

Index

HUNGARIAN PRESIDENCY OF THE VISEGRAD GROUP (2013-2014)	4
MAIN PRIORITIES OF THE HUNGARIAN PRESIDENCY	4
Energy security	4
Development of the North-South transport infrastructure	4
Security policy	5
Economic cooperation	5
Foreign policy initiatives	5
Parliamentary dimension	6
CONTINUITY OF POLICIES IN THE VISEGRAD COOPERATION DURING THE HUNGARIAN PRESIDENCY	7
FOREIGN POLICY	7
EU Affairs	7
Coordination of positions before relevant meetings	7
EU's next multiannual financial framework	7
Towards an EU whole and free – EU enlargement policy	7
Western Balkans	8
Eastern Partnership	9
Common Foreign and Security Policy	10
V4+ cooperation	10
1. Regional neighbours	10
Baltic countries	10
Nordic countries	11
Baltic and Nordic countries	11
Romania and Bulgaria	11
Slovenia	11
Croatia	11
2. Other EU partners	12
Benelux countries	12
Germany	12
3. Other partners	12
USA	12
Japan	12
China	12
ASEAN	13
Latin America	13
Africa, Middle East	13
International development cooperation	13

United Nations and other international organizations	14
Council of Europe, OSCE.....	14
Consular cooperation	14
SECTORAL POLICIES	15
1. Economy	15
Energy	15
Transport	16
Roads	16
Rail:	17
Inland water transport.....	18
Employment Policy	18
Internal market	19
Industrial policy.....	19
Consumer protection	19
Intellectual property rights	19
Research and development support.....	19
ClusterCOOP Project	19
Creative industries.....	20
2. Regional Development	20
Common spatial development cooperation of the V4+2 countries:.....	20
European Territorial Cooperation (ETC)	21
Regional Practical Cooperation.....	21
3. Finances.....	21
Macroeconomic issues	21
Tax- and Customs Co-operation	21
4. Social Affairs.....	22
Social / Roma inclusion.....	23
5. Culture.....	23
Religion	24
6. Education and Youth Policy	24
Education.....	24
Youth Policy.....	25
7. Agriculture and Rural Development	26
Drafting the V4 position of the Common Agricultural Policy.....	26

Food safety- sources of danger and efficient collective action	26
Risk management in agriculture.....	26
Further steps in the preparation of the Agreement on Forests in Europe.....	26
Improvement of irrigation and climate change adaptation measures.....	27
8. Environmental Protection	27
Natura 2000 sites	27
Resource efficiency and waste	27
Multiannual Financial Framework of the EU (2014-2020)	27
International context of the V4 environmental cooperation.....	27
Climate Policy	28
9. Health	29
10. Tourism and Sports.....	30
Tourism	30
Sports.....	30
11. Security and Defence Policy	31
General Policy Objectives	31
Capability Development.....	31
Operations, training and exercises	32
12. Home Affairs.....	32
Meeting of the heads/experts of border policing units	32
Schengen Governance	33
Cooperation in disaster management	33
Seminar concerning countering violent radicalisation of youth (expert level)	33
13. Justice	33
Meeting of Central European Ministers of Justice	33
Further cooperation with the Western Balkan countries in the area of justice	34
EU citizen rights.....	34
Further discussions on the regional division of the Unified Patent Court	34
Launching of a new ‘Language Training for Judges and Prosecutors’ Project	34
14. Public administration.....	35
Forming of a network of experts in the area of development of public administration ...	35

HUNGARIAN PRESIDENCY OF THE VISEGRAD GROUP (2013-2014)

The Hungarian Presidency of the Visegrad Group comes at a time that offers a well-founded reason for reflection on the remarkable progress Central European countries have made since they managed to reclaim their freedom: it is nearly 25 years ago that the fall of the communist regimes came about.

At the same time, we are also celebrating the 10th anniversary of our countries' accession to the European Union, which was the ultimate political step in the process of reunifying Europe. On this double occasion, the Hungarian Presidency wishes to emphasize the important role the Visegrad Cooperation has played in these common achievements of the nations of Central Europe, and based on this experience, find new ways to deepen and extend the field of activities of the Visegrad Group.

Cooperation between Central European countries is a key factor in boosting growth in Europe: the region has a unique potential for economic development and the enhancement of its competitiveness.

Aware of the responsibility we bear in exploiting the great potential Central Europe carries, that can allow the region to become the growth engine of Europe in the upcoming decades, the Hungarian Presidency is prepared to give a new impetus to the Visegrad Cooperation.

MAIN PRIORITIES OF THE HUNGARIAN PRESIDENCY

ENERGY SECURITY

The strength of Central Europe is greatly reliant on the extent to which it can reduce its energy dependence and can achieve energy independence. A key to minimizing the region's energy dependency is the construction of the missing North-South energy interconnectors in the region. An important element of this infrastructure is the Hungarian-Slovak interconnector, which has been under construction according to the planned schedule. The Hungarian Presidency also supports the preparation of a Polish-Slovak interconnector. Furthermore, we see the ongoing construction of the Polish LNG terminal as a project that has not only national relevance, but as one that has a regional importance and implication, which we welcome and fully support.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE NORTH-SOUTH TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE

Central Europe is in need of infrastructure guarantees; therefore North-South road and rail investments have to be managed as European programs. For the lack of sufficient cross-border transport links, which fundamentally hinders the economic development of entire regions, is a great burden on the competitiveness of the Central Europe. In this context, the Hungarian-Slovak wide-scale development program serves as an example: the two countries

are preparing a major joint public road development program and are dealing separately with modernizing and increasing the number of rail and high speed road connections that should serve as important elements of a renewed North-South motorway and railway system.

SECURITY POLICY

Being mindful of the importance of the security and stability of Europe and its neighbourhood, the Hungarian Presidency is determined to enhance the Visegrad Cooperation in the field of Security and Defence Policy. As an important founding element of this, Hungary will take all the necessary preparatory steps in order that the V4 Battle Group shall be stand-by in the first half of 2016.

Parallel to this, we intend to make steps for the realization of the DAV 4 (Defence Austerity in the Visegrad Region) program. Our concrete proposals for discussion include the setting up of a long-term cyber security cooperation mechanism, a V4+Ukraine EU battle group, common V4 air surveillance, a common air force pilot training centre, a stronger cooperation among our Defence Academies.

ECONOMIC COOPERATION

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) play a crucial role in the V4 economies. It is not an exaggeration that in the case of the SME sector being successful, the whole economy can be declared successful as well. Taking this into consideration, the interactions of the small and medium size enterprises constitutes a key factor in the economic development of our region. The V4 Chambers of Commerce and Industry are representing the entrepreneurship of the region in the most comprehensive way. Hence, the Hungarian Presidency initiates an advanced cooperation of the V4 of Chambers of Commerce and Industry. Such a strong cooperation between the SMEs of the four countries might contribute to enhance their competitiveness on external markets and to become members of the supplier chains of major international companies.

FOREIGN POLICY INITIATIVES

The Euro crisis has given a clear evidence that we have to strengthen our representation in the rapidly emerging regions of the world. To be as successful as possible in this regard, the Hungarian Presidency wishes to establish a working group to study the forms, functions and venues of the cooperation between the Nordic Countries in the field of joint foreign representations.

It was upon a Czech initiative that the V4 countries created the first – and so far only – Visegrad House. The functions of the jointly operated Visegrad House have been expanding continuously since its establishment. With a view to strengthening the visibility of the V4, the Hungarian Presidency intends to open a new Visegrad House in Ho Chi Min City in the spirit of the eastward economic opening of our region.

Because of efforts executed in order to overcome the Euro crisis, the European Union has not put the necessary emphasis on enlargement. In the meantime, it is a European interest to recognize and show respect to the European integration efforts of the Western Balkan



countries. To strengthen stability in the South Eastern part of Europe, the Hungarian Presidency calls for joint steps to promote the European integration of the Western Balkan countries and to assist them during their preparations in order to become members of our community.

PARLIAMENTARY DIMENSION

We propose to create the V4 parliamentary dimension following the type of parliamentary cooperation (Nordic Council) which has been functioning for a long time in a structured manner between the Nordic Countries.

We propose that the four parliaments create a Visegrad Group, with an equal number of representatives, which would operate with a rotating presidency, without political groups and with ad-hoc committees. Two parliamentary meetings could be held every year in spring and in autumn.

CONTINUITY OF POLICIES IN THE VISEGRAD COOPERATION DURING THE HUNGARIAN PRESIDENCY

1 July 2013 – 30 June 2014

FOREIGN POLICY

EU AFFAIRS

Coordination of positions before relevant meetings

The Visegrad Group will continue to hold personal meetings or teleconferences at the relevant levels before sessions of the European Council, the General Affairs Council (GAC) and the Foreign Affairs Council (FAC).

