with an emphasis on accessibility

- the image of the Visegrad states as a regional community with a distinctive cultural and social identity can be built through actions aimed at implementing a culture of equal opportunities and social policy in favour of people with disabilities, under a strategy that will enable the mainstreaming of such people within social policies.

Universal Design

- V4 mainstreaming of universal design seen as a strategic approach to designing buildings, products and environments that are accessible to all people, with no need to adapt them or resort to specialised design. This can also offer fresh incentives to the region and increase its innovative profile.

Events:

- seminar on the *Implementation of the “European Disability Strategy 2010-2020: A Renewed Commitment to a Barrier-Free Europe”*, with an emphasis on accessibility;
- seminar on *Partnership for Mobility*;
- seminar on the challenges of immigration from Asian countries, ways of monitoring and practical protection of the rights of posted workers from China;
- Visegrad contacts at the political level – to cover V4 cooperation on employment and social policies including activities linked to the European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations 2012.

8

Agriculture

The Polish V4 Presidency will concentrate mainly on discussing the future of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) after 2013 and the legislative proposals of the European Commission in this regard. Poland believes it necessary to make more efficient use of the potential which the V4+ Bulgaria, Romania and Slovenia possess in reaching and presenting common positions in the EU forum with regard to the most important aspects of CAP reform. These include:

- focusing CAP reform on development, competitiveness and the ability to meet future challenges, including global competition and need for sustainable growth;

- ensuring an appropriate level of CAP financing, given the extended scope of CAP objectives;
- ensuring a fair and balanced CAP in the new financial perspective (by setting new, objective criteria for allocation of funds in pillar I and II), modernisation measures under a new CAP, rural development, the functioning and future of selected market instruments.
- simplification of the CAP (including administrative cost cutting and ensuring the possibility of continuing the Single Area Payment Scheme/SAPS/);

The Polish V4 Presidency will try to strengthen cooperation and coordination with regard to these areas, as well as other current issues arising from the AGRIFISH Council agenda, both on ministerial and expert level. There will be at least two ministerial level meetings held in Poland (second half of 2012, first half of 2013).

Furthermore, following up on the debate initiated during Poland's EU Presidency, the Polish V4 Presidency will address the issue of the energy use of biomass of agricultural origin in the context of climate change and energy security challenges.

The programme of the Polish V4 Presidency will include the initiatives of institutions involved with management of CAP instruments and measures, such as paying agencies. The proposed issues to be discussed include:

- paying agency solutions applicable at the start of CAP reform – experience sharing. A debate on the key problems facing paying agencies in connection with the implementation of a new CAP and experience sharing with regard to new solutions followed by paying agencies in V4 countries;
- experience sharing among V4 experts assisting in the implementation of EU aid to agriculture;
- development of agri-food processing in V4 member states, allowing for specific country preferences, traditions and expertise; coordination, even if partial, of development programmes designed to indicate complementary lines or specialisations.

The Agricultural Market Agency (AMA) will organize a conference in Warsaw in the second half of 2012 celebrating the 50th anniversary of the CAP. Furthermore, AMA plans to host a conference in the first half of 2013 for agricultural agencies that are members of the Panta Rhei initiative, on IT support for implementing CAP mechanisms. Both conferences will be a good forum to present the experiences of V4 member countries.

9 Regional Development

Coordination meetings

- ***Opening meeting of the Polish Presidency of the Visegrad Group on Cohesion Policy***

One meeting in July 2012 opening the Polish Presidency of the Visegrad Group in the area of Cohesion Policy, presenting the objectives and scope of the Polish Presidency of the V4 Group, summing up previous negotiations on the legislative package for Cohesion Policy post-2013.

- ***The Future of Cohesion Policy post-2013.***

Two meetings at director-general level (once per six months): October 2012, February/March 2013) and one meeting of ministers in the second half of 2012 (November 2012).

Cooperation V4+ optionally SI+RO+BG on Cohesion Policy Regulations post-2013.

Meetings of experts with the participation of ministerial Senior Officials

- ***Support for developmental cooperation in the Carpathian region***

Seminar with participation of representatives of competent ministries and regional authorities – October/November 2012, V4+RO+UA.

Joint V4 actions and a common position with regard to European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) post-2014, with a possible impact on the future of ETC programmes. Active participation of Romania will be important as part of V4 cooperation with non-member countries.

- ***Update of the Common Spatial Development Document of the V4+2***

Steering Group meetings – September 2012 and March 2013.

Common Spatial Development Document of the V4+2.

Continuation of work by the Steering Group, which is already working on an update to the Document.

- ***Working meeting on negotiating of a legislative package for the Cohesion Policy 2014-2020***

Two meetings at expert level: January 2013 and May 2013.

