



**YEARBOOK
OF SLOVAKIA'S
FOREIGN POLICY
2017**

**RESEARCH CENTER
OF THE SLOVAK FOREIGN POLICY ASSOCIATION**

BRATISLAVA 2018

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MINISTRY
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SLOVAKIA AND ITS FOREIGN AND EUROPEAN POLICY IN 2017

MIROSLAV LAJČÁK

Tempora mutantur et nos mutamur in illis. As an old Latin adage has it, times change, and we change with them. The year 2017 was no different in that regard, and change continued to be the buzz word in the realm of international relations. Political trends became unpredictable and complex, sometimes even tectonic. It does not come easy to me to say that the world did not become a more stable and safer place last year. We saw turmoil and regional tensions, with the international community starting to lose consensus on some key issues previously understood as common interests. These changes are no longer situational. They are early warnings of new, long-term tendencies, stemming from protracted conflicts, social inequality, isolationism and lack of trust. Changing constants have placed new demands on our foreign policy, and on us as diplomats.

A YEAR OF CONTRADICTIONS AND CHALLENGES

2017 was a year of many contradictions. The number of crises and challenges to global security and stability has been steadily rising. Conflicts, violence and inequality are causing immense suffering. They continue to claim lives, fuel terrorism and force large groups of people to flee. At the same time, 2017 turned out to be the global economy's best year since 2010. Prosperity is the key factor in creating conditions conducive to stability. But the lesson learned of past years is the importance of equal opportunities, so that all people may benefit.

We have experienced new challenges to multilateralism. For a long time, we assumed the multilateral order would simply continue to grow stronger. Yet today, we are seeking to define how to ensure the relevance of the institutions we have created. In 2017, the multilateral world continued to reshape. This process is real and irreversible – simply because it is an exact reflection of what has been happening within all our countries. While global growth is a result both of the success and empowerment of individual states, individual actions as a result of pride or ignorance pose a significant risk to the culture of dialogue.

2017 was also a year of detachment. Many times throughout the year we spoke about political detachment, about the ever deeper barriers between common men and women and political forces. We identified this political estrangement as one of the reasons behind national and regional crises. But a new phenomenon, one that I have not experienced in almost 30 years of public service – at least not nearly at this scale – is the mistrust felt toward experts. We see logic and reason losing arguments to emotion and passion. Some call it a post-fact or post-truth world. Whatever you call it – it is surely a strange period. Citizens have a hard time navigating through floods of information; it is ever harder to distinguish truth from falsehoods. I see it, therefore, as more pressing than ever to talk to our citizens – to confirm to them the relevance and credibility of our established institutions, to show them the power of diplomacy. Because if we don't speak to them, somebody else will.

A YEAR OF EUROPEAN REFLECTION

Along this same vein, however, 2017 was also a year of self-reflection. In every internal crisis, recovery starts with self-awareness. Recognize that something is wrong – reflect, and adapt.

Therefore, strategic communication has been identified as one of the priorities of the Ministry going forward. We have felt the need for a pro-European offensive. We have created a specialized Unit and decided to invest more capacity and effort into communicating to our citizens the importance of partnerships, European integration, and transatlantic cooperation. We have taken the conversation to Slovak universities and shared a vision for our country's trajectory and our relations with the world. We will continue this dialogue in 2018, in the format of the National Convention on the EU. We want to lead an honest, sincere debate, and communicate that the EU is a vital space for our country.

This, however, does not mean that we are blind to our own internal challenges. The departure of the United Kingdom touches upon every aspect of our Union. We still see headlines asserting that the "EU is in crisis," and we spent a big part of last year discussing what kind of Union we want, and what the role of Slovakia should be in creating it. Yes, the EU is going through a reflection process of its own. At the same time, however, EU members certainly have the capacity to understand the nature of the current problems, and to seek and implement common solutions. I don't believe that any EU member underestimates the current situation. We have recognized the problem, fueled reflection here in Bratislava, and are together defining solutions to move our common project forward. We are still on a long and open road, but one thing remains unchanged. A successful European Union means a successful Slovakia.

A YEAR OF REINFORCING SECURITY AND DEFENSE POLICY

A positive signal was the agreement to step up cooperation in security and defense. Slovakia, along with another 24 EU member states, has launched the Permanent Structured Cooperation on Security and Defence (PESCO), to facilitate cooperation between armed forces, fill in some crucial gaps in capabilities, and make defense spending more efficient. We wanted a Union more capable, operational, deployable and interoperable. A Union that is more engaged and visible on the international scene.

PESCO will of course function in complementarity with NATO, which continues to be the cornerstone of our collective defense. We welcomed the fact that the 2017 Brussels Summit focused on the importance of transatlantic unity, solidarity, and support for collective security amongst Allies, as well as for combating terrorism. Slovakia also reconfirmed that it was prepared to invest 1.6 per cent of its GDP into defense by the year 2020 and increase this amount to 2 per cent of GDP by 2024. We also stood side by side with our Allies in the Baltic region, in Iraq, and in Afghanistan, and – thanks to NATO's open door policy – we finally welcomed a new ally, Montenegro.

I am proud to say that Slovakia's long-term support for Montenegro's NATO membership ambitions has proved beneficial both for the Western Balkans and the Alliance as a whole.

The Western Balkans – namely support for the European path of the region and its integration ambitions – remains one of the key features of our foreign policy. We promote a deeper EU engagement and share our own transformation experience with the countries in the region. We continue to reiterate the benefits of a reasonable enlargement agenda, which we consider the most successful EU foreign policy so far.

A YEAR OF MULTILATERAL ENGAGEMENT

One of the main challenges that captured headlines last year was migration. In 2017, there were 258 million international migrants. No country can successfully address the challenge alone. We need common effort; there is no solution outside a multilateral framework. We therefore welcomed and actively participated in preparations for the Global Compact for Migration under the auspices of the United Nations. On the EU level, we contributed over one million euros to the Trust Fund for Africa, to help address the root causes. We also declared our solidarity as part of the Visegrad Group. Along with our V4 colleagues, we agreed to donate jointly 35 million euros to reinforce the EU's external borders. Finding a sustainable solution remains a task in which the international community must work together and find the necessary synergy.

The complexity of this issue is yet another reminder of the importance of multilateralism and international cooperation. Without trust, engagement and effective multilateral support, we are on a trajectory leading towards a world based on a zero-sum game, the pursuit of narrow national interests, and weakened democratic values and principles.

Our foreign policy fully emphasizes the principles of multilateralism, and it is a crucial dimension of our work. We are playing an important role in finding solutions on multi-

ple multilateral forums. In 2017, while still soaking in and evaluating the echoes of our first Presidency in the Council of the EU, we already started building the groundwork for our other multilateral leading roles. In this sense, 2017 was a year of preparations. First, we have already taken responsibility within the OSCE Troika, and are preparing for a chairmanship in the Organization in 2019. Second, starting in July 2018, Slovakia is taking over the presidency of the Visegrad Group. Last but not least, Slovakia became a member of the United Nations Human Rights Council in January 2018. In this regard, 2017 was unique for me also personally, as in September I became the President of the United Nations General Assembly. As the world's most inclusive platform, the UN remains a pillar of our multilateral engagement in politics, security, humanitarian aid, human rights, and development agenda. Slovakia identifies with the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – a plan of action for the planet, prosperity, and most importantly, people. I am pleased that Slovakia has taken measures to implement this Agenda on the national level.

An inherent instrument of foreign policy is, of course, official development aid. In 2017, we focused on three priority countries – Afghanistan, Kenya and Moldova, along with substantial contributions to ease the precarious humanitarian situation in Syria. We also continued to transfer lessons learned from our own integration and reform experiences to countries from the Western Balkans, as well as to Belarus and Georgia, amongst others.

The economic dimension is an important part of our policy. In 2017, we focused on diplomacy-oriented missions abroad and innovation forums at home. We understand the need for a stronger public-private partnership. Official humanitarian and development aid and private sector instruments should form communicating vessels. We have therefore facilitated sector-specific and innovation-oriented entrepreneurial missions all across the world, including in countries with a big high-tech potential such as the US, Israel, Oman, China, Estonia and others.

A YEAR TO COME

2018 will be a year of celebrating historical milestones in our history. 100 years ago the Czechoslovak statehood was established, 50 years ago the Prague Spring reform process was launched and 25 years ago Slovakia became sovereign state. We cherish the values linked to these anniversaries, and so throughout 2018 we will coordinate celebrations with our Czech colleagues, to pay tribute to our common history and special relationship in a unified Europe.

Going forward, naturally, the European Union, NATO and the UN remain fundamental cornerstones of our foreign policy. We are committed to further cultivating our global outreach and constructive engagement. The best working method towards this end is meaningful and inclusive multilateralism. My goal is to make sure that quality of action remains a trademark of the Slovak Foreign Service.

I.

THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC
IN THE INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

BACK TO NORMAL: SLOVAK EUROPEAN POLICY IN 2017

VLADIMÍR BILČÍK

Slovakia's European policy in 2017 was about a return to normal operation after the country's first ever EU Council Presidency in the latter half of 2016. Political attention to Europe and resources and public attention devoted to EU issues all diminished compared to the hype of the Council Presidency. Slovakia's key interest was to represent itself in the EU rather than to represent the collective voice of member states in the EU.

This proved to be a challenging task since the dynamics of the EU project were elevated to a new level with discussions on the nature and consequences of Brexit, presentation of new visions for the EU following the presidential election in France, continued tension between the western and eastern halves of the Union and new integration initiatives in the area of defense hitherto reserved as an exclusive domain of member states. Slovakia's practical experience with the EU's agenda in 2017 shows the relevance of domestic political constraints for the country's performance in the EU. While these constraints could be sidelined and bypassed in part thanks to the help of the Commission during the execution of the EU interest at the helm of the EU Council, they became more apparent once Slovakia was one of the regular 28 member states again.

ELECTION YEAR IN EUROPE – CHANGING POLITICAL LANDSCAPE VIS-À-VIS INTEGRATION

It is important to set the context for Slovakia's action first. The year 2017 was dubbed by many as a decisive electoral year for the EU. Elections in member states have always

been relevant for the outcome of any bargain in the EU. However, they have become even more important for the European project since the onset of economic, debt, migration and foreign policy crises during this decade. Politics across member states have become more divisive with respect to European integration. Most notable example was the 2016 decision by the UK to exit the Union. A few years earlier, many experts and politicians pondered a possible Grexit at the height of the Eurozone crisis.

Electoral calendar in 2017 raised questions about a possible Frexit, should Marine Le Pen become a new President of France or even a possible Czechxit should Eurosceptics succeed in the Czech parliamentary election. Moreover, there were serious questions about radicalization of politics in Europe in the aftermath of the so-called migration crisis. EU institutions watched closely the parliamentary contest in the Netherlands where the radical politician Geert Wilders threatened to shake-up the long-established Dutch party system. Similarly, Austria's presidential run-off vote saw the far-right candidate Norbert Hofer in a good standing to enter Hofburg in Vienna.

Yet, none of the black electoral scenarios materialized. As Slovakia operationally returned to politics as usual in the EU, the radical or even extreme forces questioning the European project failed to succeed across the Union. Popular and pro-European centrist Emmanuel Macron won the presidential contest in France, Mark Rutte remained the Dutch Prime Minister and Geert Wilders was defeated. At the end of 2016 Austria elected a Green President Alexander Van der Bellen and Slovakia's President Andrej Kiska very much welcomed this development in neighboring Vienna¹. And the Czech Republic's new Prime Minister Andrej Babiš, while faced with unstable parliamentary support² and charges of corruption and Czechoslovak secret service collaboration, subscribes to relatively pragmatic position of Prague in the EU.

In short, the pendulum of political debate in Europe's big election year began to swing towards practical and substance-based discussion rather than ad hoc crisis management measures. The biggest change came with the election of Emmanuel Macron whose main agenda is to reform both France and the EU and he quickly established himself as a leader offering a vision for the European Union.³ In September 2017 in his Sorbonne speech Macron positioned himself as a convinced Europhile, a politician who sees the added value of more integration as including the preserving of the power of member states in international affairs.⁴ At the same time, he acknowledged that any

¹ "Slovenskí politici o výsledkoch rakúskych volieb: Ich vyjadrenia hovoria za všetko!" [Slovak politicians on the results of Austrian elections: Their statements say it all!] *Pluska.sk*, December 5, 2016. Available online: <https://www.pluska.sk/spravy/z-domova/slovenski-politici-komentuju-vysledky-rakuskych-volieb-rakuska-hrozba-je-zazehnana.html> (accessed on March 18, 2018).

² "Reakcie slovenských politikov na parlamentné voľby v Česku," [Reactions of Slovak politicians to parliamentary elections in the Czech Republic] *TASR/Teraz.sk*, October 22, 2017. Available online: <http://www.teraz.sk/slovensko/v-remisova-nebude-jednoduche-aby-m/287756-clanok.html> (accessed on March 17, 2018).

³ "Politici privítali výsledky francúzskych volieb pozitívne," [Politicians welcomed the result of French elections positively] *SITA/Trend.sk*, May 8, 2017. Available online: <https://www.etrend.sk/ekonomika/politici-privitali-vysledky-francuzskych-volieb-pozitivne.html> (accessed on March 19, 2018).

⁴ P. Briancon, "5 takeaways from Macron's big speech on Europe's future," *Politico.eu*, September 17, 2017. Available online: <https://www.politico.eu/article/5-takeaways-from-macrons-big-speech-on-europes-future/> (accessed on March 18, 2018).

EU reform would require allies and especially a basic Franco-German understanding on the substance of EU change.

While the election year brought about a shift in the quality of political discussion in the EU, the German parliamentary election also marked the limits of this debate. After the vote in September 2017 Angela Merkel remained Germany's Chancellor, albeit significantly weakened. Germany's Social Democrats (SPD) recorded their lowest result since the WWII. After months of negotiations in March 2018 Germany formed a new grand coalition government of Christian Democrats (CDU) and SPD. All the while the anti-immigrant, anti-Islam and historically anti-euro Alternative for Germany (AfD) is now the largest opposition political force in the German Bundestag. Hence, Germany faces now much stronger domestic constraints for a strong drive towards EU and Eurozone reform. Consequently, during upcoming months in 2018 and beyond we are unlikely to witness a Franco-German or wider consensus on a fundamental change to the EU prerogatives. At best the current political landscape of the EU offers a window of opportunity for modest reforms of the Eurozone and Single European Market.

FUTURE OF EUROPE DEBATE: BETWEEN STRATEGIC GOALS AND POLICY AGENDAS

In March 2018 the European Commission launched its White Paper on the Future of Europe followed by series of reflection papers on various EU policy fields.⁵ The point of the paper was to stimulate discussion on the European Union's future after Brexit and in the aftermath of various political and economic crises since the onset of this decade. The Commission offered five possible scenarios for the EU to frame the public debate however, at the same time it acknowledged that none of these were likely to mirror the Union's future.

Slovakia engaged in the future of Europe debate in the aftermath of its active role during the EU Council Presidency that produced the so-called Bratislava roadmap adopted by 27 member states at the informal EU summit in September 2017.⁶ The aim of the Bratislava roadmap was to solidify the Union's internal and external security as well as the state of its economy. The Commission's aforementioned documents, on the other hand, set a broader setting for EU reform. In this context Slovakia's response to the future of Europe discussion oscillated between a statesmanlike attempt to foster common strategic commitment to the EU and diverse responses by individual political actors.

⁵ *White Paper on the Future of Europe: Five scenarios*, European Commission, Brussels, March 1, 2017. Available online: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/white-paper-future-europe/white-paper-future-europe-five-scenarios_en (accessed on January 15, 2018).

⁶ "Bratislava Declaration and Roadmap, Bratislava," European Council, Bratislava, September 2016. Available online: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/eu-future-reflection/bratislava-declaration-and-roadmap/> (accessed on December 20, 2017).