It will also coordinate and promote common V4 positions and opinions within the Council and its working bodies, encourage the sharing of experiences in the implementation of EU legislation, and organize meetings at the appropriate levels (ministers, sherpas, state secretaries, experts) on major issues discussed at the EU level.

EU's next multiannual financial framework

The V4 countries have been in close cooperation regarding the cohesion policy of the EU in the 2014-2020 period ever since the release of the European Commission's proposal on the next MFF in June 2011. The V4 has played a crucial role in shaping the compromise during the Council debates under the Polish, Danish, Cypriot and Irish presidencies.

The Visegrad Group will focus on the preparation for the programming period of the new financial framework. Potential areas of cooperation shall be identified related to the multiannual programs, while the V4 countries will share their knowledge concerning the planning and the implementation of programs.

Towards an EU whole and free – EU enlargement policy

The Visegrad Group is committed to supporting the EU's enlargement process. The V4 will also strive to assist the countries involved in the preparatory phase, with particular attention to the Western Balkans, a region that is in close geographical, economic and cultural proximity of the V4 countries.

EU enlargement can also potentially facilitate a more efficient representation of Central Europe's interests and increase the importance of the region within the EU. The Visegrad Group aims to continue the close coordination in the field of enlargement and to assist in launching joint, possibly practical actions on both expert and political levels. The Visegrad Group will continue to put the emphasis on regional cooperation among the countries aspiring to EU membership.

The Visegrad Group wishes to maintain the well-functioning practice of enlargement related dialogue – both in Brussels and in the capitals – in accordance with the Council’s schedule.

Aiming at the focused and priority-based deployment of the Instrument of Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) funds, the Hungarian Presidency intends to host a meeting for Western Balkans and V4 experts on IPA issue with a special attention to IPA II.

WESTERN BALKANS

The Euro-Atlantic integration is the most effective instrument for stability, development and prosperity of the Western Balkans. The Visegrad Group places a special emphasis on continuing the enlargement process. In order to maintain the commitment of our partners in the Western Balkans, the enlargement process needs to be credible and consistent, as well as be based on the principles of conditionality and individual performance.

It is a firm intention to deepen the cooperation between the countries of the V4 and the Western Balkans also in order to assist them in their progress towards Euro—Atlantic integration. Building on the model worked out by the previous Hungarian V4 Presidency and endorsed by the following presidencies, an extended summit between V4 and Western Balkan foreign ministers is to be held for the fifth time in autumn 2013.

Preparations for setting up a Western Balkan Fund based on the model of the International Visegrad Fund will continue, as well as the establishment of an expert network on rule of law and fundamental rights initiated by the previous Polish Presidency. The purpose of the fund will be to support projects in culture, science and education, motivate cross-border cooperation and facilitate the exchange of experiences among countries in the region. The cooperation on the rule of law could also contribute to the improvement of investment climate in the Western Balkans countries. The Hungarian Presidency would welcome a more coherent and efficient use of bilateral as well as EU funded development aid in the Balkans. To this end special attention will be given to the analysis and identification of those areas where the most efficient cost-benefit ratio is achievable.

The Visegrad Group will promote and support the formulation of a common V4 policy regarding the EU enlargement process towards the Western Balkans. To this end we are looking forward to witness that during the presidency year each aspirant and candidate country in the region can make one step forward on its integration path. We wish to see the start of accession negotiations with Serbia and Macedonia, the opening of new negotiating chapters with Montenegro, the granting of candidate status to Albania and Bosnia-Herzegovina, and last but not least the start of negotiations for a sustainable Stabilization and Association Agreement with Kosovo.¹

The Visegrad Group also aims at creating a network among the countries of the V4 in order to make easier to jointly apply, through ‘Member State Consortia’, for the so-called Twinning projects launched by any country in the Western Balkans and the European Commission.

¹ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

Twinning is a European Commission initiative financed through IPA funds (IPAI within the next Multiannual Financial Framework), promoting the cooperation between public administrations of EU Member States and of beneficiary countries. More specifically, in the IPA region including the Western Balkans, Twinning aims to provide support for the transposition and implementation of the EU legislation. Such project activity would contribute to a large extent towards the strengthening of cooperation among the countries of the V4 and the countries in the Western Balkans.

With Croatia becoming the newest member of the EU in July 2013, a new opportunity emerges in outreach to the Western Balkan region. Figuratively speaking, the Western Balkan region takes a step closer not only to the EU but also to the Central European region. V4 countries will thus be able to continue supporting the Western Balkan region, while taking the positive example of Croatia in advocating the continuation of the integration process within the EU.

EASTERN PARTNERSHIP

The Visegrad Group will strive to systematically pursue the strategic goals of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) as an essential part of the European Neighbourhood Policy. V4 countries are committed promoters of the EaP policy. While we intend to keep EaP high on the EU agenda, we wish to enhance V4 cooperation along the already established guidelines of previous presidencies and to cover tasks and projects which support the development and implementation of the EaP as a long-term V4 priority. The Visegrad Group will continue 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 having an interest in EaP development. The Visegrad Group will continue to strengthen the visibility of V4 in the region relying on the International Visegrad Fund's special EaP programme (*Visegrad 4 Eastern Partnership*), which is continuing to pinpoint key fields for cooperation. The Visegrad Group will continue actions, initiated by Polish V4 Presidency, aiming at gaining additional support for V4EaP Programme from third countries. The Hungarian Presidency intends to continue holding 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. We will strive to work closely together with like-minded EU countries and groups of countries in order to support the EaP aspirations of the Lithuanian EU Presidency and to contribute to a successful Summit Meeting in Vilnius. The key Visegrad Group task will remain the sharing of transformation experiences with EaP countries and aligning laws and legal standards with EU standards, a significant step connected to the rollout of Comprehensive Institution Building Programmes (CIB) for individual EaP countries.

Since the V4 countries are genuinely interested in the success of the Eastern Partnership policy, the Visegrad Group believes that V4 countries should continue to play a decisive role in presenting ideas and formulating the EU policy towards EaP countries, in particular Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia. Implementing the principle of “more for more” is vital in supporting the EaP partner countries. The V4 countries are interested in having steady progress in the on-going negotiations with Moldova, Georgia and Armenia on the Association Agreements including the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Areas and with Azerbaijan on Association Agreement, as well as in the visa liberalisation process with the Eastern Partners.

We share the goal of completing the AAs and DCFTAs with Moldova, Georgia and Armenia, as well as signing the AA/DCFTA with Ukraine, if the EU conditions are met, during the Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius in November. In case of Belarus, supporting a role for the European Endowment for Democracy should be a priority of V4 countries, including strengthened co-operation with the Belarusian civil society as well as supporting the modernisation process in Belarus through the European Dialogue for Modernisation.

Furthermore, the V4 looks forward to the swift signing of the agreement with Ukraine and its entry into force, at least as regards its trade part. Ukraine is our special partner with a decisive position from the point of view of the security and stability of our region. Further development of Ukraine is of key importance for the V4. Our common neighbourhood and shared history in the Carpathian basin support a better understanding of the Ukrainian political, economic and social reforms to the success of which we can effectively contribute by the recently gained experiences in our own integration processes. Our aim is to provide support in order to help to maintain the integration-oriented vector of Kyiv's foreign policy, which also includes the implementation of the mutually accepted European system of norms and values.

During the Hungarian Presidency of the Visegrad Group, the regular extended V4 foreign ministerial meeting together with the EaP partners, initially developed by the previous Hungarian Presidency, is to be convened for the fifth time in spring 2014.

COMMON FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY

In the field of the Common Foreign and Security Policy, the Visegrad Group will put emphasis on continuing the practice of coordinating the positions of V4 countries in all relevant fora. The Visegrad Group will aim at facilitating the articulation of possible mutual positions formulated in the domains of common interest. An important exercise of the year 2013 will be the stock-taking of experiences in connection with the functioning of the European External Action Service, which provides a great opportunity for the V4 to examine the realisation of the geographical balance within the system and to channel their special considerations into the process.

V4+ COOPERATION

The Visegrad Group endeavours to go on with the efficient V4+ frames, as well as initiate new ones, preferably on ad hoc and project oriented basis. The Group attaches significant importance to the below specified relations (the list is not exclusive):

1. Regional neighbours

Baltic countries

The Visegrad Group endeavours to strengthen the V4-B3 cooperation, particularly in the fields of North-South transport corridor, cyber security, environmental protection, energy security and Eastern Partnership. Possibilities of any joint actions together with the forthcoming Lithuanian EU Presidency will be explored.