Exchange of views/positions of the member states on the negotiation of a legislative package for the Cohesion Policy post 2013 especially taking into account the areas negotiated during the Cyprus Presidency of the EU Council (e.g. instruments of territorial development); initiating common undertakings of the V4 countries at EU level concerning the proposal of the Cohesion Policy reform 2014-2020, continuation of debate and exchange of views on the reformed cohesion policy after 2013 in cooperation with the Irish Presidency.

- ***Seminar on planning across functional areas***

Seminar – March 2013.

Proposal to hold a meeting devoted to functional spatial planning. There is a need to discuss an approach that is not limited to administrative units, but also covers geographical characteristics and the various functionalities of the territories highlighted in the above mentioned documents. The seminar would be a good opportunity to share experience and best practices in the field of spatial planning and economic management across the functional areas, and to implement the idea of multi-level governance.

Meetings of experts

- ***The meeting on the result-oriented evaluation and evidence-based policy (Visegrad Evaluation Group Meeting)***

Workshop seminar – September 2012

Exchange of experiences in evaluating and identifying the future framework of the system in the perspective of 2014-2020 and establishment of plans for joint activities in the area of evaluation conducted by the V4 countries. The meeting should contribute to promoting the concept of evidence-based policy as a standard to be applied within the framework of cohesion policy. It will also be an opportunity to talk about the shape of new regulations in

the area of evaluation and monitoring, including the role of indicators. An important element of the meeting will also be an exchange of experiences of the Visegrad Group countries in the use of counterfactual methods in the previously performed research.

- ***Conference on realization of regional policy in the regions of the V4 Group***

A conference for the regions of the V4 Group – October 2012

Issues concerning the implementation of regional policy in the V4 Group in the context of revealing development potentials of particular regions.

- ***Implementation of the European Social Fund***

Expert seminar – January 2013

Exchange of experiences and applicable practices in operational programme audits and inspections, as well as other implementation issues in view of the forthcoming closure of operational programmes co-financed under the European Social Fund in the 2007-2013 financial perspective.

- ***Exchange of views on European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation – EGTC***

The V4 countries will endeavour to pay more attention to EGTCs. Exchange of views concerning the EGTCs will be carried out during the Polish V4 Presidency.

10 Home Affairs

V4 will continue to implement the Action Plan of the Prague Process for 2012-2016, as endorsed during the Ministerial Conference in November 2011. The Prague Process is the main political dialogue on migration between the EU and its Eastern and South-Eastern neighbours. During the period of the presidency, the Process will be promoted mainly through the EC's Targeted Initiative on Support for the Implementation of the Prague Process and its Action Plan that is led by Poland and supported by other V4 partners.

The Civil protection area will also be touched upon by the V4, with the aim of strengthening its capacity to respond to disasters occurring both internally and abroad.

Meetings of experts

- European Forensic Science Area – development of forensic standards across jurisdictions;
- possibilities of enhanced cooperation in combating organised crime (racketeering, drug trafficking, financial crime) – threat trends from organised crime and crime-fighting measures undertaken by V4 states — 20th September 2012;
- meeting of the heads of V4 border services and an accompanying expert meeting on the review and preparations for Schengen evaluation missions in V4 states — October 2012;
- expert meeting on the latest trends in biometric document counterfeiting and methods of detecting counterfeit documents — April 2013;
- meeting of the Directors-General for Civil Protection of V4 states — May/June 2013;
- a meeting at the level of deputy Ministers of Home Affairs competent for international cooperation, to sum up the above-listed expert meetings, is scheduled towards the end of the Polish Presidency. The provisional date of this conference is May/June 2013.

11 Sports and Tourism

Sports

- cooperation in sports – strengthening ties between our societies and the promotion of the Visegrad cooperation idea;
- continuation of the tradition of the Olympic Hopes Tournament (held since 1994);

- follow-up cooperation within the Steering Committee of the Olympic Hopes Tournament;
- V4 cooperation to strengthen the role of sports in the EU and to implement as effectively as possible new EU programmes to finance sports-related initiatives and projects;
- greater role of sports in external EU cooperation, including with Eastern Partnership countries.