Arguably, the most important statement on where Slovakia stands vis-à-vis the EU came in October 2017. In a joint statement Slovakia's President, Speaker of Parliament and Prime Minister declared among others the following shared goals:⁷

- ensure clear and responsible communication of the pro-European and pro-Atlantic orientation of the Slovak Republic and of the jointly adopted decisions at the level of the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. This should be done equally in our communication outwards as well as inwards towards the citizens of Slovakia;
- support a future for Slovakia inside the core of European integration. Our decisions and actions shall be primarily conducted in the interests of our citizens in order for them to fully use the possibilities of EU membership as well as being in the interests of the entire European Union;
- support the continual deepening of the Eurozone and the development of tools which will support its stability as well as its resilience to future crises;
- advocate principles of equal treatment in the internal single market and the non-discrimination of citizens and consumers in all parts of the European Union (e.g. the dual quality of foodstuffs);
- support a strong and "wise" EU budget that will enable the funding of traditional EU policies and at the same time be capable of reacting to new challenges;
- push for steps that will increase the security of our citizens and the defense capacity of Slovakia, especially by means of implementing the updated Security Strategy, Defense Strategy, and Military Strategy of the Slovak Republic.

This was a rather unprecedented statement of resolve and unity in the context of divided and increasingly Eurosceptic political landscape across Central Europe. It seemed reflective of the importance of Slovakia's international standing for its domestic success, especially with respect to membership in the EU, the Eurozone, Single Market and Schengen. It also reflected public support for these projects, which has been consistently solid.

A closer look at the actions and positions of major political players suggests, however, a much more mixed picture of political support for the EU. The day when President Andrej Kiska spoke in favor of more cooperation, integration and solidarity in the EU and warned against Russian propaganda⁸, Speaker of the National Council

⁷ "Declaration by the President, Speaker and Prime Minister on the EU and NATO," President of the Slovak Republic, Bratislava, October 23, 2017. Available online: <https://www.prezident.sk/en/article/vyhlasenie-prezidenta-predsedu-narodnej-rady-a-predsedu-vlady-k-eu-a-nato/> (accessed on February 15, 2018).

⁸ "President Kiska addressed the European Parliament," President of the Slovak Republic, Strasbourg, November 15, 2017. Available online: <https://www.prezident.sk/en/article/prezident-kiska-vystupil-s-prihovorum-v-europskom-parlamente/> (accessed on January 25, 2018).

Andrej Danko delivered a speech in the Russian Duma calling for a strong Russia and in favor of closer Slavic ties.⁹

In terms of the government, in August 2017 Prime Minister Robert Fico (Smer-SD) declared that Slovakia should be firmly anchored to the EU's deeply integrated core driven by France and Germany. Fico distanced himself somewhat from more sceptic partners in the Visegrad group when he claimed interest in Visegrad cooperation while saying that Slovakia's "vital interest was in the EU."¹⁰ Robert Fico has just continued his more positive stance towards the EU, which he began since the Brexit vote and Slovakia's EU Council Presidency. While Fico continued to refuse the quotas on accepting refugees across the EU, he avoided legal action launched by the Commission against Hungary, the Czech Republic and Poland as Slovakia continued to work actively towards fulfilling an old pledge to accept 100 asylum seekers from Greece and Italy. Fico also reacted – unlike Hungarian politicians – quietly to the dismissal by the European Court of Justice of a complaint filed by Hungary and Slovakia in against compulsory quotas on asylum seekers in 2015.¹¹

In practice, Visegrad cooperation in the EU did not break down, it just has differed across policy areas and diverged on some issues based on strategic goals of the individual member states. Broadly speaking, the V4 including Slovakia remained united on migration and in rejection of quotas to deal with asylum seekers in the EU. At the same time, the V4 offered financial assistance to Libya to deal with migration in the EU's southern neighborhood when in December 2017 the four countries pledged 35 million euros to help with Libyan border control.¹² Moreover, in October 2017 for Slovakia and the rest of the V4 it was important to reject continued internal border checks within the Schengen area and that have undermined a smooth operation of the single European market, so essential for the success of Slovakia's economic performance based on exports within the EU.¹³

⁹ "Danko zožal v ruskej štátnej dume standing ovation, Kiska zatiaľ v Štrasburgu varoval pred propagandou Moskvy," [Danko received in Russia's State Duma standing ovation, meanwhile in Strasbourg Kiska warned against propaganda from Moscow] *HNonline.sk*, November 15, 2017. Available online: <https://slovensko.hnonline.sk/1063297-kym-kiska-v-strasburgu-varoval-pred-propagandou-moskvy-danko-zozal-v-ruskej-statnej-dume-standing-ovation> (accessed on March 18, 2018).

¹⁰ T. Jancarikova, "Slovakia's future is with core EU, not eurosceptic eastern nations: PM," *Reuters*, August 15, 2017. Available online: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-slovakia-politics-eu/slovakias-future-is-with-core-eu-not-eurosceptic-eastern-nations-pm-idUSKCN1AV1YY> (accessed on March 9, 2018).

¹¹ While Robert Fico reacted calmly, he played down the ECJ's ruling by referring to it as a different legal opinion. "EU Court dismisses complaints by Hungary and Slovakia over refugee quotas," *The Guardian*, September 6, 2017. Available online: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/sep/06/eu-court-dismisses-complaints-by-hungary-and-slovakia-over-refugees> (accessed on March 9, 2018).

¹² "V4 to contribute to Libya border control," *MTI*, December 14, 2017. Available online: <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/news/v4-to-contribute-to> (accessed on March 3, 2018).

¹³ "Slovensko na summite odmietne kontroly vo vnútri Schengenu," [Slovakia will refuse internal Schengen checks at the summit] *EurActiv.sk*, October 19, 2017. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/buducnost-eu/news/slovensko-na-summite-odmietne-kontroly-na-vnutornych-hraniciach-schengenu/> (accessed on February 20, 2018).

In February the Slovak Government and with the support of the V4 countries uploaded the issue of dual food quality across the EU. Prime Minister Fico said “if the Commission does not address the issue vigorously enough, the Slovak government stands ready to introduce one-off measures to restrict the import of EU food products to the Slovak market”¹⁴ The V4 and some other smaller and newer EU member states called the practices of companies selling lower quality foodstuff in East Central Europe under a single European brand as unethical. The Commission promised to take up the issue, in which Slovakia and other Central European member states are calling effectively for more EU competence. However, the initiative lacks so far the support of bigger member states so the result may just be more public pressure and greater national screening mechanisms.

Beyond the issues of migration and double standards between the West and the East of the Union, the Slovak government also pursued agenda that distinguished it from some of its V4 partners. Most notably, Slovakia announced a structured dialogue across policy sectors with Germany. It also – together with the Czech Republic – was willing to compromise on a change to posted workers directive with France.¹⁵ The Slovak government was also ready for more integration in the Eurozone, including more common European approach in tax and social policy.¹⁶ Minister of Finance Peter Kažimír (Smer-SD) – who in 2017 failed to become a new head of the Eurogroup¹⁷ – outlined publicly his plan for the Eurozone with a complete banking union and a solid fiscal union with reliable institutions.¹⁸

These visions for more integration, were, however, not shared by wider political spectrum in Slovakia. Apart from skeptical coalition partner the Slovak National Party whose leader Andrej Danko spoke in the Russian parliament in 2017, the leader of the largest opposition party Freedom and Solidarity (SaS) Richard Sulík questioned the whole drive towards the EU core as something that could damage rather than help Slovakia.¹⁹ Instead, the SaS presented its own vision of Eurorealism for Slovakia that is reminiscent of several elements in the Czech Euroscepticism of

¹⁴ “Slovakia: Dual food quality,” *CEC Brief*, October 18, 2017. Available online: <http://cecgr.com/2017/08/10/slovakia-dual-food-quality/> (accessed on January 20, 2018).

¹⁵ “Slovensko a Česko sa zblížujú s Nemeckom a Francúzskom, V4 ostáva bokom,” [Slovakia and Czech Republic are aligning with Germany and France, V4 is being sidelined] *EurActiv.sk*, August 18, 2017. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/buducnost-eu/news/slovensko-cesko-sa-zblizuju-s-nemeckom-francuzskom-v4-ostava-bokom/> (accessed on March 3, 2018).

¹⁶ “Fico očakáva hlbšiu integráciu eurozóny. V daňových aj sociálnych veciach,” [Fico expects deeper integration of the Eurozone. In tax and social affairs] *TASR*, June 16, 2017. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/buducnost-eu/news/fico-ocakava-hlbsiu-integraciju-eurozony-v-danovych-aj-socialnych-veciach/> (accessed on February 20, 2018).

¹⁷ “Slovak finance chief fails to become new head of the Eurogroup,” *Spectator.sme.sk*, December 4, 2017. Available online: <https://spectator.sme.sk/c/20711013/slovak-finance-chief-fails-to-become-new-head-of-the-eurogroup.html> (accessed on February 2, 2018).

¹⁸ “Speech by Peter Kažimír at Bruegel Annual Dinner 2017,” *Bruegel.org*, September 7, 2017. Available online: <http://bruegel.org/2017/09/speech-by-peter-kazimir-at-bruegel-annual-dinner-2017/> (accessed on March 2, 2018).

¹⁹ “Sulík: byť v jadre EÚ by bolo pre Slovensko nevýhodné,” [Sulík: to be in the core of the EU would be disadvantageous for Slovakia] *TASR*, April 3, 2017. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/buducnost-eu/news/sulik-byt-v-jadre-eu-by-bolo-pre-slovensko-nevyhodne/> (accessed on March 2, 2018).

the early years of this century.²⁰ However, while visions for Slovakia's future place in the EU differ across the relevant democratic political spectrum, there is a broader consensus within the country and in newer EU member states on the need to push for continuity in EU cohesion policy beyond 2020.²¹ In the near future we may therefore expect more Slovak willingness to compromise in the name additional EU resources for member states rather than to adopt a major policy reform in the Union just on its own.

POST-BREXIT BLUES AND NEW EU OPPORTUNITIES

Official talks on the departure of the UK from the European Union began during the Maltese EU Council Presidency during the first half of 2017 and continued throughout the Estonian helm at the EU Council in the latter half of the year. Estimates and studies show that Slovakia could be heavily affected by possible consequences of Brexit.²² Hence, negotiations with London and successful minimization of potential losses tied to Brexit constitute a major Slovak interest in current European politics.

Slovak priorities with respect to Brexit have been to strive for lowest possible negative financial losses and fundamental changes to the position of EU and thus Slovak workers in the UK. Slovakia together with the V4 threatened already in 2016 that they could veto the Brexit deal unless the UK guarantees the rights of all EU nationals living and working in Britain. By the end of 2017 it seemed that Brussels and London have reached a solid preliminary agreement on both citizens' rights and financial issues post-Brexit. Paradoxically, the hottest open issue became the future trade and border regime between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. For Slovakia it will be important that a settlement of this thorny issue does not undermine Slovakia's interest to not only preserve as much of the status quo with respect to money and citizens but also with respect to future exports to the UK.

Brexit in 2017 also opened an important internal institutional debate on the transfer of EU agencies – European Banking Authority (EBA) and European Medicine Agency (EMA). It was resolved in the latter half of November with a decision to relocate EBA to Paris and EMA to Amsterdam. Bratislava was the closest V4 capital to bid successfully for EMA²³ but

²⁰ R. Sulík, "Manifest slovenského eurorealizmu k 60. výročiu podpisu Rímskych zmlúv," [Manifesto of Slovak Euro-realism on 60th anniversary of the signing of the Rome Treaties] *Sulik.sk*, March 25, 2017. Available online: <http://sulik.sk/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/reforma-europskej-unie-2017-sas.pdf> (accessed on April 3, 2017).

²¹ "Joint Paper of the Visegrad Group, Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Slovenia on Cohesion Policy after 2020," *Visegradgroup.eu*, March 2, 2017. Available online: <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/calendar/selected-events-in-2017-170203/joint-paper-of-the> (accessed on March 10, 2017).

²² "KPMG: Slovakia among EU countries at greatest risk after Brexit," *Spectator.sme.sk*, March 29, 2017. Available online: <https://spectator.sme.sk/c/20496097/kpmg-slovakia-among-eu-countries-at-greatest-risk-after-brexit.html> (accessed on February 21, 2018).

²³ "Assessment EMA – offer by Slovakia – Bratislava," *EC.Europa.eu*, March 30, 2017. Available online: <https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/info/files/ema-slovakia-relocation-assessment-grid.pdf> (accessed on February 20, 2018).

came only fourth in the first round of voting²⁴. Hence the rebalancing of power within the EU and a greater institutional parity between Western and Eastern member states remains an important part of Slovak and wider regional agenda.

Finally, Brexit has also helped accelerate some of the internal EU initiatives. Most notably, the EU achieved more in European defense in 2017 than perhaps in previous decade or two altogether. It launched Permanent Structured Cooperation in defense and effectively offered institutional and resource basis for defense policy within the European Union. Slovakia is taking part in PESCO and its project EuroArtillery has successfully bid for EU support.²⁵ Hence, the dynamics of European integration in 2017 very much reflected some of the pre-crisis years of EU policy-making not consumed with existential questions but rather exchange of policy proposals, arguments and interests of member states. It also showed tangible positive results in European integration.

²⁴ V. Foltentová, "Kto za nás hlasoval a čo rozhodlo pri liekovej agentúre? Podržali nás susedia, neprežili sme lobbing skúsenejších," [Who voted for us and what was decisive in the case of EMA? Our neighbors backed us up, we did not survive the lobbying of the more experienced] *Dennikn.sk*, November 21, 2017. Available online: <https://dennikn.sk/948665/kto-za-nas-hlasoval-a-co-rozhodlo-pri-liekovej-agenture-podrzali-nas-susedia-neprezili-sme-lobing-skusenejsich/?ref=list> (accessed on March 8, 2018).

²⁵ "Slovenský projekt nepriamej palebnej podpory „EuroArtillery“ sa prebojoval medzi finálne projekty PESCO," [Slovak project of indirect fire support 'EuroArtillery' made it among the final projects of PESCO] *Mod.gov.sk*, December 9, 2017. Available online: <http://www.mod.gov.sk/41015-sk/slovensky-projekt-nepriamej-palebnej-podpory-euroartillery-sa-prebojoval-medzi-finalne-projekty-pesco/> (accessed on March 8, 2018).

THE BOOM YEAR

MARTIN VLACHYNSKÝ

The year 2017 was supposed to be a dangerous one. There were elections planned in France, Germany and Catalonia. It was a key year for Brexit negotiations and the first year of President Donald Trump.

Yet, it was a year of booming stock markets in United States, recovering economies across the EU, and a seemingly stabilized Chinese economy. At the peak, crypto-mania shook the world both of professional and hobby investors.

The Visegrad Four has been not left out of this boom. In Slovakia, reports of new low-unemployment records became a standard part of monthly statistical reporting. The economy continues to grow, new investors keep coming, and the National Bank of Slovakia has been applying the brakes on the real estate market.

However, it is not difficult to observe that there are several economic and political cans being kicked down the world's street – especially in Europe.

THE WORLD

The year 2017 offered stronger economic growth globally. The GDP of advanced economies grew over 2 per cent,¹ while emerging economies recorded over 4.5 per cent growth, with China's growth picking up to 6.9 per cent, surpassing its official

¹ "The year in review: global economy in 5 charts," *IMF Blog*, December 18, 2017. Available online <https://blogs.imf.org/2017/12/17/the-year-in-review-global-economy-in-5-charts/> (accessed on February 5, 2018).

target of 6.5 per cent.² Such results in China – its economy's first annual acceleration since 2010 – have been especially encouraging. China had been in the crosshairs of analysts for some years, as the Chinese government reacted to declining economic growth with a series of large scale stimuli.

Despite the optimism, the case of China's economy remains open. Among other things (such as the dubious reliability of the GDP statistics themselves), China has been hit by its overcapacity in the steelmaking industry,³ and rising fears of trade wars with the United States. The traditionally unreliable financial statistics coming from within the country are further obfuscated by the rapid proliferation of alternative electronic payment systems, such as Alipay or WeChat Pay.⁴

The source of the trade war fears (not only within China itself) is the new US president, Mr. Trump. His accession to office and his policies were probably the biggest global riddle of 2017. Despite his animosity towards global trade, it strongly rebounded in 2017 and grew by more than 4 per cent. The animosity was not only rhetorical. One of his first steps in office was to withdraw the US from the Transpacific Partnership, a deal which would have governed the trade rules and practices of 12 countries and 40 per cent of global GDP.⁵ This was not the only action taken in the truly busy first year of his presidency. The US withdrew from the Paris Agreement, freed the hands of the domestic energy business, and launched a deregulation movement encompassing various areas ranging from Net neutrality to environmental regulation.