Nordic countries

The Visegrad Group aims to continue the dialogue between the V4 and the Nordic Council of Ministers, and the Council of the Baltic Sea States – CBSS. Priority areas: Eastern Partnership, energy security, environmental protection and climate change. The issues of the water and sanitation are dealt with in the final document of the Rio+20 Conference. We initiate closer cooperation with our Nordic and Baltic partners in the fields of water security, flood control, conservation of freshwater resources.

Baltic and Nordic countries

In the aftermath of Gdańsk V4+N5+B3 ministerial meeting and in the run-up to the V4+N5+B3 meeting scheduled for 2014 in Estonia we confirm our interest in gradually bringing the Visegrad, Nordic and Baltic cooperation closer together. We would like to explore further the possibilities of cooperation, especially the Eastern Policy, security and stimulation of growth in Europe, including development of transport and energy connections.

We also want to initiate closer cooperation in the fields of water security, flood control, conservation of freshwater resources. In this regard, we wish to play an active role in the "sustainable development goals" (SDG) elaboration. The Visegrad Group intends to continue discussions with experts and exchanges of experience in a wide range.

Romania and Bulgaria

The cooperation and policy dialogue among the V4 countries, Romania and Bulgaria have continuously developed and extended in the course of the last years, particularly in the fields of agriculture, environment and climate change, regional development (cohesion policy), spatial development etc. The Visegrad Group will attach great importance to the continuation of the on-going cooperation. It is worth to seek the possibility of preparing common position papers and undertaking common actions in current issues; e.g. neighbourhood policy, Eastern partnership.

Slovenia

The cooperation between the V4 states and Slovenia will continue both in foreign political issues and in the given sectors, as for example cohesion and regional policy.

Croatia

The planned accession of Croatia to the EU in July 2013 will enhance the cooperation possibilities with the V4. Cooperating with Croatia and Slovenia in the V4 framework can both enhance the chances of creating a North–South transport and energy corridor and also contribute to the better connections between the Adriatic and the Baltic Seas; thus, strengthening the relations between the Visegrad countries and the region of the Northern Adriatic. Within the general frameworks, the Visegrad Group is ready to explore the possibilities of launching new initiatives with further countries upon demand or enhance the already existing ones. Further possibilities of cooperation with Croatia will be examined as well, once the country is to join the EU in 2013.

2. Other EU partners

Benelux countries

The Visegrad Group intends to continue and strengthen the cooperation focused on the themes previously specified: MFF, cohesion policy, bank union, enlargement (Balkans), Eastern Partnership, neighbourhood policy. It is worth seeking the possibility of compiling common position papers and undertaking common actions in current themes; e.g. neighbourhood policy. Meeting of the foreign ministers on the margin of some FAC meetings and of the political directors are to be convened again.

Germany

The Visegrad Group seeks to continue and enhance the V4+Germany dialogue and pursue mutually favourable cooperation in EU-topics. The Group will explore the possibility of joint educational programmes. The Visegrad Group intends to identify synergies regarding activities within Eastern Partnership.

3. Other partners

USA

Although the Obama administration has declared the Asia-Pacific its primary foreign policy focus, the Visegrad Group attaches a special importance to attracting US attention to Europe and our region as well as to strengthening transatlantic relations. Building on the efforts made by the Polish V4 Presidency in this area, the Hungarian Presidency will continue the dialogue with the United States on such issues as international security (cooperation within NATO and in Afghanistan and maintaining military commitment in Europe), energy (energy security, nuclear and renewable energy) and - based on our experience - cooperation in countries of the Eastern Partnership as well as with the Arab countries recently undergoing a democratic transition process. The Hungarian Presidency plans to hold a second consultation of the V4 political directors with their US partners in this dialogue format (foreseen for the first half of 2014). The Visegrad Group deems it important to continue the already launched joint programs, such as the fellowship exchange program between IVF and CEPA and the on-going consultations dedicated to establishing scientific cooperation between the US and the V4. V4 supports the launch of the TTIP negotiations between the EU and the US.

Japan

Being one of the most important relations, the V4+Japan cooperation will keep playing a special role within the V4+ frames. The Hungarian Presidency intends to continue organising common expert level events (building on the previous ones focused on among others energy security, climate change, SMEs, Eastern Partnership, development assistance, etc.). The next biannual V4+Japan Foreign Ministerial meeting is also scheduled during the Hungarian Presidency in 2013. V4 supports the on-going negotiations on EU-Japan FTA launched in April 2013.

China

The Visegrad Group will increase efforts to coordinate V4 policy on China in order to better benefit from cooperation between China and CEE countries. Common efforts would enable V4 countries to capitalize on the 12 measures introduced by China after the China CEE Economic Forum in April 2012.

ASEAN

The Visegrad Group will increase efforts to coordinate the approach of the V4 countries toward ASEAN MSs. A harmonized, joint policy could strengthen the two regions' relations and may be a base to future cooperation in various fields.

Latin America

Acknowledging the growing importance of the relations with Latin America, which is one of the world's most promising economic regions – the Hungarian Presidency plans to continue the political dialogue that was launched in the framework of the Hungary–Latin-America Forum in Budapest in March 2012 in a V4+LAC format. Due to the size and scale of some of the emerging Latin-American economies, V4 countries, in joint efforts, could provide better stimulus for cooperation with the LAC region. In order to define prospective areas of cooperation, the Hungarian Presidency will explore the possibility of organizing a meeting in a V4+LAC format on the political directors' level.

Africa, Middle East

The Hungarian Presidency will hold a political director's consultation on the Arab Spring and its current developments. Possibilities of cooperation between the V4 countries and the Arab regional organisations such as Arab League or Gulf Cooperation Council should be considered. The V4 also seeks new opportunities for SMEs in the Middle East by making joint V4 efforts, as well as seeking regional level cooperation in tourism. A special topic to be discussed shall be the V4 cooperation in the field of consular work in particular in those countries where a V4 country has no diplomatic representation.

The Visegrad Group considers the "Visegrad House" in Cape Town, South Africa as exemplary. The Group attaches great importance to the endeavour that besides consular activities, the "Visegrad House" should become a common base for promoting a comprehensive, mutually advantageous cooperation with the Republic of South Africa. Hence, the Hungarian Presidency will initiate joint events in Cape Town for trade and investment development, tourism promotion as well as cultural activities and civic networking programs.

Based on the experience of the well-established House in Cape Town, the Visegrad Group will encourage the continuation of the discussions in Vietnam among the V4 representations in order to exploit the business development potentials given in the country.

Within the general frameworks, the Visegrad Group is ready to explore the possibilities of launching new initiatives with further countries as well upon demand. Possible cooperation of new quality with Croatia will be examined as well once the country is to join the EU in 2013.

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

The Visegrad Group will aim to further strengthen the coordination of the Visegrad countries within the field of development cooperation and aims at organizing regular DG meetings. The Visegrad Group will facilitate the exchange of views on positions regarding the joint programming and the EU development policy agenda, in particular regarding the application and utilization of the V4 countries' transition experience in the context of the EU's assistance to its partner countries. Also as a follow-up to the discussions on the next Multiannual

Financial Framework, the Visegrad Group intends to foster the broader participation of V4 development actors in EU development programs.

UNITED NATIONS AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

The Hungarian Presidency proposes to develop a consultation mechanism for the V4 countries on issues related to the UN, its specialized agencies and regional organizations with the aim of exchange of information, situation assessment and possibly discussing common negotiating positions.

Therefore it is necessary to assess those political, human rights, international law, and economic issues where national interests are represented more effectively by joint actions.

The present practice of regular meetings at expert level shall continue. It should be examined how already good co-operation among permanent missions to regional and global organizations of the V4 countries could be made more systematic and substantive, especially in New York, Geneva and Vienna.

COUNCIL OF EUROPE, OSCE

The V4 countries are seeking to intensify co-operation and ensure coordination of action on issues of mutual interest within the framework of the Council of Europe and the OSCE. Specific efforts will be made to ensure coordination with regard to nominations to different high level posts and positions available within these two organisations.

Building on the results of the previous Polish presidency, concrete initiatives will be envisaged with a view to increasing the visibility of the V4 co-operation and its contribution to the main objectives of the two organisations, in the field of security, promoting human rights and democracy.

CONSULAR COOPERATION

In order to facilitate the protection of our citizens abroad, the Visegrad Group intends to continue and further strengthen the on-going cooperation in consular matters on the level of foreign ministries, as well as the local coordination between diplomatic/consular missions in third countries. Possibilities will be explored to extend the already existing working relationship to new areas, such as:

- co-location of consular activities;
- overview of the visa representation agreements;
- preparing guidelines to harmonize consular practices in certain third countries and utilizing the good practices of the “Visegrad House” in Cape Town that proved to be a good example of a new type of cooperation.