Tourism

- with respect to cooperation in tourism marketing and V4 joint promotional actions under the headline “European Quartet – One Melody”, Poland’s Presidency envisions a follow-up to successful past activities with third markets, including the following actions (in line with recent strategic decisions): (I) in Russia (with ramifications to CIS); (II) in the USA (with emphasis on promotional actions in B2B, the meetings industry, MICE); (III) in India; (IV) in China; (V) in Brazil and (VI) in Japan (with emphasis on promotional actions in B2B);
- the Presidency will highlight joint activities that promote Europe as a tourist destination and will address ways of acquiring European funding for promotional events implemented by the V4. Based on the Memorandum of common acts of the V4 countries within the European Travel Commission the organizations will increase the beneficial effects of their common marketing strategy in the following common target markets: USA, China, India and Brazil;
- conventional marketing tools will continue to be applied, including workshops, road shows, displays, and joint exhibition stands. Efforts should be made to encourage the conclusion of pool agreements with service providers and tour operators, in order to increase inbound tourism to V4 countries. Particular effort will go into Internet campaigns implemented through social media;
- as a consequence of the actions to be executed in the ETC-V4 common target markets, the V4 would like to introduce the Visegrad region as the source of Central-European product development, and create common service packages and products to be offered to the overseas target markets.

Events:

The Polish Presidency of the V4 Group will arrange a meeting of the Ministers of Tourism (February/March 2013) and 2 meetings (organised by the Polish Tourist Organisation)

for National Tourist Organisations agencies engaged in tourism marketing to discuss a plan for promotional campaigns, budgeting and cost accounting.

12 Environment

Climate policy

- experience sharing in the implementation of the Climate and Energy Package, including implementation of all flexibility mechanisms;
- promotion and drafting of a common framework negotiating position on operational aspects of emission allowance registers;
- conditional on the possible continuation of the issues on international forums: promotion and drafting of a common framework negotiating position on: carrying-over and use of surplus AAUs in the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol;
- adoption of a new European mechanism for projects not covered by the EU emission trading scheme (such as Art. 24a EU ETS Directive), exploring avenues of innovative climate financing in relation to the Effort Sharing Decision (ESD), V4 support for early action on this issue;
- experience sharing and promotion of climate friendly solutions in the EaP countries and an exchange of views on the evolution of global climate policy as well as the EaP countries' negotiation positions;
- initiation of discussions on improving the performance of the Eastern European Group (EEG) in the UNFCCC forum in view of the COP 18 Conference.
 - for UNFCCC institutions and EEG – arrangement of directorate-level meetings to discuss and coordinate the V4 – EEG nominations for UNFCCC bodies;
 - for COP 18 preparations – arrangement of meetings at the ministerial level (to define common objectives) as well as at the expert level (to specify technical elements of the above decisions and to promote contributions to the conclusions as joint negotiation outcomes).

Disaster risk management

- discussion on strengthening the EU framework for disaster and pollution prevention and management, with special regard to establishing a mechanism guaranteeing the financial liability of operators of certain hazardous industrial installations.

Efficient Resource Management

- working out a common V4 position on planned EU-level priority actions for measuring the progress of policy implementation in resource efficiency;
- measures for sustainable use of mineral and energy resources in Central Europe, focusing on unconventional energy mineral resources (*shale oil and gas, tight gas*) – in the context of EU energy and raw materials policy and the Europe 2020 strategic priority of *Sustainable development and management of resources*;
 - expert meetings on selected aspects of efficient resource management – with the participation of representatives of geological services, competent national authorities and agencies, and scientific-research institutes of V4 states;
 - sharing of expertise and best practices with regard to implementation of national policies and monitoring of policy performance.

Environmental Protection

- discussions on funding for environmental protection with respect to *aquis communautaire*, including biological diversity and landscape protection, in the new financial perspective (2014-2020) in connection with ongoing negotiations on European Commission proposals concerning Cohesion Policy mechanisms and the LIFE programme for 2014-2020, as well as with regard to the impacts of specific legal regulations on environmental protection policies in V4 states;
- elaboration of a common position of the V4+2 to be presented to the European Commission on the working-level arrangements for projects under 2007-2013 funding schemes; working out the best possible terms for the post-2014 financial perspective; key areas include: state aid issues in environmental

projects, EU-level legal solutions for so-called bridge projects, future financing of biological diversity;

- future negotiations with the Commission of the so-called Partnership Contracts for the environment; sharing Poland's know-how and expertise with Bulgaria and Romania in view of Poland's substantial experience in environmental project implementation under the Cohesion Policy;
- agreement on common positions in the negotiations on environmental funding, including the Natura 2000 network, in the new financial perspective, and strengthening the V4 states' negotiating position in the EU Council;
- discussions on the implementation of the Natura 2000 network, including the obligatory reporting duties of the Member States due in 2013 and the management of Natura 2000 sites belonging to the same biogeographical region.
- elaboration of a common position on the priority objectives and concrete elements of the 7th Environmental Action Programme, taking into consideration the specific needs and complexity of environmental challenges in the V4 region;
 - Poland intends to host workshops on biological diversity funding and experience sharing in environmental project programming and implementation. The workshops will be financed by the technical assistance project of the Partnership: Environment for Development and will bring together delegates from Polish institutions and experts from the V4 countries, which have gained expertise in funding such projects;
 - arrangement of formal meetings to develop a joint approach to environmental protection programming and expenditures post-2014.