The biggest change came at the very end of 2017. In December, the biggest US tax reform since the Reagan era was passed⁶ – a move that will have a pronounced impact globally. Besides other changes, it not only substantially lowers the corporate tax rate, but also finally switches the tax system to a territorial model.⁷ This will induce a one-time cash transfer of several hundred billion USD, until now parked in corporate accounts outside of the United States. While the long-term impact of Trump's maneuvering is yet to be seen, one thing is certain – his administration is able to spring into action without much hesitation.

One thing he has not changed is the optimism of the US market. 2017 was "an epic year,"⁸ with the Dow Jones index rising 25 per cent, the S&P index 19 per cent, and

² "China's economic growth last year was even better than expected," *Fortune*, January 18, 2018. Available online: <http://fortune.com/2018/01/18/china-economy-growth-rate-2017-q4/> (accessed on February 5, 2018).

³ "Problém majú čínski oceľari, nie americkí," [China's steelmakers have a problem, not American ones] *HN Komentáre*, May 2, 2017. Available online: <https://komentare.hnonline.sk/komentare/953482-problem-maju-cinski-oceliari-nie-americki> (accessed on February 5, 2018).

⁴ "Cash is already pretty much dead in China as the country lives the future with mobile pay," *CNBC*, October 8, 2017. Available online: <https://www.cnbc.com/2017/10/08/china-is-living-the-future-of-mobile-pay-right-now.html> (accessed on February 5, 2018).

⁵ "How 5 of the World's biggest trade deals have fared in the Trump era," *Time*, November 17, 2017. Available online: <http://time.com/5027654/donald-trump-trade-america-first/> (accessed on February 5, 2018).

⁶ "Trumpov daňový tromf," [Trump's tax trump] *HN Komentáre*, January 29, 2018. Available online: <https://komentare.hnonline.sk/komentare/1683402-trumpov-danovy-tromf> (accessed on February 5, 2018).

⁷ Henceforward only revenues coming from business activity taking place within US territory will be taxed. Previously, US businesses were obliged to pay taxes on their global revenues.

⁸ "It was an epic year for stocks," *CNN Money*, December 29, 2017. Available online: <http://money.cnn.com/2017/12/29/investing/stocks-2017-wall-street/index.html> (accessed on February 5, 2018).

the Nasdaq 28 per cent. However, these numbers amount to little when compared to the “wunderkind” of investments – cryptocurrencies.

At the beginning of 2017, Bitcoin was a curiosity and other cryptocurrencies hardly known outside the crypto world itself. At the end of 2017, Bitcoin was up by 900 per cent, the whole of the crypto-market 1,200 per cent, and some newer currencies even much more. Global corporations have been quick to jump on the bandwagon, investing in blockchain projects, while in December two stock exchanges opened bitcoin-based futures trading. During the same period, governments, tax administrators and central banks grew increasingly alarmed. The second half of 2017 was therefore marked also by intensified regulatory actions taken against crypto exchanges and other related business, especially in China and Korea. Fear of a tulip-mania style bubble burst⁹ was one of the complaints mentioned, but this was usually overshadowed by forebodings of money laundering and other tax-related offenses.

While sudden massive drops in value are not uncommon for cryptocurrencies, with their rising market value such occurrences attract more attention. The biggest came in late December and made for a scary year's end for many newcomers. Undoubtedly, cryptocurrencies and blockchain were the biggest investment topic of 2017.

THE EU CORE

The three biggest EU economies were each put through several trials. France dodged the bullet of Marine Le Pen becoming president, which for Brussels would have been a nightmarish outcome – once thought highly improbable, but after the surprises of the Brexit referendum and US presidential election, not discounted too much. Instead, a new president – Emanuel Macron, the youngest president in French history and youngest French head of state since Napoleon – entered office with promises of deep overhauls to the stiff French economy. While promising to ease regulations and to focus on the seriously underperforming rigid French labor market, he also embarked on a campaign against East European workers and companies operating in France,¹⁰ accusing them of “social dumping.” So far, this has resulted in France's pressure to restrict intra-EU posting¹¹ of workers. Macron is a strong supporter of a more centralized EU, with an EU finance minister, Eurozone budget, new all-European taxes, and tax harmonization.¹²

In this respect, France's attitude toward the EU's future will not substantially change and France will remain the driving force towards a “deeper EU”. In the same vein,

⁹ “Nie každé krypto je tulipán,” [Not every crypt is a tulip] *HN Komentáre*, January 11, 2018. Available online: <https://komentare.hnonline.sk/komentare/1673210-nie-kazde-krypto-je-tulipan> (accessed on February 5, 2018).

¹⁰ “France's Macron, on Eastern Europe trip, to raise issue of cheap labor,” *Reuters*, August 7, 2017. Available online: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-france-easteurope-macron/frances-macron-on-eastern-europe-trip-to-raise-issue-of-cheap-labor-idUSKBN1AN1G9> (accessed on February 5, 2018).

¹¹ Sending workers under contract in one member state to work in other member state.

¹² “Macron seeks far-reaching EU overhaul,” *EU Observer*, September 26, 2017. Available online: <https://euobserver.com/institutional/139164> (accessed on February 5, 2018).

Macron did not show a warmer attitude towards Brexit negotiations – another big topic of 2017.

With March 2019 – the final date for the UK to leave the EU – approaching fast, the negotiations seem throughout the whole year to have stalled dangerously. While the key interest of the UK has been a trade deal and financial markets, the EU has been focusing on citizens' rights, the Northern Ireland border, and the budgetary settlement between UK and EU. Each side claiming priority for their particular issues was not helpful in terms of moving the negotiations forward very much, even after six rounds.¹³ Only in December did the Brussels summit bring a new development into the Brexit drama, when EU leaders decided that sufficient progress had been reached in the Brexit talks to move to the second phase, which will include negotiations on a transition period for the UK.

Some feared an economic tsunami would hit the British Isles immediately after the Brexit referendum. These fears did not materialize, as the UK economy grew an estimated 1.8 per cent in 2017, down slightly from the 1.9 per cent seen in 2016 but well ahead of the 1.5 per cent growth forecast.¹⁴ The Pound did not recover from its post-referendum losses and continued to weaken against the Euro, albeit at a much slower pace. Both the Euro and the Pound grew substantially stronger against US Dollar in 2017. UK inflation rose to its highest level in five years, and The Bank of England reversed its emergency rate cut from 2016. A number of banks announced they would move (at least partially) out of the City of London to Frankfurt or Paris – including HSBC, Bank of America Merrill Lynch, Citi, and JPMorgan, as well as some asset managers.¹⁵ Yet the employment rate remained at its highest level in the past two decades.

In Germany, the September parliamentary elections produced no shocking results and confirmed Angela Merkel in her position as the leading EU policymaker. However, her position now will be somewhat more peculiar, since the election results did not produce a coherent coalition. With hopes of creating a "Jamaica coalition"¹⁶ from pro-market FDP and left-leaning Greens fading out in late 2017, the political situation of Europe's economic engine seemed more fragile than it had in years.

Luckily for Germany, and for the whole of Europe, its economy remained strong in 2017, despite the ongoing Dieselgate scandal, the country's expensive energy transformation, and the immigration crisis. The German economy grew 2.2 percent in 2017, enjoying its fastest rate of expansion since 2011.¹⁷ It also recorded a budget surplus equal to 1.2 per cent of GDP.

¹³ "Brexit timeline – The clock is ticking," *EU Observer*, December 29, 2017. Available online: <https://euobserver.com/europe-in-review/139787> (accessed on February 5, 2018).

¹⁴ "UK economic growth stronger than expected in final quarter of 2017, shows new figures," *Independent*, January 26, 2018. Available online: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/business/news/uk-economic-growth-2017-q4-final-quarter-ons-office-national-statistics-a8178991.html> (accessed on February 5, 2018).

¹⁵ "Paris neck-and-neck with Frankfurt in Brexit race: French lobbyist," *Reuters*, February 15, 2018. Available online: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-britain-eu-banks/paris-neck-and-neck-with-frankfurt-in-brexit-race-french-lobbyist-idUSKCN1FZ234> (accessed on February 5, 2018).

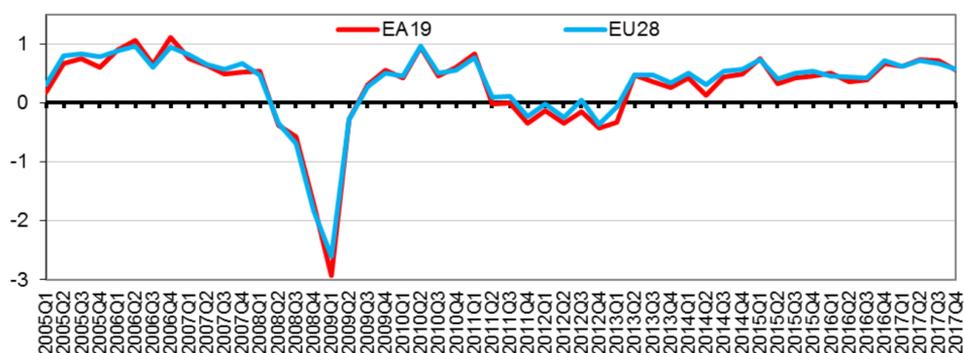
¹⁶ So named from the similarity in color between the three coalition parties and the Jamaican flag.

¹⁷ "German economy in 2017 grew at highest rate in six years," *The Local*, January 11, 2018. Available online: <https://www.thelocal.de/20180111/german-economy-in-2017-grew-at-highest-rate-in-six-years> (accessed on February 5, 2018).

The appearance of this surplus was due not only to the frugal attitude of German policymakers. The European Central Bank continued in its loose monetary policy throughout 2017, with low interest rates helping to save 290 billion euros in Germany since 2008.¹⁸

The ECB did not change its interest rates during the whole of 2017, whereas the American Fed hiked its rates several times, steadily working upwards from its bottomed-out interest rate – followed by the Bank of England, which hiked its rate in November for the first time in a decade. The inability of the ECB to disengage from its extremely low interest rate policy may prove dangerous in the future. According to research conducted by Swiss financial giant UBS, a financial crisis with a magnitude similar to that of the 2008 crisis would require interest rates deep in the minus territory – in the case of several countries, even as low as -5 per cent. Arend Kapteyn, UBS' global head of economic research, has commented: "There's no space on the policy rates side, there is no space in terms of compressing long end yields, there is no space in terms of being able to run public debt levels a lot above where we are now."¹⁹ Between 2015 and 2017, the ECB purchased euro securities – including government bonds worth €1.8tn – for 2.3 trillion freshly printed euros.²⁰

Figure 1. EU 28 and euro area GDP growth rates (% change over the previous quarter)



Source: Eurostat News Release – Euroindicators²¹

¹⁸ "German momentum gives another lift to Europe's economic outlook," *Bloomberg*, January 11, 2018. Available online: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-01-11/german-economic-growth-accelerates-less-than-forecast-in-2017> (accessed on February 5, 2018).

¹⁹ "We'd be in trouble: The next financial crisis could force central banks to cut rates to -5%," *Business Insider*, November 14, 2017. Available online: <http://uk.businessinsider.com/ubs-investment-bank-global-interest-rates-financial-crisis-2017-11> (accessed on February 5, 2018).

²⁰ "How to start paying off southern Europe's debts," *The Guardian*, January 29, 2018. Available online: <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2018/jan/29/how-to-start-paying-off-southern-europes-debts> (accessed on February 5, 2018).

²¹ "Preliminary flash estimate for the fourth quarter of 2017," *Eurostat News Release – Euroindicators*, January 30, 2018. Available online: <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/8627394/2-30012018-AP-EN.pdf/0374d17b-ba86-4aab-8837-c4865e087ceb> (accessed on February 5, 2018).

THE SOUTH

2017 was probably the first year since 2010 that Greece did not appear on the front pages of Economic periodicals. The country has been preparing for its expected full market entry in 2018 by carrying out a broader liability management exercise, aggregating 30 billion euros-worth of bonds into five new benchmark issues in an effort to improve trading liquidity.²² The question of debt relief remains open, since it is the wish not only of the Greek government, but also the IMF. The Greek debt has not reached its peak even according to the official forecast. This should occur in 2018, when it hits 184 per cent of GDP – up from 180 per cent in 2017. The Greek economy finally grew in 2017, but the 1.5% growth was again well below the initial expectations of 2.7 per cent.²³

Greece has lost its title as the Eurozone's "most toxic economy" to Italy few years ago. Despite mediocre economic growth (around 1.5 per cent), Italy remained the one economy to watch out for in 2017. Its troubled banking sector required a further 20 billion in bailouts that year. Italian politicians remain divided on what is causing their troubles and how to solve them.²⁴ Even after making deep reductions this year (around 27 billion), Italian banks are still weighed down by about 170 billion euros in non-performing loans.²⁵

In contrast, Spain with its 3.1 per cent growth surpassed the Eurozone average in 2017. Unemployment continued to fall from its disastrous 2013 peak, although still remaining very high at the end of the year at 16.6 per cent.²⁶ The country saw record job creation in 2017, with 21.5 million employment contracts in place according to the Ministry of Employment and Social Security. The extreme importance of their labor market reforms is underlined by the fact that 19.6 million of these were temporary.²⁷ Overall, 2017 has seen significant improvement in the Spanish job market, with the number of people signed on with the country's social security scheme – a key indicator of net job creation – up by over 630,000, a rise of 3.58 per cent.²⁸

²² "Five tests that will judge Greece's bailout exit," *Financial Times*, January 22, 2018. Available online: <https://www.ft.com/content/41ca28b0-fba4-11e7-a492-2c9be7f3120a> (accessed on February 5, 2018).

²³ "Greece forecasts economic growth of 2.7% in 2017," *The Guardian*, October 2, 2016. Available online: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/oct/02/greece-forecasts-economic-growth-of-27-in-2017> (accessed on February 5, 2018).

²⁴ "Italian banking commission fails to approve joint findings," *Reuters*, January 30, 2018. Available online: <https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-italy-banks/italian-banking-commission-fails-to-approve-joint-findings-idUKKBN1FJ1D1> (accessed on February 5, 2018).

²⁵ "Italy bad loans," *REUTERS GRAPHICS*. Available online: <http://fingfx.thomsonreuters.com/gfx/rngs/ITALY-BANKS/0100517H2Q9/index.html> (accessed on February 5, 2018).

²⁶ "Spain unemployment rose by 35,000 in fourth quarter to end year on 16.6%," *The Spain Report*, January 25, 2018. Available online: <https://www.thespainreport.com/articles/1326-180125094231-spain-unemployment-rose-by-35-000-in-fourth-quarter-to-end-year-on-16-6> (accessed on February 5, 2018).

²⁷ "Spain's economy slows down slightly to 3.1 per cent in 2017," *Financial Post*, January 30, 2018. Available online: <http://business.financialpost.com/pmn/business-pmn/spains-economy-slows-down-slightly-to-3-1-per-cent-in-2017> (accessed on February 5, 2018).

²⁸ "More jobs but less security as Spain struggles to shake off crisis," *El Pais*, December 27, 2017. Available online: https://elpais.com/elpais/2017/12/29/inenglish/1514539488_557778.html (accessed on February 5, 2018).

While the Spanish economy shows signs of ongoing improvement, the political situation within the country seriously deteriorated in 2017. In a referendum held on October 1st, declared illegal by Spain's Constitutional Court, about 90 per cent of Catalan voters (but with only 43 per cent turnout) backed independence.²⁹ This moved the ongoing Catalonia crisis up to a new level. The Spanish government sacked the Catalan leaders, dissolved their parliament and called a snap regional election on December 21st – which was won by pro-independence parties. Catalonia is an economically important region for Spain, generating a fifth of Spain's GDP and quarter of exports. These events may also provide strong inspiration to similar pro-independence movements, especially in Italy.

VISEGRAD FOUR

In the heart of Central Europe, the Visegrad Four countries continued to lower their economic distance – while increasing their political distance – from the EU core. All four countries recorded very solid economic growth (over 3 per cent) and lowered unemployment numbers, with the Czech Republic emerging as the country with lowest unemployment rate in the whole of the EU, and recording a budget surplus as well.