The Visegrad Group supports the exchange of views in consular topics discussed in different EU Working Groups with special attention to the preparation of new regulations for consular protection of EU citizens abroad.

SECTORAL POLICIES

1. ECONOMY

Energy

The Visegrad Group aims at continuing the work started by the Polish Presidency in order to contribute to further progress in energy market integration in the Visegrad region in the context of the EU deadline of 2014 for completion of the internal energy market through overcoming infrastructural and non-infrastructural barriers that impede trade relations in line with the guidelines set by the European Council in February 2011. At the same time, the Visegrad Group aims at enhancing diversification projects in the Southern Corridor, as well as the establishment of LNG terminals.

The Visegrad Group aims at maintaining the priorities outlined by the Polish Presidency, i.e. focusing on the implementation of the internal energy gas market integration. Building on the steps taken under auspices of Polish Presidency, including the preparation of the market liquidity paper, presented by V4 National Regulatory Authorities, together with the conceptual analysis of the Gas Target Model for the region, it has planned to work out a toolkit to continue and facilitate the process of further regional energy-gas market integration (financing, institutional framework, gas market models).

Relying on the achievements of the Polish Presidency, the Hungarian Presidency proposes to establish a V4 Forum for Gas Market Integration to provide political support, and coordination among ministries, national regulatory authorities and also transmission system operators of the participating countries on legal harmonization and commitment to a process of regional integration of the gas markets as a stepping stone towards a single EU wide market in compliance with respective directives and regulations of the European Union. The internal market integration together with the V4 market potential are the best incentives for the effective use of existing interconnections and for the development of diversification projects and increasing the level of competition and market liquidity.

The Visegrad Group aims to enhance the common, regional need for energy diversification. It has the intention to enhance all pipeline and LNG projects which could result in gas-to-gas competition in the region.

The Visegrad Group reiterates the importance of crude oil pipeline projects of common interest with regard to the security of supply of the region and in order to secure diversification possibilities. Furthermore recognises the need to explore different tools for enhanced regional cooperation methods.

The growing share of renewable resources in electricity generation, especially when the necessary infrastructure development is lacking, results in loop flows not only provoking considerable social welfare loss but also threatening the secure operation of our interconnected electricity systems.

Bearing the increased need for cooperation in mind, the Hungarian Presidency will further promote the now active and mutually beneficial cooperation between V4 countries in the field of electricity market integration, including the sharing and possible coordination of national positions before the meetings of the regional electricity market integration platform i.e. the

CEEE Forum and the implementation of the Electricity Target Model in general. Furthermore, the Visegrad Group highly supports the existing intense cooperation between the national regulatory authorities, transmission system operators and other stakeholders in this regard.

The European Union has proposed a set of very ambitious yet nonbinding indicative low-emission economy targets for 2050, which will be a considerable challenge for the energy sector, including as far as costs are concerned. In order to fulfil these targets, the role of nuclear energy as a clean, secure and affordable source of electricity generation has to be preserved. In this respect, coordinated action in energy-climate post2020 framework discussion will be a priority. The Hungarian Presidency will continue the work started in the framework of the V4 working group in nuclear energy established by the Polish Presidency. The Visegrad Group aims to enhance cooperation in R&D, especially to foster V4 cooperation in nuclear R+D, with special regards to generation IV reactors, to support cooperation in regulatory aspects and to promote an exchange of knowledge and experience.

The Visegrad Group will aim to further strengthen the coordination of the Visegrad countries regarding the *Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Directive 98/70/EC relating to the quality of petrol and diesel fuels and amending Directive 2009/28/EC on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources*.

The V4 countries are capable of exerting an influence on the decision-making process in this field and this was visible during the negotiation of the RES Communication Conclusion (3.12.12 TTE). Interests of V4 countries are very similar regarding this issue (all V4 countries are against the 5% limitation in the amount of first generation biofuels and have doubts regarding the ILUC emission values). Therefore the V4 countries should closely cooperate in course of the discussion, also with other Member States. The need of cooperation on that issue was confirmed by energy ministers (22.02 in Brussels) and during the Hungarian Presidency, meetings of V4 energy ministers and expert-level consultations are to be held.

The Visegrad Group takes note of the ongoing European Commission analysis on the framework for unconventional hydrocarbon extraction. In this context the V4 countries will remain informed on the energy policy priorities and will exchange best practices on shale gas. The shale gas will be approached as an important commodity with high potential for energy security and energy prices while environmental aspects of extraction will be also considered.

New legislative proposals to be tabled by the European Commission in the second half of 2013 will be closely monitored and V4 coordinated action will be applied where appropriate.

Transport

The Hungarian Presidency intends to carry on with the transport programmes and objectives proposed during previous presidencies.

During the Hungarian presidential period, meetings of V4 transport ministers and expert-level consultations are to be held. The Hungarian Presidency will organise a high level joint V4-CEI conference (with separate V4 and CEI panels) on transportation with particular focus on infrastructural development and financial matters (Budapest, November 2013).

Roads

- Examining the possibility and method of joint action to preserving the value of EU road financing in the period of 2014-2020.

- Coordinating the schedule of the roll-out of TEN-T networks (core network and comprehensive network) in order that certain key strategic corridors should be implemented in a coordinated manner, according to the best possible schedule (e.g. border sections to be implemented in the same phase in case of two neighbouring countries etc.)
- Closely related to the above, issues of the implementation of the north-south transport axes (CETC axis, connection of the V-VI Helsinki corridor and the implementation of the Lancut Declaration and the Via Carpatia axis (accession of south countries may be part of these axes).
- Collective and priority treatment of border projects (development, renewal, accessibility for the disabled).
- Exchange of experiences regarding toll collection systems, consultation on the regional cooperation framework of e-tolling systems in order to facilitate the establishment of the European Electronic Toll Service (EETS).
- Possibilities for the establishment of standard road safety measures in the V4 countries.
- exchange of experiences on achievements to date in the area of road safety, with particular regard to the following issues:
 - a. reducing the accident risk of level crossings (road or railway crossing);
 - b. possibilities of managing the specific road safety problems arising from the transport needs of ageing societies;
 - c. review of road safety measures.
- examining the possibility of cross-border road safety programmes, cooperation in order to reduce the number of accidents, with particular regard to the following issues:
 - a. standardisation of control and the relevant traffic rules;
 - b. reducing the risk of accidents concerning cross-border tourism-related transport needs, with particular regard to hazards of unprotected road users.

Rail:

Of the priority programmes of the Polish Presidency, the Visegrad Group intends to continue the following during the Hungarian Presidency:

- Seeking to develop a joint position and priorities for the V4 concerning the rail-related strategic documents of the EU, e.g. the fourth railway package.
- Regulation (EU) No 913/2010 concerning a European rail network for competitive freight set out the directions for freight transport; in the V4 countries, the planned improvement projects should now be implemented on these lines.
- Liberalisation of domestic passenger transport.
- The future of the high-speed rail network.

In addition to the above, it is proposed that the following new subjects be put forward:

- Examining the possibility and method of joint action with a view to preserving the 2014-2020 value of EU rail funding.

- Coordinating the proposed completion schedule of the TEN-T rail network, including in particular the core network, in terms of the scheduling of border crossings and the connected sections, technical parameters and interoperability.
- Discussing the issue of regional cross-border rail interoperability (up to the first major city), traction and time-tables. Analysis of the possible interconnection of feeder lines separated by borders and the revitalisation of separately non-viable, sometimes closed-down branch lines.
- Exchange of experience on fees to access the railway network, the competitiveness of individual railways and the optimisation of state intervention.
- Joint negotiation of the framework of cross-border rail traffic agreements.

Inland water transport

The EU has committed itself to pursue the goal of shifting transport to less energy-intensive, cleaner and safer transport modes. Inland water transport can play a prominent role in reaching these targets. However; the development of inland navigation can only be performed with fully taking into account all the other area's interests. Hence, a comprehensive strategic analysis shall be carried out. Such an analysis should take into account all aspects that concern the river Danube as a whole such as shipping, environmental protection, water management, tourism and protection of natural resources.

Employment Policy

Economic recession strongly marks the employment situation in the V4 countries. Each country tries to shape its institutional system (closer cooperation of labour market participants, rationalisation of government bodies, process optimising, and decreasing bureaucracy) and toolset to enhance the efficiency of the labour market. There has been a significant increase in the youth unemployment across Europe. We are seeking new employment opportunities, forms and solutions, which alleviate the access of young people to the labour market. In addition the economic crisis resulted in further and stronger segregation on the labour market. The circle of those living on allowances that are not entitled to job-seeking allowance, and receive welfare benefits, extended further. It is very important to get to know good practices of certain countries, which can lead back persons in a difficult situation on the primary labour market. In a quickly changing economy there is a special need for forecasting certain employment trends and job visions, thus ensuring the opportunity for the VET system and stakeholders of the labour market for appropriate adaptation.