V4-UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme)

- consolidation of the V4 position in contacts with UNEP – an initiative to develop a mechanism for consultations between V4 ministers and UNEP, agreeing priorities to be advanced on behalf of the V4. With regard to the Rio+20 context, consultation on appropriate measures to enhance international environmental governance, including financial options;

- meetings at the level of directors/senior officials of the V4 environment ministries; followed by V4 directors/senior officials meetings with representatives of UNEP organisation structures, and by political-level meetings with participation of the UNEP Executive Director.

V4 Environment Ministers Meeting

- organisation by the Polish Environment Ministry of the 19th V4 Environment Ministers Meeting to debate proposed priorities and other environmental protection issues that require V4-level agreements and common positions.

13 Health

- V4 cooperation and experience sharing for health care system integration;
 - organisation of two expert-level meetings/seminars on health care system integration – one in September 2012 and the other at a future date to be agreed;
- V4 cooperation and experience sharing on social inequalities in health and access to health care, and measures to prevent these;
 - organisation of two expert-level meetings/seminars on social inequalities in health care – one in October 2012 and another at a future date to be agreed;
- initiation of actions to prevent obesity and to combat smoking.

Meeting of V4 Health Ministers – organisation of an informal meeting of the Ministers of Health of the V4 states + Ukraine and Moldova between March and June 2013.

14 Justice

- implementation of a Memorandum on Cooperation in Information Technologies;
- cooperation in the area of judicial training, with a particular focus on ensuring better application of EU legislation;
- meeting of V4 Justice Ministers – topics for consideration:
 - introduction of modern solutions in court proceedings involving the use of ICT systems (Implementation of a Memorandum on Cooperation in Information Technologies);
 - cooperation in the area of judicial training, with a particular focus on ensuring better application of EU legislation;
 - strengthening the rights of suspected or accused persons in criminal proceedings;
 - cooperation between penitentiary services.

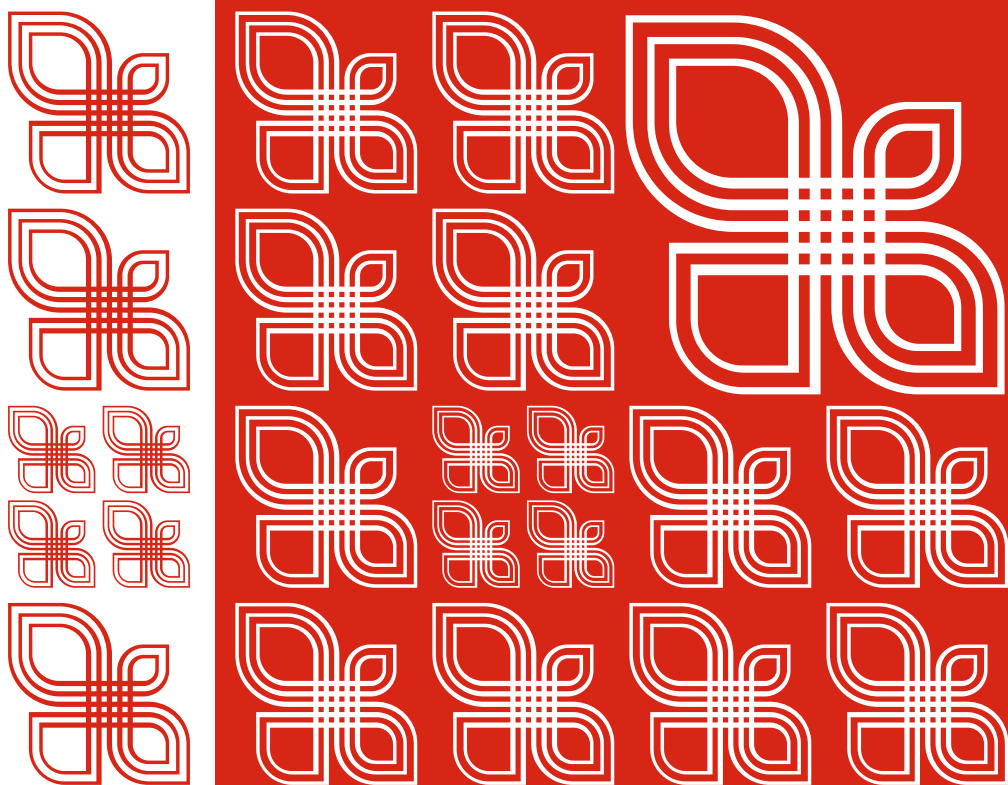
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