Some of these governments also made efforts to show a more friendly face to business. Hungary introduced a 9 per cent corporate tax rate (offered before only to small businesses), Slovakia lowered its corporate tax rate by one percentage point and reduced the tax burden on self-employed persons, and the Slovak Ministry of Economy prepared a special pro-business package of regulatory changes. Poland made progress in its pro-business plan “100 changes for business.”³⁰

One wonders if their interest in improving business conditions is a genuine one, or implemented just to appease public pressure and respond to competitiveness ranking results such as those of Doing Business. This question can be analyzed using the example of the Slovak Republic, where the still-fresh government (elected in spring 2016) kept coming up with populist and economically ungrounded regulations (like the one rising obligatory nighttime and weekend salary surcharges), or picked out various industries (e.g. the insurance industry) and taxed them with special levies. Similarly, Poland went the way of decreasing its retirement age and increasing childcare benefits.

In all four countries, the public has been continuously irritated by politicians – in Slovakia by mounting allegations of top representatives being connected to VAT fraudsters, in the Czech Republic by an alleged connection between the finance minister and EU-funds fraud (as well as their president's pro-Russian antics), in Hungary by the rising anti-Soros hysteria, and in Poland by pressures to limit the independence of the Constitutional Court. The nationalist and populist tendencies within the region have retained their previous power. At least in Slovakia, the shocking success of a local neo-

²⁹ “Catalonia crisis in 300 words,” *BBC*, December 22, 2017. Available online: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-41584864> (accessed on February 5, 2018).

³⁰ “Polish FinMin's ‘100 changes for business’ plan 90% complete: report,” *Radio Poland*, October 24, 2017. Available online: <http://www.thenews.pl/1/12/Artykul/331872,Polish-FinMins-100-changes-for-business-plan-90-complete-report> (accessed on February 5, 2018).

Nazi party in the 2016 parliamentary elections was kept in check by their humiliating defeat in regional elections the following year.

Although all four countries have been enjoying a boom, they have not (with the possible exception of the Czech Republic) looked far beyond it. There is no aggressive drive towards a balanced (not to mention surplus) budget, and not much intention of reforming pension systems faced with a demographic shift, or of systematically reducing red tape – beyond the rigid Doing Business metrics. Bearing in mind the 15 per cent drop in growth experienced by Slovakia within the mere two-year period of 2007–2009, it is not difficult to see that open economies such as these are extremely sensitive to the external environment. Yet not much is being done to prepare against a repeat of the 2009 situation – the next round of global crisis, which will result in a deep decline in export demand.

CONCLUSIONS FOR THE YEAR 2018

The year 2017, now over, resulted in the accumulation of much economic optimism around the world. But 2018 is the year in which several loose ends will need to be tied. For the first time in nine years, Greece will attempt to exit its rescue program and finance all its needs on the market. Even with European financial market full of investors hungry to purchase any asset with a return above zero (regardless of risk), the space to maneuver will be very tight for the Greek treasury. At the end of 2017, the yield on two-year Greek bonds fell below that of the equivalent US government paper. However, rather than demonstrating that the Greek economy is less risky than US economy,³¹ it shows how disturbed in reality the Eurozone financial markets are.

Prior to Greece fully returns to financial markets, in March 2018, Italy will hold a general election. While the Italian economy seems to be well insulated from its soap opera politics, the results of the election could have the potential to derail the country's very fragile reforms. At the end of 2017 the anti-establishment Five Stars Movement led the polls, while the populist-nationalist (and anti-EU) block – consisting of Berlusconi's Forza Italia, the Nord League and the Brothers of Italy – was climbing up.³²

Meanwhile, the new German government – formed at the beginning of 2018 from CDU and SPD – may continue to struggle to decide on a clear political position, which could give France space to push harder on some of its projects for an ever closer Eurozone. Brexit talks will need to advance to their final stage, at least in terms of establishing clear conditions for the transitional period. The ECB will have to think seriously about phasing out its loose monetary policy, one that could lead

³¹ "Five tests that will judge Greece's bailout exit," *Financial Times*, January 22, 2018. Available online: <https://www.ft.com/content/41ca28b0-fba4-11e7-a492-2c9be7f3120a> (accessed on February 5, 2018).

³² "Italy's election could put the country on a collision course with the rest of Europe," *CNBC*, January 30, 2018, Available online: <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/01/30/italy-election-could-mean-a-collision-with-the-rest-of-europe.html> (accessed on February 5, 2018).

to asset bubbles in number of Eurozone countries. On the other hand, not many national budgets are ready for rising interest rates. The plan agreed in December 2017 sees halving bond purchases to 30 billion per month from January 2018, and guiding its bond-buying program to a gentle halt by the end of 2018.³³ Whether this plan actually materializes in 2018 will remain an interesting question in the course of the year.

The world will adjust to the impacts of the Trump tax reform – which could alter global capital flows – and contemplate counteractions. Whether these will tend more on the side of protectionism or lead to a wave of tax reforms around the world is yet to be seen.

³³ “ECB seen topping up qe once more with short taper in late 2018,” *Bloomberg*, December 8, 2017. Available online: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2017-12-08/ecb-seen-topping-up-qe-once-more-with-short-taper-in-late-2018> (accessed on February 5, 2018).

ADAPTATION, BARRIERS, AND COOPERATION – DEFENSE IN 2017, IN AND OUT OF SLOVAKIA

DUŠAN FISCHER

THE YEAR OF ADAPTATION

The most recent developments in security and defense suggest that we are living in troublesome times, with high tensions close to European and NATO borders. The situation between Russia and Western countries was impacted by continuous intelligence and informational warfare coming from Russia, and its military presence during the exercise ZAPAD 2017. The situation in Ukraine is yet to be resolved. On the international stage, the world witnessed more testing of ballistic missiles and thermonuclear weapons by North Korea. Despite several rounds of sanctions, the regime of Kim Jong-un has continued its development of nuclear weapons at a faster pace than previously anticipated. The atrocities in Syria were left without resolution, a combination of terrorist insurgency and proxy conflicts. International political leaders, including those from Slovakia, continued to speak about the worsening international security situation.

Thus the year 2017, in terms of security, may be characterized as a wait-and-see period. The year began with the inauguration of Donald Trump as the 45th President of the United States, which triggered intense discussions about US engagement in NATO and the EU's strategic adaptability and defense autonomy. After an election campaign in which Mr. Trump openly called NATO "obsolete," and presented a double-standard policy when considering the application of collective defense measures as stated in

the Washington Treaty, US allies were worried about the new paradigm in US foreign policy. The anticipated American isolationism did not emerge in its full potential capacity. The European allies were reassured concerning US commitments to collective security by visits of governmental representatives, among them Vice President Mike Pence, US State Secretary Rex Tillerson, and Defense Secretary James Mattis.

After this assurance from the alliance's largest member, NATO continued its day-to-day business of security assurance, transformation, and adaption. A meeting of heads of state took place in Brussels in May, to introduce President Trump to the alliance and its new headquarters to the rest of the world. The conclusion of the summit (which attracted media attention mainly due to the presence of US representatives) included a confirmation of NATO's Open Door Policy with the accession of Montenegro (who officially became NATO's 29th member), as well as assessment of NATO assurance and deterrence measures, followed by the presentation of a new proposal for its command structure.

While NATO was visibly satisfied with the US commitment to the common defense as declared by US representatives, the European Union saw the Trump presidency as a chance to achieve its own goal of strategic autonomy. Through the comprehensive cooperation of its members, the EU is seeking independence in its Security and Defense Policy. EU member states were given the opportunity to introduce projects for the Permanent Structure Cooperation (PESCO) – the initial signals, sober predictions, and praise from NATO leaders all suggest a long-term success.

Trump's election had a smaller impact on Slovakia, but the trends he set have influenced the country's security and defense debate nonetheless. In 2017 the focus was mostly on introducing a set of security documents – security, defense, and military strategy. At the time of writing, none of these documents has passed through the National Council so as to be fully implemented, and after almost a year since drafting the documents remain as working papers. The introduction of the documents was accompanied by newspaper leaks, and the disclosure of differing visions among the leadership of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs concerning the security environment and the main threats to it – including the rise and military potential of Russian forces close to NATO and EU borders. Related to these documents, the Slovak Armed Forces have continued with their modernization projects and contributions to PESCO. Slovakia has also continued in its contributions to NATO and to EU operations and missions.

NATO – THE FIRST YEAR WITH TRUMP

After the initial worries of NATO allies concerning the US commitment to common defense and Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization came to an agreement with the new American administration of Donald Trump. Despite his failure to mention this pledge during his speech nearby the newly opened 9/11 memorial¹ – commemorating an event which led to the first and so far only

¹ "President Trump meets with World Leaders before the NATO Summit," White House, May 26, 2017. Available online: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/articles/president-trump-meets-world-leaders-nato-summit/> (accessed on February 28, 2018).

invocation of Article 5 in history of the Alliance – the spoken promise of America's stance "behind the mutual defense commitment" was given to NATO later.² It must be said that Donald Trump was not the first US president to accuse the European allies of freeloading, but he was the first successful presidential contender to call NATO "obsolete." After his first meeting with NATO's Secretary General, however, he corrected and reversed his statement regarding the Alliance's usefulness.³ Trump's presence at the meeting of heads of state in Brussels in May accomplished what the NATO nations had hoped for, and more.

One of the most consequential decisions the North Atlantic Council took at the summit in Brussels was its step towards further enlargement. By admitting Montenegro to the Washington Treaty, NATO achieved two things. First, it openly settled the question of continuing its Open Door Policy, despite criticism coming from the international relations realists that NATO enlargement is among the reasons that have brought about Russia's aggressive behavior in its neighborhood.⁴ Second, by opening its doors to Montenegro, countries "stuck" in the Partnership for Peace and aspiring to become members received the needed encouragement to continue with their strategic reforms. Critics argue that by accepting Montenegro the Alliance has made a burdensome decision, taking into consideration the country's lack of supersonic air force capabilities.

In 2017, NATO continued its engagement in assurance, reassurance, and deterrence measures in East-Central Europe, and its involvement in the Middle East through its crisis management activities. The Enhance Forward Presence (eFP)⁵ and Tailored Forward Presence measures – including NATO nations' contributions of troops to the Baltic countries and Poland on the Eastern flank, and to Romania on the Southern flank – became fully operational in June and July 2017 respectively, having been agreed at the NATO Warsaw Summit in 2016. In Iraq, NATO started a new operation (which included a Slovak contribution) called NATO Training and Capacity Building (NTCB-I), with the goal of training and advising local Iraqi leaders and armed forces on demining, countering improvised explosive devices, medical services, and maintenance.⁶ A majority of NATO nations continued gradually to increase their defense spending to cover capabilities and modernization according to the pledge they gave

² "Remarks by President Trump to the People of Poland," White House, July 6, 2017. Available online: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-people-poland/> (accessed on February 28, 2018).

³ Joint Press Conference of President Trump and NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg," White House, April 12, 2017. Available online: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/joint-press-conference-president-trump-nato-secretary-general-stoltenberg/> (accessed on February 28, 2018).

⁴ J.J. Mearsheimer, "Why the Ukraine crisis is the West's fault," *Foreign Affairs*, September/October 2014, pp. 77–89.

⁵ "NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence," NATO, February 2018. Available online: https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2018_02/20180213_1802-factsheet-efp.pdf (accessed on February 28, 2018).

⁶ "NATO Training and Capacity Building activity in Iraq (NTCB-I)," NATO, December. Available online: https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2017_12/20171205_1712-backgrounder-NTCB-Iraq-en.pdf (accessed on February 28, 2018).

at the Wales Summit in 2014 and subsequent meetings, with the most significant rises recorded in Latvia and Lithuania.⁷

NATO saw one of its calmer years in 2017. The pressures involving Russia have not escalated into a larger conflict, although the latest NATO–Russia Council, chaired by Secretary General Stoltenberg, was mostly focused on Russia’s exercise ZAPAD 2017. Stoltenberg confirmed during a press briefing that the “scale and scope” of the exercise had “significantly exceeded” previous announcements from Russia.⁸ Nevertheless, the NATO Secretary General called for transparency and praised the dialogue and risk reduction undertaken with Russia. Despite this tension, NATO member states fulfilled their pledges and the US administration did not call for NATO’s disintegration. NATO unity did take a fair number of punches, but also an equal number of fixes so as to remain strong into the future, thanks to the US’s declared commitment followed by its real contributions to collective defense. Cooperation with the EU was on the right track, and the command adaptation well-prepared to be implemented in 2018 and going forward. However, there are challenges ahead, including distrust within the Alliance among its European nations, and in regard to future involvement with Turkey – an issue that remains to be solved by the North Atlantic Council and its leader Jens Stoltenberg, whose leadership was renewed in 2017 for another four years as NATO’s Secretary General.

THE EU’S PATH TOWARDS AUTONOMY

The European Union’s reaction to the election of Donald Trump and the resulting policies of the new presidential administration was different to that of NATO. While NATO sought statements of reassurance from the US, the EU was looking for no such thing. On the contrary, for the EU, 2017 was a year of implementation of its 2016 Global Strategy (EU GS), and the US election was a signal that it was the right time to fully separate itself strategically from the United States and focus on the EU’s own priorities, as the new administration was “reshaping America’s role in the international arena,”⁹ as stated in the first annual assessment of EU GS implementation. Ever since introducing its Common Foreign and Security Policy (CSDP), the European Union has had difficulties being recognized as an organization with substantial military power. Although its aspirations have not been fulfilled in that area, 2017 was a key year for strategic autonomy, one of its goals as outlined in the ambitious EU GS. It is possible that, for once, the EU received more media coverage in the area of defense and security than NATO did. One reason for this was the introduction of the Permanent

⁷ “Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2010-2017),” NATO Public Diplomacy Division, June 29, 2017. Available online: https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2017_06/20170629_170629-pr2017-111-en.pdf (accessed on February 28, 2018).

⁸ “Press point by the NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg following the meeting of the NATO–Russia Council, NATO, October 26, 2017. Available online: https://www.nato.int/cps/su/natohq/opinions_147976.htm (accessed on February 28, 2018).

⁹ “From shared vision to common action: implementing the EU Global Strategy Year 1,” European Union External Action, June 2017. Available online: https://europa.eu/globalstrategy/sites/globalstrategy/files/full_brochure_year_1.pdf (accessed on February 28, 2018).

Structural Cooperation, also known as PESCO – which by definition is a close cooperation between member states who willingly contribute to the pool of ideas on how to contribute to the common defense. Through its closer cooperation, the EU has put itself on the international security map of reliable defense actors. Also during the year, the EU conducted a trial run of its Coordinated Annual Review of Defence (CARD), a mechanism of information-sharing among member states on defense planning, with the first report set to published in 2018.

After the recent turmoil in Europe – namely the Russian invasion in Ukraine and its continued support of separatists in the eastern part of the country, complemented by a disinformation campaign, followed by the Brexit referendum in the United Kingdom – the EU saw an opportunity to take more responsibility for its security and defense, not only by deepening cooperation but also by strengthening the position of the Vice President of the European Council and High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the EU, currently held by Federica Mogherini. After initial steps towards a closer cooperation between the EU and NATO, Secretary General Stoltenberg publicly supported deeper integration and further cooperation.¹⁰ The meetings between Stoltenberg and High Representative Mogherini have continued on a regular basis.

European efforts to strengthen its defense and security structures were aided by French President Emanuel Macron and German Chancellor Angela Merkel. Both spoke publicly in favor of a stronger and more defensible Europe after the Russian intervention in Ukraine and its ongoing disinformation campaign, and vote of the United Kingdom to leave the EU. Furthermore, Merkel clearly stated that the EU should keep its affairs in its own hands and not rely on partners, particularly the United States. Another important step was the State of the Union speech by President of the European Commission Jean Claude Juncker, who presented the idea of the deeper integration of EU member states, including in the area of defense and security.¹¹ By its actions the EU has shown that the ambitiously set goals of the EU GS are meant to be implemented, with the results of PESCO providing more capabilities to support the process. The transformation and adaptation both of NATO and the EU were also followed and mirrored by that of the Slovak Republic.

SLOVAKIA'S INTERNATIONAL CONTRIBUTION

Along with the efforts of the EU and NATO to adapt to the security environment, Slovakia underwent adaptation reforms of its own during 2017. Both in terms of international contributions and domestic debate, Slovakia acted as a responsible ally to both organizations. However, due to a lack of transparency, the largest modernization

¹⁰ "NATO Secretary General welcomes PESCO, stresses need for complementarity," NATO, November 13, 2017. Available online: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_148838.htm (accessed on February 28, 2018).