During the Hungarian Presidency the Visegrad Group plans to organize the following events:

Challenges and good practices of the public employment services of V4 countries in the fight against unemployment, with special regard to the vulnerable groups (e.g. groups with Roma origin, young people, disabled people etc.);

The role of the employment offices of the V4 countries in the improvement of employment including mobility and migration measures taken against illegal employment;

Sharing achievements, good practices and meeting challenges of new European tools of VET developments with V4 partnership.

Internal market

The Internal Market is without a doubt the biggest success of the European integration. It brings tangible benefits to citizens and companies in all Member States. Two packages of proposals (Single Market Act I and II.) are aiming at further deepening the single market. It is a common interest of the V4 to coordinate their position when negotiating the remaining proposals from the Single Market Act I and the proposals contained in the Single Market Act II, thus supporting economic recovery.

Industrial policy

Appreciating the need to ensure cohesion between the EU energy, climate and industry policies, which have strong influence on the competitiveness of industry, the Visegrad Group will contribute to enhancing the cooperation within the Competitiveness Council on issues concerning further development of the internal market and sectors of the European industry. The Visegrad Group will work for more active and in depth exchange of views among EU Member States' ministers who are responsible for industry issues.

Consumer protection

The Visegrad Group aims to foster cooperation with regard to consumer protection, with special attention to the negotiations of the Commission proposal concerning general product safety. The improvement of market surveillance activity and administrative cooperation directly benefit the citizens of the Visegrad region.

Intellectual property rights

Interests of V4 countries are almost identical regarding the issue of collective rights management, a probable future hot topic in the EU. The EU level regulation of multi-territorial online licensing of rights related to musical works may result in the more "popular" (and better royalty revenue generating) works falling out of the collective rights management of V4 countries. The amount of royalties distributed to rights holders and allocated for cultural purposes will therefore be subject to decrease. The V4 countries' interest is to align positions during the negotiations.

Research and development support

During the preparation of the research and development framework program for the 2014-2020 period and the work programs thereof, it is of great importance that researchers from the previously more poorly performing countries participate more successfully. V4 countries will coordinate their positions for better results, such as better use of the resources of the Horizon 2020-Program.

ClusterCOOP Project

The ClusterCOOP Project led by the Hungarian Ministry of National Economy in the framework of the EU's Central Europe Programme, initiated on the basis of the Memorandum (signed on 26 November 2009) on cooperation of V4 countries in the field of clusters, shall continue to receive full support for its activities which started in April 2011 and now also incorporates Slovene, Italian and German partners and should be successfully terminated by March 2014 after approval of its results by a ministerial conference planned for autumn 2013

in Bratislava. It is crucial to underline that an important set of results planned within the project need joint coordinated representation vis-à-vis the stakeholder EU organs in line with the preparation for the next MFF period 2014-2020.

Creative industries

Following the Polish Presidency in highlighting the sector of creative industries, Design Terminal, the state agency for Hungarian creative industries should share its best practices in the field of introducing platforms for young talents to promote their works of European and international level in technology, urbanism, fashion and design.

2. REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Visegrad Group will continue the path paved by the Polish Presidency. As we are approaching the closure of negotiations concerning 2014-2020 cohesion policy legislative package, the emphasis is more and more shifted to programming when Member States will conduct bilateral negotiations with the European Commission. The Visegrad Group will focus on main concerns and issues of the period:

- Discussing any outstanding issues of the 2014-2020 negotiations. Cohesion policy regulations delegate power in a large number of important issues to the Commission. Commission will issue delegated and implementing acts to be negotiated in Council or at comitology forum. Regular V4 consultations ensure joint representation of common interests.
- A Partnership Agreement and Operational Programmes should be submitted within deadlines set by the regulations and are subject to bilateral negotiations with the European Commission. Transparent negotiations would ensure that Commission treats the Member States on an equal basis. To enhance equal treatment, permanent consultations with V4 countries are inevitable.
- As the end of the 2007-2013 period is approaching, implementation experiences need to be discussed and the outcome of evaluations needs to be shared in the V4 group.

V4 or V4+ consultations, including a ministerial meeting is to be held.

Another aspect of the regional development that shall be continued by the Visegrad Group is its active involvement, in cooperation with other V4 Member States, in the process of negotiating and shaping the new perspective of the Swiss Contribution as well as the third edition of the EEA/Norwegian Financial Mechanisms (if the latter topic arises) on the EU forum.

Common spatial development cooperation of the V4+2 countries:

V4 countries, Bulgaria and Romania are preparing a common spatial development strategy which promotes the more harmonious and efficient spatial development of this region and is suitable to establish the basis of a common platform to influence dominant processes of the European Union. Spatial development planning co-operation would provide more possibilities for taking advantage of the special characteristics of the Central- and Eastern European space and for enhancing territorial cohesion. The Visegrad Group will continue and be ready to

finalize the preparation of the Common Spatial Development Document of the V4+2 Countries which is co-ordinated by the Czech Regional Development Institute (UUR). V4+2 consultations, including a meeting of ministers responsible for territorial development are to be held.

European Territorial Cooperation (ETC)

European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) provides a good framework not only for the bilateral cooperation of the V4 + (cross-border programs), but also allows the cooperation of all countries of the Group (the transnational Central Europe Programme). During the preparation and implementation of the ETC 2014-2020, which will take place in the time of the Hungarian Presidency, the cooperation in setting common goals and discussion about creating links with sectoral and regional programs will be important for the quality of the new programs.

Regional Practical Cooperation

As a result of the enlargement of the EU in 2004 Central Europe underwent fundamental changes. The new tool of the EU, the macroregional strategies are aiming mainly at the improvement of security, prosperity and the sustainability of the given macro region in a coherent way. These tools stretching across the counties of the Visegrad Group could play an important role during the next budgetary period to achieve major development goals of the V4, in terms of North-South infrastructure connection as well as in boosting growth and rising employment, improvement of R&D capacities and acceleration of the technology transfer. Through a strategic V4 thinking, cooperation and new partnerships, based on shared interest the V4 should enhance the efficiency of these tools in our region, in practice these actions could serve as a bridge concerning the institutional cooperation between the Baltic and the Danube regions.

3. FINANCES

Macroeconomic issues

Growth prospects outside the Euro zone – consultation on expert level (proposed date: November 2013): V4 experts will exchange views on potential growth outlook outside the Euro zone, but inside the EU. The consultation could investigate the effect of the different pace of integration of the Euro zone and non-euro zone on economic growth.

Fiscal framework in light of the EU directive 2011/85 - consultation on expert level (proposed date: July 2013/February 2014): building on the work started in Prague in June 2012, V4 experts will exchange views about the implementation of the directive into national law, and what are/were the main challenges and obstacles they faced/face.

Tax- and Customs Co-operation

- Continue regular meetings of V4 Directors General in order to deepen cooperation for the purpose of representing regional interests within the EU.
- Continue the work at expert level in Task Forces in view of preparation the EU legal harmonization in the following topics:

- mineral oil related excise tax evasion, including pursuing the objectives set out in the Declaration on prevention of excise tax evasions, which was signed by the Directors General of the customs administrations of Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic in Bratislava June 2011 – that is to advocate for the inclusion of products within CN codes 2710 19 91 and CN 2710 19 99 to article 20. par. 1 of Council Directive 2003/96/EC so as to become subject of the provisions of the control and movement of these products in accordance with Council Directive 2008/118/EC);
- Undervaluation of textile of Asian Origin. Taking the measures on the V4 level to eliminate customs and tax evasions due to undervaluation of the imported goods, ensuring the exchange of information among the V4 countries in the field of determining the customs value for imports of textiles from Asian countries, to examine the possibility of exchange of information of data contained in the import's databases of V4 countries and usage of the existing databases of the customs authorities which lead to the detection of customs and tax fraud in connection with the undervaluation of imported textiles from Asian countries.
- Organization of meeting in tax matters by inviting delegates from Austria, Slovenia and from Romania.
- Organization of V4 level meetings on simplification and standardization of customs data exchange to develop a unified form for the benefit of V4 customs administrations.
- Organization of V4 expert level meetings to exchange experiences and best practices (use of EU funds).
- Organization of V4 expert level meetings to develop common projects.
- Strengthening the V4 cooperation in order to combat fraud in the field of excise duties according to the Art. 16 of the Council Regulation (EU) No. 389/2012 on administrative cooperation in the field of excise duties.
- For the purpose of increasing the efficiency of the control capacity at the external borders of the EU enhancing V4 cooperation and coordination, capacity building of border crossing points and other customs investments making use of the options provided by the financial framework of the EU in order for the joint representation of the V4 customs modernization objectives and the implementation of joint applications (e.g. development of border crossing points, mobile laboratory/container laboratory, vehicles, thermal cameras, night vision devices, endoscopes, IT-systems, development of the risk analysis system).

4. SOCIAL AFFAIRS

All V4 countries are affected by demographic challenges. In order to improve the demographic situation, the issue of women's employment and the adjustment of work and family life were among the priorities of the Hungarian EU presidency and were also on the agenda of the Czech V4 Presidency. Discussions will be held on the opportunities of increasing of women employment, reducing wage gaps between employed men and women, as well as the

instruments and best practices of Member States in reconciling work and family life. These issues will be discussed at a thematic workshop.

Social / Roma inclusion

The current crisis greatly aggravates the problems of poverty and social exclusion, and the Roma population is particularly affected. The Visegrad Group intends to intensify the V4 discussion on Roma inclusion issues along the lines of the EU framework of National Roma Integration Strategies, focusing on implementation and monitoring. The aim is to share best practices and formulate common positions towards the EU on how to best mainstream Roma integration aspects in policy making and how to use the EU funds for the purpose of social inclusion in the most effective way. The Visegrad Group will initiate discussions on the issues of measuring and monitoring the implementation and results of Roma inclusion programmes.

Type of event: high level conference on the implementation of social /Roma integration strategies, possible accompanying side event (possible invitation of further Eastern-European / Western-Balkan states, date: end of 2013).

The promotion of Roma culture is a good tool for breaking stereotypes and helping community development of Roma and non-Roma people. Therefore Roma culture will be promoted by programmes and in side-events, among others in the occasion of 8 April 2014, the International Roma Day.

5. CULTURE

The Visegrad Group will focus on supporting and maintaining on-going joint projects, while paying close attention to the finalisation and future implementation of the EU Creative Europe Programme (2014-2020) which supports cultural and creative sectors.

During the Hungarian Presidency the Visegrad Group will convene the 24th meeting of V4 Cultural Ministers.

- The Hungarian Presidency will work along the lines of the jointly accepted priorities on preservation and utilisation of cultural heritage.
- Emphasis will be put on the support and development of the cultural and creative sectors while focusing on the Creative Europe Programme Proposal. In this context, the Hungarian Presidency will foster the exchange of information and good practices between MEDIA Desks and Cultural Contact Points of the V4 countries.
- The Hungarian Presidency will encourage discussions of cinema experts, including digitization, while taking into consideration the specificities of the V4 countries.
- The Hungarian Presidency will promote cultural and linguistic diversity in V4 and its neighbouring regions.
- The Hungarian Presidency, depending on its financial capabilities, will facilitate the creation of an area for mutual continuous communication and cooperation of film funds in the V4 countries in order to analyse the possibility of initiating the creation of, among other things, a common platform to support the film co-production projects and the development of co-production and distribution cooperation among institutions in the V4 countries.

V4 cultural projects to be continued:

- On-going colloquium of Library-Information employees from the V4 countries.
- Maintaining and supporting the activities of the Working Group for Cultural Heritage in the V4 countries and their new proposals. Exchange of experiences would be welcome as regards the preparatory work at national level in view of the implementation of the Decision establishing a European Union action for the European Heritage Label.
- Joint project on the Role of Theatre in the V4 Countries after 1989.

Religion

“In the wake of St. Adalbert – Role and Opportunities of Churches in the Visegrad Region in the 21st Century”: In August 2012, the State Secretariat for Religion, National Minority and Civil Society Affairs drafted its proposal for organising an international conference focusing on church affairs in the framework of the upcoming Hungarian V4 Presidency, involving partners from the churches and the civil society of the Visegrad region, as well as the representatives of the Holy See. The event would aim at directing attention to the spiritual heritage of St. Adalbert, a saint especially honoured in the Visegrad region, and to stress the relevance of his heritage in today’s Central Europe.

The event offers the opportunity to overview the historical role of the Christian churches in the integration process of the Visegrad region as well as in the service of European integration.

Renowned institutions of the region (e.g. the Catholic University of Ružomberok and Catholic University of Lublin) or civil organisations with relevant experience and cultural activities of the region may participate in realising the conference (date: autumn 2013, Budapest/Esztergom).

6. EDUCATION AND YOUTH POLICY

Education

The Hungarian Presidency of the Visegrad Group plans to put the spotlight on the success of the scholarship and grant programmes of the International Visegrad Fund (IVF) in the fields of education, science and research. For this reason, the Hungarian Presidency endeavours to organize an *International V4 Alumni Achievement Conference (2013, Corvinus University of Budapest)*.

To foster the development of closer cooperation in the region and encourage the mobility of scholars and individuals, it is important to assess the results of the IVF scholarship and grant programmes and its global impact. Therefore, former participants of IVF grants and scholarships will be invited to the conference. This event will serve as an opportunity for representatives from relevant parties – governments, universities, businesses and alumni – to evaluate the IVF programmes and for grantees to speak about the effect of the received IVF support on their professional careers. In addition, the Conference will create a unique forum for the former project participants of the various grants to present the long term impact of their joint work with the institutions and organisations of the other V4 countries.

The objectives of the International V4 Alumni Achievement Conference include:

- to recognize and acknowledge the outstanding work accomplished within the framework of the projects supported by IVF;
- to identify best practices through the presentations of individual alums, organizations and institutions that are successful in their respective fields;
- to encourage alumni to reconnect with each other and interact with other V4 programme alumni;
- to develop a closer relationship between businesses, NGOs, ministries and universities through networking opportunities provided by this meeting;
- to brainstorm ideas for new ways to expand V4 cooperation in the fields of education, science and research.

With the purpose of efficiently contributing to the support of the economic competitiveness of the European Union through promoting the technological and scientific progress in the Visegrad Countries, the Hungarian Presidency emphasizes the importance of the Visegrad Countries' cooperation in the fields of educational and scientific mobility of students, scholars and researchers. Besides promoting cooperation in the field of higher education, fostering relations between governmental and non-governmental organizations, corporations, educational institutions *and schools providing vocational education and training* is also a top priority of the Visegrad Group.

A new-type intern program for students is proposed to be launched within the framework of the International Visegrad Fund scholarship program collaborating with the business sector in the V4 countries in order to help young university graduates to gain the work experience they need to successfully find employment.

Youth Policy

The Visegrad Group in the field of youth policy – in line with the priorities of the V4 – plans to continue the practice of the previous years in order to achieve the following objectives:

- encourage the cooperation of non-governmental youth organizations and youth workers with a special emphasize on non-formal learning activities and sharing best practices;
- Promotion and effective use of the available financial resources (Visegrad Fund, Youth in Action Programme and the new integrated programme from 2014 as well as other EU Programmes and Funds) for supporting youth related activities;
- exchange of good practices and sharing information about the state of play of the national youth policies;
- strengthen common youth policy actions: (ministries: in certain issues negotiating and preparing common positions, sharing best practices and giving continuous update on the national youth policies; background institutions -national agencies: setting as national priority the support of the cooperation of the V4 countries, strengthening the cooperation and common activities of national agencies of the four countries; NGOs: implementation of common projects; dealing with common V4 themes);

- explore further possibilities of cooperation, designate common activities;
- exchange of practices and cooperation with the member states of Eastern Partnership.

Planned activity:

Following the practice of the previous presidencies, organizing a 2-day seminar with the participation of delegations from the V4 countries (5 participants, representing: ministry, youth policy background institution, NGO), and depending on the final outcome of the Polish seminar and the approved Hungarian programme, representatives of the ministries responsible for youth affairs of the Eastern Partnership countries and further European institutions and organizations.

7. AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

During the Hungarian Presidency, the Visegrad Group intends to cover the following subjects in the field of Agriculture and Rural Development:

Drafting the V4 position of the Common Agricultural Policy

Discussions are to be held on the implementation of the Common Agricultural Policy reform, in order to reach a common position which can be represented at the Councils' meetings in Brussels. Tasks deriving from the implementation of the CAP reform, most of all with regard to the new basic regulations (direct payments, Common Market Organizations, horizontal regulation and rural development). The V4 countries continue the close cooperation on the negotiations of their implementing regulations and the Commission's delegated acts as well. They can also exchange their experiences on the national preparation to the next programming period. Increase of the value of the EU agricultural de minimis limit, if the beneficiary raises the level of employment in the rural regions or the member state compensates their farmers for elemental weather damages (like drought, frost).

Food safety- sources of danger and efficient collective action

Enhance cooperation in the field of animal health, plant health, food safety and food quality with focus on food-stuffs controls and problem solving on an internal market with the intention to provide our population with safe and healthy food products.