¹¹ J.-C. Juncker, "State of the Union Address 2017," European Commission, September 13, 2017. Available online: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-17-3165_en.htm (accessed on February 28, 2018).

projects remain on hold, amidst criticism from the political opposition and expert defense analysts.

A unique declaration of the country's three highest placed political leaders was signed in 2017. It was an important proclamation of the unity of the legislative and executive branches on the pro-Atlantic and pro-European direction of Slovakia. All three – President Kiska, President of the Parliament Danko, and Prime Minister Fico – agreed to ensure communication of EU and NATO decisions to the public, support Slovak integration into the EU core, and fulfil allied commitments regarding the defense budget and modernization.¹² Despite the importance of such a declaration, it is difficult to assess its impact on the domestic audience, namely voters of Danko's Slovak National Party and Fico's Smer. It is, however, a joint declaration that will be recognized within international forums, and a strong signal of unity to allies and partners abroad.

In 2017, Slovakia continued its commitment to NATO measures without any significant speedbumps. The NATO summit in Brussels did not receive wide media coverage within Slovakia. The Slovak contribution to the summit was not even published on the website of the Slovak government office, unlike on previous similar occasions. Following a night flight from Brussels, President Kiska – accompanied by the ministers of foreign and European affairs and defense, Miroslav Lajčák and Peter Gajdoš – highlighted NATO's accession to the Global coalition against Daesh, words of unity from the US president, and the further adaptation measures being taken by the Alliance.¹³ Slovakia continued to support the Alliance's enlargement efforts. President Kiska publicly supported Georgia's efforts towards membership in NATO.¹⁴ With regard to international commitments, the National Council passed a proposal for sending 25 members of the armed forces to Iraq to support NATO's Training and Capacity Building activity. The mandate is currently being fulfilled at the level of 60 per cent. Their role is in countering improvised explosive devices (C-IED) and the maintenance of Soviet-type vehicles.¹⁵ The other contribution was in the form of a deployment of 152 members of the armed forces to Latvia, with a training mission which is officially not part of the eFP. The government passed the mandate for the months of April to June 2017. The main

¹² "Vyhlásenie prezidenta, predsedu Národnej rady a predsedu vlády k EÚ a NATO," [Statement by the President, the President of the National Council, and the Prime Minister on the EU and NATO] October 23, 2017. Available online: <https://www.prezident.sk/article/vyhlasenie-prezidenta-predsedu-narodnej-rady-a-predsedu-vlady-k-eu-a-nato/> (accessed on February 28, 2018).

¹³ "Prezident: Slovensko prišlo na samit NATO dobre pripravené," [President: Slovakia came to the NATO summit well-prepared] *Prezident.sk*, May 26, 2017. Available online: <https://www.prezident.sk/article/prezident-slovensko-prislo-na-samit-nato-dobre-pripravene/> (accessed on February 28, 2018).

¹⁴ "Kiska: Podporujeme gruzínske ambície stať sa členom NATO," [Kiska: I support ambitions of Georgia to become a NATO member] *Prezident.sk*, May 15, 2017. Available online: <https://www.prezident.sk/article/prezident-podporujeme-gruzinske-ambicie-stat-sa-clenom-nato/> (accessed on February 28, 2018).

¹⁵ "Návrh na vyslanie príslušníkov ozbrojených síl Slovenskej republiky na budovanie obranných a bezpečnostných kapacít Irackej republiky," [Proposal to send members of the armed forces of the Slovak Republic to build the defense and security capabilities of the Republic of Iraq] National Council of the Slovak Republic, October 6, 2018. Available online: <http://www.nrsr.sk/web/Dynamic/Download.aspx?DocID=443894> (accessed on February 28, 2018).

responsibility is to be training and capability enhancement.¹⁶ Contributions to such activities are at the necessary minimum to ensure Slovakia's credibility as a reliable ally, and also a unique way to effect investment in the armed forces, both in terms of training, international cooperation, and capabilities building.

In the area of public diplomacy and disinformation messages being spread among the younger population, it was important to emphasize communication on social media. One example of this is the communication being carried out by one of the NATO Force Integration Units (NFIU), a reluctantly and secretly built NATO coordination unit.¹⁷ 2017 marked the reaching of full capability for the NFIUs in Slovakia and Hungary.¹⁸ The NFIUs' social media and other outreach activities are a good example of a defined, reliable, and well-executed communication strategy which can contribute to a debate often overwhelmed by negative comments and publications towards NATO. Another example of a strategic communication effort was Slovakia's becoming one of five pilot countries actively participating in the communication project #WeAreNATO, an initiative of NATO mostly involving shot videos showing armed forces personnel in their everyday environment (in contrast to their military life),¹⁹ which are displayed on social media. However, apart from one short video, and the ongoing use of hashtags, the participation of Slovakia has not been covered widely by mainstream media. Based on an Institute for Public Affairs survey, conducted in Slovakia in June 2017, 58.2 per cent of responders said they trusted NATO.²⁰ A similar result was polled in 2014, when 58 per cent of responders answered positively to a question on NATO as a guarantee of Slovakia's security.²¹

A personnel change took place in the Permanent delegation of the Slovak Republic to NATO. Today it is led by Radovan Javorčík, former Slovak ambassador to Israel. After four years, Tomáš Valášek was replaced by Javorčík in April and became director of Carnegie Europe, a think tank in Brussels. Valášek was a significantly influential voice within NATO HQ. Javorčík, his successor, is considered an experienced diplomat with a previous

¹⁶ "Návrh na vyslanie príslušníkov ozbrojených síl Slovenskej republiky na výcvik do Lotyšskej republiky," [Proposal to send members of the armed forces of the Slovak Republic for training in the Republic of Latvia] Government of the Slovak Republic, January 11, 2017. Available online: http://www.rokovania.sk/File.aspx/ViewDocumentHtml/Mater-Dokum-206006?prefixFile=m_ (accessed on February 28, 2018).

¹⁷ Others are in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Hungary. For more information see "NATO Force Integration Units (NFIU)," NATO. Available online: <https://jfcbs.nato.int/page5725819/nato-force-integration-units> (accessed February 28, 2018).

¹⁸ "Slovensko splnilo svoj záväzok, NFIU má plnú spôsobilosť," [Slovakia has fulfilled its commitment; the NFIU has a full capability] Ministry of Defence of the Slovak Republic, May 19, 2017. Available online: <https://www.mod.gov.sk/39756-sk/slovensko-splnilo-svoj-zavazok-nfiu-ma-plnu-sposobilost/> (accessed on February 28, 2018).

¹⁹ "#WeAreNATO," NATO. Available online: <https://www.nato.int/wearenato/svk/index.html> (accessed on February 28, 2018).

²⁰ "IVO survey on foreign policy orientation of Slovakia's population," Institute for Public Affairs, June 1, 2017. Available online: <http://www.ivo.sk/8148/en/news/ivo-survey-on-foreign-policy-orientation-of-slovakia%E2%80%99s-population> (accessed on February 28, 2018).

²¹ "Slováci sú presvedčení, že členstvo v NATO je záruka bezpečnosti, [The Slovaks are convinced that NATO membership is a guarantee of security] *TASR*, July 13, 2014. Available online: <http://www7.teraz.sk/slovensko/prieskum-ivo-bezpecnost-nato/91355-clanok.html> (accessed on February 28, 2018).

background working for NATO, and as head of the Preparation for NATO Membership Program (PRENAME).²² It is also important to mention that since May 2017, the Slovak Armed Forces have a representative at the NATO School in Oberammergau: Command Sergeant Major Miroslav Dulaj, who works as a Command Senior Enlisted Leader at the unique educational facility falling under Allied Command Transformation.²³

On the EU level, the internal Slovak debate was mostly concerned with the EU's core and PESCO. In the summer of 2017, Prime Minister Fico said that his policies were close to those of France and Germany, and therefore it was natural that Slovakia should be part of this closer, more integrated group within the EU.²⁴ Later in August, he instructed the Minister of Defense to use European solutions when it comes to the acquisition of military equipment.²⁵ This triggered further steps and actions leading to Slovakia's contribution to PESCO, which was introduced and passed by the government on November 8, 2017. For Slovakia, PESCO represents "the opportunity to strengthen its defense capability, to strengthen the EU's ability to respond effectively to current security challenges/threats, but also to strengthen the European pillar of NATO."²⁶ PESCO is meant to support capacity building measures in the Slovak Armed Forces, and involve the domestic military industry in their implementation.

Slovakia is the only country in the V4 with a successful project included as part of PESCO, and one of the two (the other being the Czech Republic) that have sent a proposal. The other V4 members plan to contribute to Italian, Dutch, and French projects. Despite the often-proclaimed vision of V4 cooperation in defense and security, the group's inability to act swiftly and collaboratively only shows that V4 cooperation beyond one Battle Group (yet to be deployed in an actual operation) has remained wishful thinking, and that the group is focused more on contributing to international initiatives. When implemented, the Slovak project "EuroArtillery," focused on indirect fire support, should develop "a mobile precision artillery platform, which would contribute to the EU's combat capability requirement in military operations."²⁷ By passing the national strategy for contributing to and implementing PESCO, Slovakia has placed itself ahead of other East-Central European countries. More integrated cooperation will be a challenge for countries that have struggled to fulfil the 2 per cent pledge toward

²² "Radovan Javorčík." NATO, April 13, 2017. Available online: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/who_is_who_143216.htm (accessed on February 28, 2018).

²³ "Senior Leadership," NATO School Oberammergau. Available online: <http://www.natoschool.nato.int/Organization/Structure/Senior-Leadership> (accessed on February 28, 2018).

²⁴ "Slovakia's future is with core EU, not Eurosceptic eastern nations: PM," *Reuters*, August 15, 2017. Available online: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-slovakia-politics-eu/slovakias-future-is-with-core-eu-not-eurosceptic-eastern-nations-pm-idUSKCN1AV1YY> (accessed on February 28, 2018).

²⁵ "PREMIÉR: Pri nákupe vojenskej techniky treba hľadať európske riešenia," [PM: When purchasing military technology, European solutions must be sought] *TASR*, August 10, 2017. Available online: <http://www3.teraz.sk/slovensko/premier-pri-nakupe-vojenskej-techniky/274644-clanok.html> (accessed on February 28, 2018).

²⁶ See materials from official meeting of the Government "Vlastný materiál," [Main material] November 8, 2017. Available online: http://www.rokovania.sk/File.aspx/ViewDocumentHtml/Mater-Dokum-213886?prefixFile=m_ (accessed on February 28, 2018).

²⁷ "Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) first collaborative PESCO projects – overview," European Commission. Available online: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/32082/pesco-overview-of-first-collaborative-of-projects-for-press.pdf> (accessed on February 28, 2018).

NATO without any reciprocity. The legally binding character of PESCO can discipline a partner by a qualitative voting measure. A simple majority can bring about the removal of any of the twenty-five members that have so far signed up for cooperation. Slovakia will be closely watched from the outside, as well as from the inside by think tanks and academia. Any hesitation could cost us a seat in a future integration project.

Although Slovakia's contribution to PESCO may serve as a long-term commitment with a detailed implementation plan,²⁸ the issues of undermining of the nation's responsibilities for its own defense, including defense budget and modernization, will most likely remain. If successful, Slovakia could make its mark on the European defense platform, which could lead to a potential leadership role, if accepted, in the future. The Slovak contribution is a welcome signal of the country's maturity and responsibility. For this reason it should not be perceived as an isolated event, but as one of many upcoming steps on its trajectory towards responsibility. This will gain Slovakia credibility in the international arena, and with that the ability to help shape the future of the defense debate in Europe and abroad.

Apart from its above mentioned activities in Iraq and Latvia, Slovakia is one of 39 nations contributing to NATO's Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan with 34 troops there (the mandate is 66),²⁹ one soldier at NATO HQ in Sarajevo,³⁰ 42 members of the armed forces serving with the EU mission Althea in Sarajevo,³¹ 169 with UNFICYP in Cyprus,³² two with UNTSO in Syria and Israel,³³ and ten soldiers serving in Rome as part of the EUNAVFOR MED SOPHIA focused on the Mediterranean sea.³⁴ Observation missions in Georgia, for the OSCE and the EU, remain vacant. Members of Slovakia's Armed Forces attended the Slovak Shield 2017, Cyber Strike, and Summer Shield (Latvia) exercises.

²⁸ "Návrh Stratégie národného plánu implementácie záväzkov a kritérií vyplývajúcich z účasti Slovenskej republiky na Stálej štruktúrovanej spolupráci Európskej únie," [Draft of National Strategy for the Implementation of Commitments and Criteria for the Participation of the Slovak Republic in the Permanent Structured Cooperation of the European Union], *Slov-Lex*, November 7, 2017. Available online: <https://www.slov-lex.sk/legislativne-procesy/-/SK/dokumenty/LP-2017-799> (accessed on February 28, 2018).

²⁹ "Operácia Resolute Support, Afghanistan," [Resolute Support Mission, Afghanistan] Ministry of Defence of the Slovak Republic, November 30, 2017. Available online: <http://www.mod.gov.sk/operacia-resolute-support-afghanistan/> (accessed on February 28, 2018).

³⁰ "Veliteľstvo NATO v Sarajeve," [NATO HQ in Sarajevo] Ministry of Defence of the Slovak Republic, October 12, 2017. Available online: <http://www.mod.gov.sk/velitelstvo-nato-v-sarajeve/> (accessed on February 28, 2018).

³¹ "Operácia ALTHEA, Bosna a Hercegovina," [Operation ALTHEA, Bosnia and Herzegovina] Ministry of Defence of the Slovak Republic, August 30, 2017. Available online: <http://www.mod.gov.sk/operacia-althea-bosna-a-hercegovina/> (accessed on February 28, 2018).

³² "Misia UNFICYP, Cyprus," [UNFICYP Mission, Cyprus] Ministry of Defence of the Slovak Republic, September 19, 2017. Available online: <http://www.mod.gov.sk/misia-unficy-cyprus/> (accessed on February 28, 2018).

³³ "Mierová pozorovateľská misia UNTSO, Blízky východ," [Peace observation mission UNTSO, Middle East] Ministry of Defence of the Slovak Republic, February 2, 2018. Available online: <http://www.mod.gov.sk/mierova-pozorovatelaska-misia-untso-blizky-vychod/> (accessed on February 28, 2018).

³⁴ "Operácia EUNAVFOR MED SOPHIA, Stredozemné more," [Operation EUNAVFOR MED SOPHIA, Mediterranean sea] September 21, 2017. Available online: <http://www.mod.gov.sk/operacia-eunavfor-med-sophia-stredozemne-more/> (accessed on February 28, 2018).

DOCUMENTS AND MODERNIZATION

After years of criticism coming from defense and security analysts, and one important Strategic Defense Review in 2011, the security community has long awaited the drafts of certain national security documents. It is important to remember that the last national documents were published in 2005, shortly after Slovakia's accession to NATO. The first draft of the Security strategy was constructed in three parts – determination [odhodlanie], resilience [odolnosť], and defense [obrana]. This concept was later let go, and the document went back to the more traditional concept. The draft had more than one observed fallacy. A document leaked to the mainstream press during the summer of 2017 described security threats insufficiently. Eventually, responsibility for drafting the documents was transferred from State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs Lukáš Parížek of the Slovak National Party, to Minister Miroslav Lajčák, which eventually led to personal misunderstandings overshadowing the documentation debate itself.

The Slovak Security Strategy³⁵ is divided into five parts of which two are key – that defining the security milieu and that defining the security policy of the Slovak Republic. The main theme of the second part is the strengthening of various aspects of Slovak security policy, including national defense, security system, resilience, and public trust in institutions, which has deteriorated in the past decade. It was noticeable that the updated version was much more pro-Atlantic and less vague in terms of concrete steps. It is important to note that Slovakia has issued its security strategy in accordance with the EU GS and the latest NATO strategic concept. This step has ensured that a pro-EU and pro-NATO stance will be affirmed.

The Slovak Defense Strategy was drafted under the oversight of the Ministry of Defense. The largest portion of the document is devoted to the strategic adaptation of national defense.³⁶ The strategy further mentions Slovakia's commitments to supporting and contributing to Centers of Excellence and to other parts of the NATO command structure, including providing host nation support. The failure to pass documents creates a technical difficulty for the administration in terms of implementing strategy. However, there is the possibility that by introducing draft strategies to the floor of the National Council, both responsible ministries would be risking a lively debate among the nationalist and anti-NATO parties, which could lead to some lost votes among the government majority.

On the procurement scene, the overwhelmingly dominant topic was the acquisition of military equipment, namely armed vehicles. At the beginning of the year, President Kiska visited the Chairman of the Armed Forces for the annual inspection. His main critique following the inspection was aimed at the belated modernization. Kiska mentioned that the soldiers have to fight with equipment that is often older than the average

³⁵ "LP/2017/627 Návrh Bezpečnostná stratégia Slovenskej republiky," [Proposal of the Security Strategy of the Slovak republic] *Slov-Lex*, September 26, 2017. Available online: <https://www.slov-lex.sk/legislativne-procesy/SK/LP/2017/627> (accessed on February 28, 2018).

³⁶ "LP/2017/640 Návrh Obrannej stratégie Slovenskej republiky," [Proposal of the Defense Strategy of the Slovak republic] *Slov-Lex*, September 19, 2017. Available online: <https://www.slov-lex.sk/legislativne-procesy/SK/LP/2017/640> (accessed on February 28, 2018).

soldier. This was not the first time this critique had surfaced, but it was exceptional to hear it from the head of state. "We have a long-term problem," Kiska concluded.³⁷

In May 2017, the government passed a document tasking the defense minister to come up with a proposal to acquire two types of armored vehicles.³⁸ Apart from the technical details, the document included a list of options, including government to government, EDA, NSPA, and a common V4 project. Only one day later, Finnish media Yle confirmed that Minister Peter Gajdoš had signed a letter of intent with his Finnish counterpart Jussi Niinistö.³⁹ It is unclear why Finland is on the list of top sellers, or why the Minister signed the memorandum the day after the document was passed by the government, without a public procurement process. The Slovak National Party argued that this cooperation was based on a common development, and therefore the Ministry did not have to follow the usual process.

On November 8, 2017, during the same session in which the Slovak government gave the go-ahead for the Slovak contribution to PESCO, it also approved a restricted proposal for the delivery of ground combat vehicles (4x4 and 8x8), with the strong involvement of the Slovak defense industry.⁴⁰ The proposal, which cancelled the 2014 agreement with Poland on defense cooperation passed a week later. The plan is to invest 1.2 billion euros during the period 2018–2029. The material mentioned cooperation with the Finnish company PATRIA, and also stipulated that a percentage of the unit price for the 4x4 and 8x8 vehicles (80 and 70 per cent respectively) should remain in Slovakia for manufacturing and assembling. The prepared analysis on which the document was based remains classified. This acquisition project, the largest in history of Slovakia, naturally attracted a lot of media attention, which was often dismissed by the Ministry's leadership as disparaging. Nevertheless, the Ministry failed to answer questions concerning the acquisition process, mainly those related to the process of choosing the procurer of the project, while denying allegations that it followed the same public procurement procedure used by the neighboring Czech Republic in a similar situation.

With the debate over modernization mostly about armed vehicles, one branch of the armed forces was excluded. During 2017 there was little traction gained on the

³⁷ "Prezident: Slovensko si neplní závazky v obrane," [President: Slovakia is not fulfilling commitments in defense] *Prezident.sk* January 31, 2018. Available online: <https://www.prezident.sk/article/prezident-slovensko-si-neplni-zavazky-v-obrane/> (accessed on February 28, 2018).

³⁸ "Zabezpečenie projektov – Bojové obrnené vozidlo 8x8 a Bojové obrnené vozidlo/Viacúčelové taktické vozidlo 4x4," [Project Security – Combat Vehicle 8x8 and Combat Vehicle / Lentokent-täkuljetusauto 4x4] Government of the Slovak Republic, May 17, 2017. Available online: http://www.rokovania.sk/File.aspx/ViewDocumentHtml/Mater-Dokum-209100?prefixFile=m_ (accessed on February 28, 2018).

³⁹ P. Raivio, "Suomi haluaa viedä Patrian panssariajoneuvoja Slovakiaan," [Finland wants to export Patria's armored vehicles to Slovakia], *Yle*, May 18, 2017. Available online: <https://yle.fi/uutiset/3-9621084> (accessed on February 28, 2018).

⁴⁰ "Návrh realizácie dodávok Bojových obrnených vozidiel 8x8 a Bojových obrnených vozidiel / Viacúčelových taktických vozidiel 4x4 s dôrazom na zapojenie slovenského obranného priemyslu," [Proposal for delivery of armored combat vehicles 8x8 and combat armored vehicles / 4x4 multipurpose tactical vehicles with an emphasis on involvement of the Slovak defense industry] Government of the Slovak Republic, November 8, 2017. Available online: <http://www.rokovania.sk/Rokovanie.aspx/BodRokovaniaDetail?idMaterial=26992> (accessed on February 28, 2018).

modernization of air forces, specifically supersonic jets. In February, the Ministry issued a statement clarifying that future modernization will include either an American option (F-16 jets, used by the air forces of Poland, Romania, Belgium, and others) or a Swedish option (JAS 39 Gripen, currently being employed by the Czech Republic and Hungary, among others). Minister Gajdoš is scheduled to present a new proposal on June 29, 2018. The Ministry denied reports of the potential acquiring of Russian jets.⁴¹ This was an attempt to distance itself from criticism that was sketched upon vague statements. It is true, however, that by postponing modernization the Ministry has allowed for the currently used MiG-29s to remain for the next couple of years, based on a subscription agreement which is set to expire in 2019 and will have to be renewed. This was a well-known fact when the existing government took power in 2016, when there was enough time to come up with a proper analysis to begin the acquisition process.

Specifically tied to modernization is a document introduced to the parliament in September, entitled “Proposal for a Long-term Defense Development Plan with an Emphasis on the Construction and Development of the Slovak Armed Forces with a View to 2030.”⁴² This document has not yet passed the National Council, which may be considered one of the most important obstacles holding up the modernization projects. The government most likely wished to avoid having these documents introduced in parliament, where they would receive the unwelcome attention of the anti-NATO and anti-EU members, which in turn could result in the delay or even rejection of the documentation.

The Ministry continued in its modernization, adaptation, and contribution to international missions, operations, and activities. Members of the political opposition, as well as certain generals from the General Staff, reminded the current government that the current political climate in Slovakia is permissive of modernization and this opportunity should not be left to waste.⁴³ As a testimony to its determination to support the unity of the EU and NATO and the credibility of Slovak defense capabilities – as well as to ensure the defense and security of its people, and achieve a defense spending level of 1.6 per cent GDP by 2020 – the National Council passed the Declaration on

⁴¹ “Ministerstvo obrany vyberá nové typy stíhacích lietadiel už iba z dvoch ponúk – americkej a švédskej,” [The Ministry of Defense is selecting new types of fighter aircraft from just two offers – American and Swedish] Ministry of Defence of the Slovak Republic, February 2, 2018. Available online: <http://www.mod.gov.sk/41295-sk/ministerstvo-obrany-vybera-nove-typy-stihacich-lietadiel-uz-iba-z-dvoch-ponuk-ponuk-americkej-a-svedskej/> (accessed on February 28, 2018).

⁴² “LP/2017/665 Návrh Dlhodobého plánu rozvoja obrany s dôrazom na výstavbu a rozvoj ozbrojených síl Slovenskej republiky s výhľadom do roku 2030,” [Proposal for a long-term defense development plan with an emphasis on the construction and development of the Slovak Armed Forces with a perspective to 2030], *Slov-Lex*, September 14, 2017. Available online: <https://www.slov-lex.sk/legislativne-procesy/-/SK/LP/2017/665> (accessed on February 28, 2018).

⁴³ “Generál Maxim: Ak premrháme politickú vôľu na modernizáciu ozbrojených síl, na ďalšiu šancu môžeme čakať desaťročia,” [General Maxim: If we waste the political will to modernize the armed forces, we can wait for decades for our next chance] Ministry of Defence of the Slovak Republic, December 29, 2017. Available online: <https://www.mod.gov.sk/41083-sk/general-maxim-ak-premrhame-politicku-volu-na-modernizaciu-ozbrojenych-sil-na-dalsiu-sancu-mozeme-cakat-desatrocia/> (accessed on February 28, 2018).

the Necessity to Support Defense of the Slovak Republic.⁴⁴ Although the declaration is non-binding, and there are parties who opposed it, this is a unique opportunity for Slovakia to continue modernization and to connect it with the already improving integration with PESCO. Complete transparency must be ensured, in order to avoid legitimate criticism from the domestic media and international agencies.

THE LONG AND TOUGH ROAD AHEAD TOWARDS CREDIBILITY

At the level of the EU and NATO, full cooperation will become deeper when PESCO is fully underway. EU countries will have the chance to demonstrate their capacities and capabilities for closer cooperation. NATO will continue its adaption, including implementation of the new command structure proposal. However, no further enlargement is expected in the short to medium term. In Slovakia, the year 2018 will be devoted mostly to preparations for its OSCE leadership in 2019. The government will likely continue to send mixed messages on acquisition, and there will also be a visible push for putting strategic security documents up for a vote in the National Council. 2018, therefore, will be no less challenging than 2017.

Slovakia did not witness important domestic political events in 2017. The following year will be more important, as the country will be preparing for the presidential elections of 2019 and parliamentary elections of 2020. The problems with transparency at the Ministry of Defense have proven not to be partisan, but have continued despite changes in the government. The secrecy of the Ministry's daily conducting of its business may lead to a lowering of its credibility and trust among the public, which in turn makes it difficult to campaign politically for a higher defense budget, thus making long-term modernization projects almost impossible. This must change in the future. The ministry is not a unique entity, despite its focus on security, defense, and the armed forces. For many it is just another part of the governmental puzzle and should act like it. Its international obligations should be fulfilled to their maximum capacity, insofar as this is attainable.

⁴⁴ "Deklarácia Národnej rady Slovenskej republiky o nevyhnutnosti podpory obrany Slovenskej republiky," [Declaration of the National Council of the Slovak Republic on the necessity to support defense of the Slovak Republic] National Council of the Slovak Republic, May 16, 2017. Available online: http://www.nrsr.sk/web/Static/sk-SK/NRSR/Doc/v_deklaracia_podpora_obrany_20170516.rtf (accessed on February 28, 2018).

SLOVAKIA'S ENERGY POLICY IN 2017: THE BUMPY ROAD TO A GREEN ECONOMY

PAVOL SZALAI

The civic initiative “We are forest” (*My sme les*) is one of Slovakia’s most successful environmental campaigns. According to its communication director, Juraj Rizman, the call for protecting Slovakia’s forests was supported by 56,000 people in November 2017, which made it the country’s biggest environmental online petition. In the same month, one of the campaign’s leaders, Erik Baláž, was awarded the White Crow for his long-term activities, a prize awarded by non-governmental organizations for civic courage. His current campaign goal is to put an end to logging in protected forest areas.¹

Does “We are forest” matter for Slovakia’s energy policy? Moreover, is it an issue for the country’s foreign policy?

If viewed from a classical standpoint as to what energy policy and foreign policy signify, the answer is no. However, both areas of policy are part of the bigger picture of ever-changing domestic and international political environments, which are necessarily intertwined. Energy policy and foreign policy overlap as much as domestic and international politics.

¹ “Iniciatíva My sme les je najväčšou online environmentálnou akciou v SR,” [Civic initiative ‘We are forest’ is biggest environmental initiative in Slovakia] *Teraz.sk*, November 20, 2017. Available online : <http://www.teraz.sk/slovensko/iniciativa-my-sme-les-je-najvacsou-o/293407-clanok.html> (accessed on February 28, 2018).

The initiative “We are forest” is itself a prime example of the changing nature of politics and policies. The issue of logging within Slovakia’s protected areas is not only one of protecting its natural heritage against industrial production. Wood is the main resource for biomass, which represents the biggest renewable electricity source in Slovakia after water. In 2016, biomass produced 1,204 GWh of electricity – as much as all other renewable electricity sources (apart from hydropower) combined, including biogas (614 GWh), photovoltaics (577 GWh) and wind (5.4 GWh).² According to the Director of the Research Centre of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association, Alexander Duleba, “Slovakia is specific in the fact that in some energy segments it is considered to be the leader of the former Eastern Bloc, especially in terms of building insulation; but also, for example, in the use of biomass for central heating systems.” Duleba argues that biomass-fueled heating, and combined heat and power, has stood out among the rising share of renewables in Slovakia’s energy mix since 2006.³ But biomass, if burnt with low efficiency, contributes to air pollution, and increases pressure on protected areas.⁴

And although the civic initiative primarily targets domestic institutions such as the Ministries of Environment and Agriculture, it has repercussions as well for Slovakia’s international standing within UNESCO, as managed by the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs. UNESCO’s draft decision, published in May 2017, highlights the international organization’s concern over the insufficient protection offered to the Slovak portion of the transboundary World Heritage Site known as the Primeval Beech Forests of the Carpathians and the Ancient Beech Forests of Germany. The site “continues to be threatened by logging, despite the efforts of government aimed at strengthening the management of the park,” the draft decision pointed out.⁵ In February 2018, the Slovak Supreme Audit Office found several flaws in the protection of the site, and warned that its inscription on the UNESCO world heritage list may be threatened. The Office addressed its recommendations to the Environment Ministry as well as to the Foreign Ministry, requesting the latter to coordinate the process of updating the map of the international bio-spherical reserve in the Poloniny National Park, to reflect its current state.⁶ Slovakia’s standing on the UNESCO world heritage list is to be defended by Slovakia’s Permanent Delegation to UNESCO, which is managed by Slovakia’s bilateral Embassy in France, itself under the jurisdiction of the Foreign Ministry.

Since the new government took over in 2016, the Slovak Environment Ministry has led the push towards what it calls a “green economy.” In November 2017, it published

² “Slovak Energy Annual 2017,” RE-PUBLIC, 2016. Available online: <http://rocenka.sk/domains/rocenka/UserFiles/Files/Rocenka%202017%20finalne.pdf> (accessed on February 28, 2018).

³ Ibid

⁴ “Zelenšie Slovensko. Stratégia environmentálnej politiky Slovenskej republiky do roku 2030,” [Greener Slovakia – Environmental Strategy of the Slovak Republic until 2030] Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic, November 2017. Available online: http://www.minzp.sk/files/iep/x_2017_envirostrategia_20171214.pdf (accessed on February 28, 2018).

⁵ “UNESCO and WWF concerned about protection of Primeval Beech Forests,” *The Slovak Spectator*, May 23, 2017. Available online: <https://spectator.sme.sk/c/20540536/unesco-and-wwf-concerned-about-protection-of-primeval-beech-forests.html> (accessed on February 28, 2018).

⁶ “UNESCO inscription of primeval forests in Poloniny may be threatened,” *The Slovak Spectator*, February 13, 2018. Available online: <https://spectator.sme.sk/c/20760326/flaws-found-in-protection-plan-of-primeval-forests-in-poloniny.html> (accessed on February 28, 2018).

a draft of the Strategy of the Slovak Environmental Policy by 2030, entitled "Greener Slovakia."⁷ It is now being debated and is expected to be approved by the government by June 2018.⁸ This recast of Slovakia's current environmental strategy (approved in 1993) covers several policy areas, including energy, with the drafting process involving the Ministries of Agriculture, Economy, Transport, and Health. In addition, the Ministry is working together with the World Bank on a Low-Carbon Strategy of Growth by 2050.⁹ This approach to energy-related policy making is in line with that of the European Commission's Vice-President responsible for the Energy Union. "The Energy Union is about more than energy and climate alone; it is about accelerating the fundamental modernisation of Europe's entire economy, making it low-carbon, energy and resource efficient, in a socially fair manner," said Maroš Šefčovič in February 2017, when presenting the Third Report on the State of the Energy Union.¹⁰

In this article, the draft Environmental Strategy serves as a spring board for considering two policy areas. In regard to power, Slovakia attempts a transition from coal to geothermal energy. In regard to transport, the country – a major car manufacturer – has begun to move from combustion to electric engines. The initiative of the Environment Ministry is an exceptional case, Slovak institutions generally act under varying degrees of pressure from European (international) institutions and the domestic public.