Risk management in agriculture

Joint elaboration of strategy and actions are planned during the Hungarian Presidency concerning risk management in agriculture in order to protect farmers from the consequences of extreme weather conditions.

Further steps in the preparation of the Agreement on Forests in Europe

The negotiation of a legally binding Agreement on Forests in Europe began in February 2012. This will be the first legally binding international agreement in the field of forestry. The participating states will have the opportunity to discuss the expectations, the steps of the national implementation and the further steps deriving from the framework character of the agreement.

Improvement of irrigation and climate change adaptation measures

Cooperation in the field of the introduction and use of water and energy saving irrigation technologies, particularly with regard to the more frequent and severe drought and scarcity periods due to the climate change. The introduction of possible mitigation measures are also advisable with retaining of precipitation and flood waters, possible investments may provide for the establishment of reservoirs for irrigation water and the supply of green energy for the pump stations of the irrigation water.

The Hungarian Presidency plans to organize the following events:

- Two Meetings of the Ministers of Agriculture (2013 2nd semester and 2014 1st semester).
- Expert Meeting for the V4+3 (RO, BG, SI) National Plant Gene Banks (2013 2nd semester).
- Expert Workshop on the safety risks of food supply.

8. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Natura 2000 sites

Management of Natura 2000 sites, the financing of the Natura 2000 network, monitoring and communication. The key theme would be the preparation for the seminar on the Pannonian biogeographical region organised by the EU Commission dealing with the management of the affected sites on a biogeographical level.

Resource efficiency and waste

Discussion on the life cycle of natural resources, how we can reduce the amount of waste and ensure its reuse as raw material. Sharing the EU and national experiences and best practices among the V4 countries. Exchanging the views on “Review of Waste Policy and Legislation” prepared by the European Commission.

Multiannual Financial Framework of the EU (2014-2020)

During the second part of 2013 the elaboration of the national operative programmes and the bilateral negotiations with the Commission will be on the agenda in the field of the supporting environmental development. There will be V4 discussions about the national experiences and specialities, and the Multiannual Financial Framework for 2014-2020, with regard to the programmes on environment protection.

International context of the V4 environmental cooperation

Discussion about the implementation of the outcome document adopted at the Rio+20 Conference. Evaluation of the report prepared by the UN open working group for September 2013 regarding the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the outcome of the international water conference, the “2013 Budapest Water Summit” (2013 October, Budapest) and identifying regional priorities.

Close cooperation and possible coordination of positions to important EU environmental agenda/proposals (eg. EIA Directive, ILUC).

The Hungarian Presidency plans to organize the following events:

- a Meeting of the Ministers of Environment V4+CR (2014 1st semester).
- V4 - South-America: Agriculture-environmental Forum (2014 1st semester).
- sharing of experience with the V4 countries + 2 (RO, CR) regarding the management of Natura 2000 sites
- sharing experience with the V4 countries + 2 regarding cohesion policy, programming in the field of environment (expert level).

Climate Policy

- The international climate policy programme of the Hungarian Presidency reflects the outcome of the 2012 Doha Summit. The greatest achievement of the summit was the adoption of the second commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol following the expiry of the first commitment period in 2012 while also reducing the number of negotiating paths.
- Following the Doha meeting (COP18/CMP8), in December 2012, of the parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol, the Visegrad Group will pay particular attention to the ratification process of the amendment to the Kyoto Protocol, including the EU's decision to fulfil jointly the commitments in Article 3 of the Kyoto Protocol.
- The Visegrad Group intends to facilitate a discussion on the Commission's consultative communication on the 2015 International Climate Change Agreement, and the main issues of both workstreams of the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action (ADP) bearing in mind that the EU's mitigation efforts should be in line with tangible efforts of other major economies.
- The Visegrad Group will pay particular attention to the preparation for this year's Conference of the Parties (COP19) to be held in Warsaw, in November 2013 with a view to facilitate the progress in the negotiations on the global climate agreement to be adopted in 2015. Although V4 countries are devoted to fulfilling the EU's ambitious climate mitigation targets, during the formulation of the EU's and its Member States' position, the Visegrad Group intends to place particular emphasis on increasing competitiveness and making energy prices more affordable, as well as avoiding carbon leakage.
- The Visegrad Group will place great emphasis on the EU's internal climate policy too. In this respect, it will further debate on the Commission's 2030 framework for climate and energy policies, and on other measures aiming to increase the efficiency of the EU Emissions Trading System in a balanced manner, and coordinate V4 positions, keeping in mind that we have common concerns that need to be taken into account when the Member States' position is formulated. It is of utmost importance to exchange views on V4 countries' transition to a low emission economy, the results of the second period of the EU Emissions Trading System (e.g. flexibility mechanisms, free allowances, auction), experiences concerning the Climate and Energy Package as

well as the expectations concerning the third trading period of the EU ETS, taking into account the possible impact of the proposed EU ETS structural reform on the functioning of the carbon market in V4 countries. Besides, the Visegrad Group deems it important to give a more particular attention to the 2013-2020 allowances/auctions scheme.

- The future of flexible mechanisms, especially Joint Implementation Mechanism or domestic offset schemes, is of utmost importance for the countries of Eastern Europe, and should be given due attention when developing rules for their continuation.

9. HEALTH

Health sector modernisation, human resources for health and the implementation of the directive on cross-border health care are issues proposed to be high on the agenda of the Hungarian V4 Presidency Programme, planned to be discussed during the meeting of ministers of health.

The V4 Ministers of health regularly exchange views on how to meet challenges of demographic ageing, growing and changing disease burdens, with special emphasis on the prevalence of chronic non-communicable diseases, increasing patient expectations and at the same time the scarcity of resources available for the health sector, especially under the circumstances of the global economic-financial crisis. Innovative solutions, new models of health care are emerging responding and flexibly adapting to future needs, being the only way of ensuring financial sustainability of health care systems. A crucial condition to the operation of the health sector is the availability of adequately trained health professionals in adequate numbers. The evolving human resource crisis and efforts aiming at retaining health professionals in our health services is high on our agenda. In the course of these complex processes, it is of utmost importance to exchange views, share experiences, both successes and failures, on how to address critical situations and build a modern health sector for the future. The Visegrad Group will carry on these dialogues of mutual interest and benefit. In addition and related to these issues, an exchange of views among health ministers is planned to discuss proceedings, experiences in preparing for the implementation and in the practical application of the directive on cross-border health care. Possible future trends in patient mobility and common thinking on how we can best co-operate for the benefit of our patients are important questions for discussion among neighbouring countries.

Chief Medical Officers of V4 countries are proposed to carry on their exchange of views and experiences on their contributions to mitigating social inequalities, as well as preventing chronic non-communicable diseases with special emphasis on addressing social determinants of health.

The Hungarian Presidency plans to organize the following events:

- Meeting of the Ministers of Health of V4 countries
- Meeting of the Chief Medical Officers of V4 countries

10. TOURISM AND SPORTS

Tourism

In the field of tourism, the Visegrad Group will focus mainly on branding, common touristic products, E-marketing and communications.

Cooperation in tourism marketing will be extended to new markets such as the Arabian countries (GCC region), Eastern Partnership countries, Russia, Central Asian states and Australia.

The Visegrad Group intends to utilize the results and best practices of the Culture and National Heritage cooperation started during the Polish Presidency. Thus the cultural and religious heritage of the V4 region will be presented (music, World Heritage sites, and pilgrimages) in the form of a publication and a dedicated microsite on the V4 website in cooperation with the service providers.

During the Hungarian Presidency, the Visegrad Group will appear as one of the main health and medical touristic destinations in the region, rich in natural thermal and healing waters. A wide range of services will be presented during the SPA-CE 2013 Trade Show in Hungary, where the region's service providers will have an opportunity to appear and present their services.

One of the important aims of the Visegrad Group is to stimulate tourism among the four countries, for which the main tool is to create common products and attractive service packages.

The V4 countries continue to use conventional marketing tools of tourism promotion, including: media study tours, workshops, presentations and social media campaigns.

The Visegrad Group emphasizes the importance of E-marketing and social communication. For this purpose the already running social media campaigns will continue, in addition to introducing it on new markets. Furthermore, it is planned to update the V4 training programs according to current trends.

It is important to highlight the V4 as a brand and an independent region in a tourism industry seeking regional cooperation. As a tool of brand creation, the Hungarian National Tourist Office would like to raise awareness and motivate the service providers to apply and make more efficient use of the tenders provided by the International Visegrad Fund (IVF).

The high level meeting of state tourism's leaders will be held in February 2014, and in order to discuss promotion campaigns and to determine the related marketing budget two marketing meetings are proposed during the Hungarian V4 Presidency.