According to 2015 statistics, the energy and power industry represented 22.4 per cent of Slovakia's greenhouse gas emissions, while transport accounted for 16.2 per cent. Although the largest share of emissions – 38.9 per cent – was produced by industry in general and the steel industry in particular, it will not be considered separately in this article, given its very complex nature on the one hand, and the relative absence of domestic debate on the other. However, the article's focus still allows for consideration of one sector covered by the EU Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) – power – and one non-ETS sector under a different regime – transport.

POWER: AWAY FROM COAL

Hard coal power accounts for 2.8 per cent of Slovakia's total installed capacity, while lignite power represents 5.8 per cent. In 2016, hard coal produced 1,008 GWh of electricity, with lignite at 1,757 GWh, representing 19 and 33 per cent respectively – i.e. 52 per cent together – of the power produced from fossil fuels. All fossil fuels combined accounted for 19.4 per cent of Slovakia's installed capacity, taking second place after

⁷ "Zelenšie Slovensko. Stratégia environmentálnej politiky Slovenskej republiky do roku 2030," op. cit.

⁸ "Environmental Performance Reviews. Mid-term progress report: Slovak Republic," OECD, January 17, 2018. Available online: http://www.minzp.sk/files/omv/strednodobe-hodnotenie-env-vykonnosti-sr-2017-rev_clean.pdf (accessed on February 28, 2018).

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ "Europe's energy transition is well underway," European Commission, February 1, 2017. Available online: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-17-161_en.htm (accessed on February 28, 2018).

nuclear energy (53.8 per cent), and ahead of hydropower (17.6), other renewables (8.9), and other energies (0.3).¹¹

Slovakia has two coal power plants, but only one of them burns domestic lignite, with state subsidies based on the “general economic interest.” The Vojany Power Plant in Eastern Slovakia, which does not enjoy subsidies, has a total installed capacity of 220 MW and is fueled by hard coal from Ukraine and Russia. Since 2009, the power plant has co-fired biomass at 22 per cent at Unit 5, and 7 per cent at Unit 6.¹²

The country, however, does subsidize coal power production in another plant, located in Central Slovakia – Nováky. With a total installed capacity of 266 MW, Nováky burns domestic lignite.¹³ According to a Government Resolution from 2005, production of heat and power from domestic coal is in Slovakia’s “general economic interest,” because it increases security of electricity supply, lowers energy dependence on imports, and maintains employment. Based on this reasoning, the government allocates direct and indirect subsidies for coal extraction in Slovakia and electricity production at the Nováky Power Plant. In 2015, total government support (direct and indirect) of domestic coal mining amounted to almost 120 million euros. The direct support is funded by a special fee included in all electricity bills to support domestic coal mining, which added up to 95.5 million in 2016. The indirect support is allocated via exemptions from the excise duty tax for electricity production from coal, and amounted to 15 million in 2015. The OECD also mentions other forms of support, including direct subsidies from the Ministry of Economy for closing down mines.¹⁴

Since 2017, however, pressure from the public on the one hand and from European institutions on the other has forced Slovak institutions to plan for the end of coal. And while Slovak institutions have taken steps towards such a phase-out, Prime Minister Robert Fico, who resigned in March 2018, clearly expressed his opposition to such a policy.

The domestic public pressure comes from non-governmental organizations and local businesses. In 2017, the Environment Ministry began evaluating the plan of private mining company Hornonitrianske bane Prievidza to open the 12th mining section in Nováky, projected to produce up to 9.4 million tons of coal between 2023 and 2034. After first approving the new section, the Environment Ministry considered objections from various stakeholders and relaunched its Environmental Impact Assessment.¹⁵ The Slovak NGO Friends of Earth-CEPA strongly criticized the plan, referring to the risk of increased air and water pollution as well as to costs related to public health and govern-

¹¹ “Slovak Energy Annual 2017,” op. cit.

¹² “Vojany Black Coal Power Plant,” Slovenské elektrárne. Available online: <https://www.seas.sk/vojany-thermal-power-plant> (accessed on February 28, 2018).

¹³ “Nováky Brown Coal Power Plant,” Slovenské elektrárne. Available online: <https://www.seas.sk/novaky-thermal-power-plant> (accessed on February 28, 2018).

¹⁴ “Making the Slovak Republic a more resource efficient economy,” OECD, December 2017. Available online: <http://www.oecd.org/environment/waste/Policy-Paper-Making-the-Slovak-Republic-a-more-resource-efficient-economy.pdf> (accessed on February 28, 2018).

¹⁵ “Rozšírenie ťažby uhlia má vážne dopady. Opäť je v procese EIA,” [Increase in coal mining has serious impact – once again undergoes EIA] *Energia.sk*, September 27, 2107. Available online: <http://energia.sk/dolezite/elektrina-a-elektromobilita/opat-sa-posudzuju-dopady-rozsirenia-tazby-uhlia-v-novakoch/24906/> (accessed on February 28, 2018).

ment subsidies.¹⁶ The company criticizing the mining most vocally is the Bojnice Spa, which claims that such new mining activities may pollute underground thermal water. In response, Hornonitrianske bane Prievidza have argued that they need to open the new mining section in order to maintain 4,000 jobs and optimize power production at the Nováky plant.¹⁷

The European Commission is applying a carrot-and-stick policy towards Slovak coal. As to the stick, the Commission – in its capacity as the EU's anti-monopoly office – is looking into the compliance of Slovenské elektrárne (SE), the operator of the Nováky Power Plant, with EU state aid rules in connection with subsidies received by the company for burning lignite. According to a government decree, SE is obliged to purchase lignite from Hornonitrianske bane Prievidza. As the operation is not profitable, SE receives revenues from the special fee paid by all electricity consumers. If the Commission decides such practice is unauthorized state aid, it could order the Slovak government to recollect the disbursed subsidies.¹⁸

Moreover, in 2017, the Committee for Industrial Emissions Directive Article 75, presided over by the European Commission, decided on new emissions standards for coal power plants, applicable from 2021.¹⁹ If the strictest standards are taken into account, Nováky requires an investment of 82 million euros, according to a 2017 study conducted by consulting firm DNV GL.²⁰

The carrot is offered to Slovakia by the Commission within a separate process. A first “roundtable” meeting took place in July 2017 at the Office of the Prime Minister, with the participation of Juraj Nociar, the Head of Cabinet of Commission Vice-President Šefčovič.²¹ In fact, the Commission plays a crucial if not leading role in the stakeholder dialogue on the phasing out of coal in Slovakia. In December 2017, the Commission

¹⁶ “Mimovládne organizácie žiadajú ministra Sólymosa o zohľadnenie faktov k možnému rozširovaniu ťažby hnedého uhlia,” [NGOs ask Minister Sólymos to take facts into account, while assessing expansion of brown-coal mining] *Priatel'ia Zeme-CEPA*, July 13, 2017. Available online: https://euractiv.sk/section/all/press_release/mimovladne-organizacie-ziadaju-ministra-solymosa-o-zohladnenie-faktov-k-moznemu-rozsirovaniu-tazby-hnedeho-uhlia/ (accessed on February 28, 2018).

¹⁷ “Rozšírenie ťažby uhlia má vážne dopady. Opäť je v procese EIA,” op. cit.

¹⁸ “Brussels scrutinises the subsidy for Nováky power plant,” *The Slovak Spectator*, June 6, 2017. Available online: <https://spectator.sme.sk/c/20552450/brussels-scrutinises-the-subsidy-for-novaky-power-plant.html> (accessed on February 28, 2018).

¹⁹ “11th meeting of the Industrial Emissions Directive (IED) Article 75 Committee,” European Commission, April 28, 2017. Available online: http://ec.europa.eu/transparency/regcomitology/index.cfm?do=search.dossierdetail&Dos_ID=14177&dos_year=2017&dc_id=5446 (accessed on February 28, 2018).

²⁰ “Pre uhoľné elektrárne platia nové normy, Slovensko môžu stať 91 miliónov eur,” [New standards in force for coal power plants – may cost Slovakia 91 million euros] *EURACTIV Slovakia*, August 18, 2017. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/fosilne-paliva/news/pre-uholne-elektarne-platia-nove-normy-slovensko-budu-stat-91-milionov-eur/> (accessed on February 28, 2018).

²¹ “Úrad vlády riešil útlm ťažby uhlia na Hornej Nitre,” [Office of Government deals with phase-out of coal mining in Horna Nitra region] *Energia.sk*, July 13, 2017. Available online: <http://energia.sk/dolezite/elektrina-a-elektromobilita/urad-vlady-zvolal-okruhly-stol-o-utlme-tazby-uhlia-na-hornej-nitre/24269/> (accessed on February 28, 2018).

launched the Coal Regions in Transition Platform, listing the Trenčín region (Prievidza) as one of the “pilot regions.”²²

In February 2018, Šefčovič participated in a stakeholders meeting in Trenčín. Speaking to Vice-Prime Minister Peter Pellegrini, representatives of several ministries, and local stakeholders, the Commission Vice-President presented a study entitled “Socio-economic transformation in coal transition regions: analysis and proposed approach. Pilot case in Upper Nitra, Slovakia.” According to this study, “the Slovak government plans to phase out coal mining activities completely with the closure of the last remaining coal company situated in the Trenčín region (Hornonitrianske bane Prievidza), and asked the Commission for assistance in this process.” The analysis, produced by the Commission’s Joint Research Centre (JRC), argues that in the first year following the closure of the Nováky Power Plant, Slovakia will save 160–170 million euros. In the case of a complete coal phase-out by 2023, Slovakia may save 2.5–2.9 billion euros by 2030. The JRC defined “changes in net present value, including the economic benefit resulting from avoiding environmental and health damage, as compared to the reference scenario” involving lignite extraction and power production up to 2030. Experts claim that coal can be replaced by domestic geothermal energy in heat and power production, although in such case the savings would be at the lower end. According to the study, if Nováky is closed by 2023, Slovakia’s CO₂ emissions will be reduced by 6.32 per cent by 2025 and 7.67 per cent by 2030. The study finally suggests that the regional economy be diversified towards biomass production and tourism.²³

The parties at the meeting in Trenčín agreed they would propose an Action Plan for the region by June 2018, detailing options for its economic transformation and its funding.

But in 2017 and 2018, Slovak institutional actors have created a cacophony over the issue. At the One Planet Summit in December 2017 in Paris, Environment Minister László Sólymos declared 2023 as the target year for Slovakia’s coal phase-out, both in the mining and power sectors. In the same week, Sólymos’s Ministry released its draft Environmental Strategy arguing for a “progressive phase-out of power and heat production from coal” due to local air pollution, calling Slovakia’s annual 100 million euros subsidies for coal power “environmentally damaging.”²⁴ Earlier that year the Ministry calculated that closing down the Nováky Power Plant would save the country every year not only 100 million euros in direct subsidies, but another 500 million in “health benefits.” Moreover, an advisor at the Education Ministry and the country’s representative to the Commission’s Strategic Energy Technology Plan, Eduard Hulík, has rejected the security-of-supply argument, saying there is “no need to replace the

²² “Ústup od uhlia: Šefčovič chce pomôcť hornej Nitre,” [Coal phase-out: Šefčovič wants to help region of Horna Nitra] *EURACTIV Slovakia*, December 12, 2017. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/fosilne-paliva/news/ustup-od-uhlia-sefcovic-chce-pomocet-hornej-nitre/> (accessed on February 28, 2018).

²³ “Socio-economic transformation in coal transition regions: analysis and proposed approach. Pilot case in Upper Nitra, Slovakia,” Joint Research Centre, 2018. Available online: https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/sites/jrcsh/files/coal_regions_report_jrc_pilot-slovakia.pdf (accessed on February 28, 2018).

²⁴ “Zelenšie Slovensko. Stratégia environmentálnej politiky Slovenskej republiky do roku 2030,” op. cit..

electricity source in Nováky, (because) there are other power plants in the power system."²⁵

The Ministry of Economy (responsible for Slovakia's energy policy) refused, however, to provide a timeline, and referred to "negotiations which are not yet over."²⁶

Contrary to his ministers, former Prime Minister Robert Fico regularly advocated coal mining in Slovakia. In February 2018 he went even further, questioning any commitment to a coal phase-out. "I don't know anything about closing the mines. That is some sort of nonsense. I absolutely refuse any declarations on closing mines, I'll have nothing to do with it," said Fico, on the same day that the Commission presented alternatives to coal mining in Trenčín.²⁷

TRANSPORT: TOWARDS E-MOBILITY

Transport accounted for 22 per cent of final energy consumption in 2015, ranking second among the various sectors. Industry ranks first (43.9 per cent) and the residential sector third (19.7). These are followed by services (12.9) and agriculture/forestry/fishing (1.5). Energy efficiency in transport did not increase between 2005 and 2015, but rather dropped by 0.4 per cent.²⁸

Oil and natural gas, which account for almost the entirety of road transport fuels, dominate Slovakia's energy mix. In 2015, oil represented 20.6 per cent and gas 23.9 per cent of the country's gross inland energy consumption, for a combined 44.5 per cent. When these are treated separately the dominating energy remains nuclear (24.4 per cent), yet they remain ahead of solid fuels (20.2), renewables (9.7) and waste (1.2).²⁹

The transport sector is a subject of environmental and economic concern to Slovakia. It is not only the second largest source of greenhouse gas emissions, after energy and industry (grouped in one category), but – contrary to other sectors – its emissions keep increasing, especially in the road transport segment. Between 1990 and 2016 Slovakia's total greenhouse gas emissions decreased by 44.8 per cent, and between 2005 and 2016 its overall non-ETS emissions dropped by 14 per cent. But road transport, a non-ETS segment, produced 40.9 per cent more CO₂ in 2015 than in 1990. The trend is similar throughout the EU, but Slovakia ranks significantly worse

²⁵ "Slovakia considers exiting coal in 2023, Sefcovic eyes geothermal energy," *EURACTIV*, December 22, 2017. Available online: <https://www.euractiv.com/section/energy/news/slovakia-discusses-coal-phase-out-in-2023-sefcovic-eyes-geothermal-energy/> (accessed on February 28, 2018).

²⁶ *Ibid*

²⁷ "Hornonitrianske bane počítajú s ťažbou do roku 2033 (+závery z rokovania)," [Horna Nitra mines count on mining until 2033 (+ conclusions from meeting)] *EURACTIV Slovakia*, February 15, 2018. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/energetika/news/hornonitrianske-bane-nadalej-pocitaju-s-tazbou-do-roku-2033/> (accessed on February 28, 2018).

²⁸ "Energy Union factsheet Slovak Republic," European Commission, November 23, 2017. Available online: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/energy-union-factsheet-slovakia_en.pdf (accessed on February 28, 2018).

²⁹ *Ibid*

when it comes to average CO₂ emissions of new cars. While in the EU these decreased by 27.3 per cent, in Slovakia they dropped by 20.6 per cent.³⁰

The complex impact assessment of road transport vis- -vis the environment remains, however, a difficult exercise. The draft Environmental Strategy argues that the sector in general is behind the high concentration of NO_x, with passenger road transport in particular producing almost a half of all NO_x emissions. But the document goes on to say that “a precise quantification of the environmental impact of passenger road transport . . . is missing.”³¹

The Review of Environmental Expenses, a document jointly published by the Environment and Financial Ministries in July 2017, argues that biomass used for heating and combustion engines in the transport sector carries major responsibility for the particulate matter damaging public health. “For improving air quality, it is crucial to tackle emissions from local heating sources and in transport,” the Review says. It quotes a study by the European Environmental Agency, according to which, 5,600 people die in Slovakia every year due to polluted air. The resulting “lost years” incur a cost of 1.95 billion euros – which, however, cannot be totally eliminated, only decreased by 450 million euros.³²

Yet, the low-emission alternative to combustion engines – electric and hybrid vehicles – are rather rare in Slovakia. They are less numerous than vehicles co-fueled by LPG or CNG³³, which have a carbon imprint and depend on imported fossil fuels. There are approximately 2,500 electric vehicles in Slovakia³⁴ out of the total of 2 million passenger cars³⁵. In 2015, they represented 0.09 per cent in total car sales, up from 0.01 in 2013. Furthermore, the country had only 335 publicly accessible charging points in 2016 (as compared to 3 in 2013).³⁶

Beyond the environment, transport may become a problem for Slovakia's economy. As a matter of fact, the country's export-oriented economy is underpinned by the manufacture of automobiles with combustion engines. With roughly one million cars produced annually and 5.4 million inhabitants, the country remained in 2016 world's

³⁰ Ibid

³¹ “Zelenšie Slovensko. Stratégia environmentálnej politiky Slovenskej republiky do roku 2030,” op. cit.