Sports

The purpose of the V4 cooperation is the exchange of experience in the field of sport as well as the coordination based on common regional interests with a view to discuss possible common opinions to be represented at EU and international fora.

- Meeting of the Steering Committee of the Olympic Hopes competition (November or December 2013)

- Consultative meeting of the V4 countries' sport administration bodies. This meeting at experts level is focused on the exchange of experience in the field of sport as well as the coordination based on common regional interests with a view to discuss possible common opinions.

11. SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY

General Policy Objectives

- Discussion and harmonization of strategic-level defence policy issues related to NATO and the Common Security and Defence Policy of the European Union (among others, thinking about the future of CSDP with a view to the forthcoming strategic debate on the EU's Common Security and Defence Policy at the European Council in December, cyber security challenges or lessons learned from the ISAF mission in Afghanistan);
- Further enhancing the visibility of the Visegrad Group and promoting the unified presentation of our common interests in the fora of NATO and the EU;
- Development and expansion of the opportunities in regional cooperation;
- Support and promotion of the integration efforts of the Western Balkans;
- Deepening association of EaP countries within the EU Common Security and Defence Policy;
- Emphasising the importance of cyber security awareness and strengthening dialogue and cooperation at policy and operational level in the field of cyber defence;
- Promoting efforts to make information exchange and knowledge transfer (lessons learned and best practices) more efficient in the field of cyber and information security.
- Exchange of knowledge and practical expertise countering cybercrime with Western Balkan countries.

Capability Development

- Continuation of the preparation process of the Visegrad Battle Group, to be available for standby in the first half of 2016 and to investigate the possibility of the post-Battle Group use of its elements and capabilities;
- Seeking further possibilities for cooperation in capability development, maintenance and acquisition in V4 format (and in wider Central-European defence cooperation) in the spirit of "Pooling and Sharing" and "Smart Defence". This aim should be achieved by exploiting the possibilities in the harmonization of defence planning activity and by formalizing the common project proposals in certain capability areas.

Operations, training and exercises

- Discussion of our lessons learned from the ISAF mission and our post-2014 international commitments in Afghanistan;
- Training cooperation and mutual participation in the courses organized by the parties;
- Participation in the exercises organized in the region with the largest forces possible.

Events:

- Meeting of the V4 air force commanders (1-4 August, 2013)
- Meeting of the V4 Defence Policy Directors (Visegrád, September, 2013)
- V4+Baltic Conference (November, 2013)
- Meeting of the V4 National Armaments Directors (November or December, 2013)
- Meeting of the V4 Defence Policy Directors (Budapest, February, 2014)
- Meeting of the V4 Defence Ministers (March or April, 2014, Szombathely)
- Meeting of the V4 Chiefs of Staff (June, 2014)
- Meeting of the V4 National Armaments Directors (June, 2014)

Expert-level Programmes:

- Planning and specifying the logistical preparation tasks related to the establishment of the V4 EU Battle Group on the EU BG working group meeting (April and September 2013);
- Central European NBC (nuclear, biological, chemical) defence cooperation workshop (Autumn of 2013);
- Expert seminar for defence planning experts of the V4 countries on multinational capability development topics (Spring, 2014);
- Expert seminar on the future of V4 EU Battle Group (Spring, 2014);
- Expert level dialogue between the directors of the National Security Authorities of V4 member countries and cyber security experts. (Spring-summer of 2014).

Working Groups

- Strategic Transport Working Group (HU)
- Air Defence Working Group (SK)
- NBC Defence Working Group (CZ)
- Soldier of the 21st century Working Group (PL)
- Life Cycle Management Working Group
- Quality Assurance Working Group
- Cyber Defence Working Group (HU)

12. HOME AFFAIRS

Meeting of the heads/experts of border policing units

It is a tradition in the Visegrad Group that heads/experts of the border policing units meet annually. As the year 2013 will be devoted mainly to Schengen evaluation, the Hungarian

Presidency plans to organise that meeting in the first semester of 2014. By that time experience and outcomes of the evaluation will be available for analysis.

Schengen Governance

The V4 countries accessed the Schengen area in 2007-2008 and their first round of regular evaluation as Schengen Member States is on-going. Visits on external borders and SIS/SIRENE – under the second generation Schengen Information System (SIS II) are scheduled to July-December 2013. Cooperation and mutual support in this task has its added value as good experience already showed under the previous chapters evaluated.

V4 countries may also consider cooperation concerning the negotiations in the Council of the Schengen governance package.

Cooperation in disaster management

The Hungarian Presidency plans to hold the regular meeting of disaster management director generals in Budapest, February 2014.

The topic to be discussed will be Critical Infrastructure Protection – presentation of national and EU legislation as well as exchange of experience and best practices.

Seminar concerning countering violent radicalisation of youth (expert level)

Seeing and constantly following the tendencies of violent radicalisation and extremism in the recent years, cooperation among the states within the region could be useful, both in the field of exchange of knowledge and experiences as well as in the field of developing methods in order to be able to properly address this growing phenomenon. These activities have many faces and different forms, ranging from violent and racist individuals, to far right and far left wing groups, from animal rights groups, to single issue terrorism, largely depending on their (hidden or open) Agenda. Since it is not easy to define the roots and causes of becoming part of violent extremist movements we could identify and focus on those issues which are of common interests and are to be addressed at regional level.

13. JUSTICE

Meeting of Central European Ministers of Justice

The traditional meeting of V4 ministers of justice has been expanded to the Meeting of Central European Ministers of Justice since May 2011 when the participants decided that the traditional annual event would take place every half year and Croatia and Slovenia would be included in the cooperation as well.

The discussion of the ministers during the two meetings planned by the Hungarian Presidency (in October 2013 and in spring 2014) is based on three main areas of cooperation: coordination of national positions in the Council of the European Union, exchange of experiences on national legislation activities and subjects of regional importance.

Further cooperation with the Western Balkan countries in the area of justice

In further core areas of the accession process as justice besides the formulation of a network seminars could be held on the Court of Justice of the EU, on judicial cooperation in criminal matters and fight against corruption, and fight against cybercrime.

EU citizen rights

Along with „The European Year of Citizens 2013” designated by the European Union, the means of the European Citizens’ Initiative should be the topic of a conference under the Hungarian V4 Presidency in order to enable EU citizens to be better acquainted with their EU citizen rights. The conference will be organised on February 2014. The close cooperation between V4 states, common historical experiences, the region’s common interests, as well as better possibilities to enforce the aforementioned interests suggest the issue’s V4 relevance. The aim of the conference is to raise the active use of European citizen rights.

Further discussions on the regional division of the Unified Patent Court

In December 2012 the Council of the European Union has approved the legislative package concerning the unitary patent and the Unified Patent Court, therefore the international agreement on the establishment of the Court was signed in February 2013, and subsequently the preparations for the functioning of the Court have started. In relation to the structure of the Court it has been previously conceived that the Central European countries shall establish a regional division; the related questions have been discussed in an expert group set up under Hungarian initiative and coordination. It is considered necessary to continue the work of this expert group, also in view of further elaboration of the detailed rules of the court system, and our objective is to reach an agreement on the establishment of a regional division with the participation of several countries of the region (V4 and West-Balkan) at the latest during the Hungarian presidency.

Launching of a new ‘Language Training for Judges and Prosecutors’ Project

In March 2012 Poland, the Czech Republic, Croatia and Hungary (the Ministries of Justice or the national judicial academies thereof) have jointly submitted an application for action grant in the framework of the Call for proposal – Criminal Justice Programme 2012. The European Commission selected the jointly submitted project entitled ‘Language Training for Judges and Prosecutors’ as a winner project. The execution of the Project began in autumn 2012 and lasts till the end of 2013. The Project aims at improving legal professional English knowledge and skills of the participants who are criminal judges and prosecutors. The language training focuses on the legal terminology of general European Union law and Union legal acts on the one hand, and especially on the legal terminology used in the field of judicial cooperation in criminal matters on the other hand. Since the feedbacks already gathered during the execution of the Project are all very positive and favourable, the submission of a similar application in 2013 with the participation of the countries of the V4 and Croatia would seem to be strongly recommended.

14. PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Forming of a network of experts in the area of development of public administration

The Polish Presidency of the Visegrad Group proposed to form a network from experts of the V4 countries with the purpose of helping the countries of the Western Balkans in their accession process and membership of the European Union. Hungary has undertaken the development of public administration topic primarily with the remark that we carry on our initiated judicial projects as well.

The Hungarian Ministry of Public Administration and Justice is ready to share experiences on improving efficiency and transparency of public administration institutional development.

The Hungarian Presidency plans to organize the following events:

Involving our V4 partners, as a launching event of forming an expert network, a multi-country workshop is planned to be held in Budapest, in September 2013 for the experts of the Western Balkan countries.