³² “Revízia výdavkov na životné prostredie: Záverečná správa,” [Revision of environmental expenses: Final report] Ministries of Environment and of Finance of the Slovak Republic, July 2017. Available online: https://www.minzp.sk/files/iep/zaverecna_sprava_zivotne_prostredie.pdf (accessed on February 28, 2018).

³³ “Návrh Národného politického rámca pre rozvoj trhu s alternatívnymi palivami,” [Proposal of the National political framework for the development of markets with alternative fuels] Ministry of Economy of the Slovak Republic, November 9, 2017. Available online: <http://www.rokovania.sk/Rokovanie.aspx/BodRokovaniaDetail?idMaterial=26031> (accessed on February 28, 2018).

³⁴ “Štát už prispieva na elektromobily samosprávam. Zadotuje aj stavbu nabíjačiek,” [Government already contributes to electric vehicles for municipalities, and will also subsidize construction of charging points] *EURACTIV Slovakia*, March 28, 2018. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/digitalizacia/news/stat-uz-prispieva-na-elektromobily-samospravam-zadotuje-aj-stavbu-nabijaciek/> (accessed on March 29, 2018).

³⁵ “Návrh Národného politického rámca pre rozvoj trhu s alternatívnymi palivami,” op. cit.

³⁶ “Energy Union factsheet Slovak Republic,” op. cit.

biggest producer in per-capita terms.³⁷ In 2015 car exports represented 27 per cent of total exports, and the OECD expects the automotive sector to continue to drive export and production growth in the coming years.³⁸ The European Commission has gone as far as to say that “the predominant orientation towards the automotive industry makes the economy vulnerable.”³⁹ The Commission believes new innovative technologies like electromobility are indispensable for the EU’s further economic growth, jobs and competitiveness, and the boost to alternative energy sources for transport may imply an important development in the Slovak industrial sector. But only one of the three major plants (Volkswagen) produces vehicles powered by alternative fuels (electricity), the Commission’s 2017 report says.⁴⁰ Another plant (PSA) may produce electric vehicles in the future, and a fourth plant, now under construction (Jaguar), may produce batteries for electric cars.

But on the whole, the industry in Slovakia is not forward-looking. Out of the 250,000 jobs within the Slovak automotive industry, only about 2,000 are in research and development, and all of these are with subcontractors, not with the three big production plants.⁴¹ If multinational companies don’t decide to develop new technologies and deploy them in their automotive production in Slovakia, the country may lag behind, and innovative investments may stagger.⁴² The first signs are already there: in contrast to Poland or Hungary, Slovakia doesn’t have a production plant for batteries of electric vehicles.

In 2016 and 2017, Slovak institutions made certain attempts to alleviate this situation, both from the environmental and economic viewpoints.

The Environment Ministry proposed, and the National Council approved, a new law on air quality, which entered into force in November 2017 and allowed for the creation of low-emission zones in Slovak cities.⁴³ The Environment and Economy Ministries also convinced the Finance Ministry to factor CO₂ emissions into the registration fees of new cars as of 2017, which effectively gives an advantage to owners of vehicles

³⁷ “Výroba áut dosiahla na Slovensku nový rekord. Sme stále veľmocou,” [Car production in Slovakia reached a new record] *ETrend.sk*, January 17, 2017. Available online: <https://www.etrend.sk/firmy/vyroba-aut-dosiahla-na-slovensku-novy-rekord.html> (accessed on February 28, 2018).

³⁸ “Making the Slovak Republic a more resource efficient economy,” op. cit.

³⁹ “EU Environmental Implementation Review: Highlights. Slovakia,” European Commission, February 2017. Available online: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/eir/pdf/factsheet_sk_en.pdf (accessed on February 28, 2018).

⁴⁰ “Energy Union factsheet Slovak Republic,” op. cit.

⁴¹ “Elektromobily sa u nás stále počítajú na desiatky, masívna kampaň sa nechystá,” [Electric vehicles in Slovakia only in the dozens, no massive campaign in sight] *EURACTIV Slovakia*, January 17, 2017. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/veda-a-inovacie/news/elektromobily-sa-u-nas-stale-pocitaju-na-desiatky-masivna-kampan-sa-nechysta/> (accessed on February 28, 2018).

⁴² “Electric Cars Threaten to Leave this European Nation behind,” Bloomberg, February 8, 2018. Available online: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-02-08/electric-cars-threaten-to-leave-this-european-nation-behind> (accessed February 28, 2018).

⁴³ “Nízkoemisné zóny sa stávajú realitou aj na Slovensku,” [Low-emission zones becoming a reality in Slovakia] *Energia.sk*, October 27, 2017. Available online: <http://energia.sk/dolezite/elektrina-a-elektromobilita/nizkoemisne-zony-sa-stavaju-realitou-aj-na-slovensku/25190/> (accessed on February 28, 2018).

powered by alternative fuels, including electricity. The cumulated tax break amounts to 788,000 euros per year.⁴⁴

In November 2016, the Environment and Economy Ministries decided to fund buyers of electricity-powered vehicles. The subsidies were initially meant to continue until the end of 2017, but due to lack of interest on the part of applicants, they have been made available until June 2018. The Recycling Fund and the Automotive Industry Association together allocated 5.2 million euros, with the former providing 5.0 million euros, and the latter the rest. The owner of a battery electric vehicle receives 5,000 euros per vehicle, while the buyer of a plug-in hybrid has the right to 3,000 euros. As of March 2018, subsidies were reserved for 644 applicants. These included owners of battery electric vehicles as well as plug-in hybrids, amounting to 2.5 million euros in total subsidies.⁴⁵

In the first quarter of 2018, the Slovak government was preparing a set of measures to further support e-mobility. They include new tax breaks as well as permits for electric-powered vehicles to use bus lanes. If the allocated subsidies for purchasing vehicles are not applied for by June 2018, they will be redirected to the building of charging stations. In March 2018, the Environment Ministry launched a subsidy scheme worth 1 million euros for cities and regions buying electric vehicles and wants to allocate, later on, extra funds for the construction of publicly-accessible charging stations in cities.⁴⁶ Finally, it plans to reform the law on public procurement, so that 50 per cent of vehicles purchased by public authorities are powered by electricity.⁴⁷

The draft Environmental Strategy 2030 foresees an equal environmental taxation on gasoline and diesel, with lower taxes for alternative fuels, as well as measures to reduce individual road transport and extend public transport. According to strategic documents drafted by the Ministry of Economy and approved by the Slovak government in 2015–2016, there are two potential scenarios. In the conservative scenario, the country will have 10,000 electric or hybrid vehicles by 2020. In the ambitious scenario, this number will rise to 25,000, depending on the private sector's engagement and the public perception of electromobility.⁴⁸

On the future of Slovakia's automotive industry, the Economy Ministry's Andrea Farkašová – designated Director General and leading a section responsible for electromobility – wrote:⁴⁹

⁴⁴ "Päť miliónov a dosť. Elektromobily narazili na ministerstve financií," [Five million is enough. Electric vehicles crashed at the Finance Ministry] *EURACTIV Slovakia*, November 8, 2016. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/veda-a-inovacie/news/pat-milionov-a-dost-podpora-elektromobility-narazila-na-ministerstve-financii/> (accessed on February 28, 2018).

⁴⁵ "Štát už prispieva na elektromobily samosprávam. Zadotuje aj stavbu nabíjačiek," *op. cit.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid*

⁴⁷ "Kam kráčaš slovenská elektromobilita? Spoznali sme 14 návrhov na podporu jej rozvoja," [Where are you heading, Slovak e-mobility? We've learnt of 14 proposals for its development] *EAPortal*, November 2017. Available online: <http://eautoportal.sk/elektromobilita-slovensko-planu-stav-vizia/> (accessed on February 28, 2018).

⁴⁸ "Slovensko a elektromobilita – ako ďalej?" [Slovakia and electromobility – how to continue?] *Webnoviny.sk*, November 27, 2017. Available online: <https://www.webnoviny.sk/slovensko-elektromobilita-ako-dalej/> (accessed on February 28, 2018).

⁴⁹ "Slovak Energy Annual 2017," *op. cit.*

The Slovak Republic must be ready to accept new mobility systems and technologies in order to maintain the competitiveness of the automotive industry. . . The priority is to provide for its development and competitiveness, especially by defining optimum conditions for conversion from production entities to research and development entities. In relation to the Industry 4.0 concept, the automotive industry must take into account that the changed philosophy of traffic and the overall development of the automotive industry will not only lead to the acquisition of new qualities in the area of more eco-friendly fuels or power plants, but will also mean a significant change in the overall concept and philosophy of traffic. . . The great potential of electromobility is in the area of research and development, especially of new materials. This includes the development and improvement of batteries, electro-technical components, and other components of electric vehicles. It also has great potential for appropriate integration into the concept of smart grids.

But, as shown above, the results yielded by Slovak institutions have so far been rather moderate. Moreover, it is again the European Commission that is actually driving the change. When adopting measures to support electromobility, the Slovak government referred to the transposition of the EU's 2014 Alternative Fuels Directive. And the EU budget – at the Commission's proposal – invested more into the charging infrastructure within the country than did the state budget. In 2017 alone, the Commission proposed spending 30 million euros to build a charging infrastructure on motorways across Slovakia. In January 2018, Commission Vice-President Šefčovič inaugurated, in Bratislava, two sets of innovative charging points combined with vehicle-to-grid and battery technologies, which facilitate the integration of electric vehicles into the larger electricity system, as part of the demand-response solutions.⁵⁰ In fact, one of the pioneers in electromobility in Slovakia, and an active entrepreneur, Peter Badík, believes Slovakia lacks a political leader who will promote electromobility in the country.⁵¹

Former Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico is actually calling for prudence. Discussing the future of energy and the car industry, Fico said in November 2017 that “in times when some global players are adopting a flexible approach to the objectives of a green economy, despite their international commitments (referring to US President's decision to quit the Paris Agreement), I cannot but call for a self-reflective prudence towards the objectives of the Energy Union, especially in terms of their application

⁵⁰ “Stredoeurópsky skokan? Slovensko testuje nové nabíjacie technológie,” [A Central-European leap? Slovakia tests new charging technologies] *EURACTIV Slovakia*, January 10, 2018. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/digitalizacia/news/stredoeuropsky-skokan-slovensko-testuje-nove-bateriove-technologie/> (accessed on February 28, 2018).

⁵¹ “Slovensku chýba politik, ktorý by bol tvárou elektromobility, hovorí jej priekopník,” [Slovakia lacking a politician who would be the face of its electromobility] *EURACTIV Slovakia*, December 14, 2017. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/veda-a-inovacie/interview/slovensku-chyba-politik-ktory-by-bol-tvarou-elektromobility-hovori-jej-priekopnik/> (accessed on February 28, 2018).

within the industry." He added that the EU should most of all be concerned with its "competitiveness" (in combustion engine production).⁵²

CONCLUSION: HOPE FOR CHANGE?

Both in terms of coal power and road transport, Slovak institutions are acting not as the vanguards of progress, but rather under pressure from domestic stakeholders, including NGOs and businesses. They are not being leaders, but followers. The strongest imperative for action is being provided by European legislation, with policy innovation coming from the European Commission.

In 2017, the contrast – more blatant in the case of coal than in that of transport – was personified perfectly by the difference in attitude between former Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico on the one hand and the Slovak Commissioner in charge of Energy Union, Maroš Šefčovič, on the other. While Fico defended coal mining and the "competitiveness" of an automotive industry producing mostly combustion engines, Šefčovič advocated for coal transition and a stretching of the "low-carbon" economy into the car industry as well.

In March 2018, Fico was replaced by Peter Pellegrini in the Prime Minister's Office, and Environment Minister László Sólymos was promoted to Vice-Prime Minister, giving rise to the hope that the new government leaders will exhibit more understanding towards the green economy. As Vice-Prime Minister, Pellegrini assisted Šefčovič in the dialogue over the coal phase-out, and served also as Slovakia's "digital leader". In addition, his former Office of Vice-Prime Minister recently began coordinating the national implementation of the UN's Agenda 2030, with the goal of better aligning the country's environmental, economic and social policies.^{#53} Sólymos's Ministry is the one that has pushed hardest for a transition towards a green economy. The strongest opposition party, SaS, is also generally more supportive of an energy and transport transition than the biggest party in power, Smer-SD. But the policy plans of any future party in power may be tamed by the increased risk of political instability following the murder of journalist Ján Kuciak and his fiancée, and the subsequent revelations of corruption linking parties in power to organized crime.

Regardless of the political environment, the transformation of Slovakia's power and transport provides new opportunities for increasing the use of domestic resources such as geothermal energy and nuclear energy – with the latter promising to make the country a net electricity exporter within a couple of years, alleviating Slovakia's chronic dependence on oil imports. It also opens the door to regional cooperation, transcending the borders of domestic politics and policies. Suffice it to say that despite a much higher dependence on coal power, some of the Czech Republic's regions are further along than Slovakia in the transition away from coal. And thanks to its ambitious

⁵² "Šefčovič chváli Slovensko za elektromobilitu, Fico vyzýva k obozretnosti," [Šefčovič praises Slovakia for electromobility, Fico calls for prudence] *EURACTIV Slovakia*, November 24, 2017. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/energetika/news/sefcovic-chvali-slovensko-za-elektromobilitu-fico-vyzyva-k-obozretnosti/> (accessed on February 28, 2018).

⁵³ "Environmental Performance Reviews. Mid-term progress report: Slovak Republic," op. cit.

plans to produce and deploy electric buses and cars, Poland is the Visegrad Group leader in electromobility.

Treating power and transport as fields of foreign policy naturally raises new questions that are beyond the scope of this article. As to institutional setup: What is the role of Slovakia's foreign ministry and other ministries? What added value can foreign policy bring to domestic-oriented policies? As to the larger environment: What should be the role of non-state actors such as NGOs or businesses? Who are the relevant domestic and international actors? And finally, as to the resurging issue of ambiguous foreign policy: How can institutions handle predetermined policy goals without sufficient political backup, in a climate of political instability, or even under conditions of political divergence within the government itself?

All these questions are relevant not only to those areas covered by this article, but also in light of the larger discussion over the designing of foreign policy within the European Union and beyond.

II.

**PRIORITIES OF SLOVAKIA'S
FOREIGN POLICY**

JEWEL OR THORN? V4 IN 2017 FROM SLOVAKIA'S PERSPECTIVE

TOMÁŠ STRÁŽAY

The trends that characterized Visegrad cooperation in the year 2016 continued also in 2017. The prime ministers remained the main political drivers, while the foreign ministers (and foreign ministries generally) played the role of technical coordinators. Multi-layered and intensive cooperation in various sectors continued to be an important pillar of the V4. Perhaps the most visible connecting issue continued to be migration and a negative stance on redistribution quotas, while another important binding issue became that of double standards in food quality. With the intensification of debate on the future of European integration, V4 leaders, however, continued to present positions that differed in some way. Nevertheless, no V4 country has any interest in the dissolution of the V4 – on the contrary, all of them consider it a successful model of regional cooperation in many areas.

MIGRATION (AND REDISTRIBUTION QUOTAS)

The position of the Visegrad countries – that the system of redistribution quotas for refugees proposed by the European Commission has not proved to be effective – remained unchanged for the whole of 2017. Although criticism of the effectiveness of the proposed redistribution mechanism could be heard even more often in the so-called old EU member states, the representatives of EU institutions continued to appeal for maintaining the principle of EU solidarity. Therefore, the V4 countries continued to be perceived, throughout the EU and beyond, as the main opponents of the Commission's proposal on the relocation of refugees.

Slovakia nevertheless differed in one important respect from its Visegrad neighbors. Unlike with the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland, the European Commission did not refer Slovakia to the Court of Justice for non-compliance with its legal obligations on the relocation of refugees.¹ This decision of the Commission was based on the fact that Slovakia accepted a very small number of asylum seekers from Italy (16), and also showed a willingness to assist Austria with its high flow of migrants by providing a facility in Gabčíkovo for several hundred refugees. In contrast to this, Hungary and Poland have not relocated a single person and the Czech Republic has not made any such offers for over a year.²

Migration was also one of the main topics of the meeting of V4 prime ministers in July, newly under the Hungarian V4 presidency. The joint declaration summarized already-known positions of V4 countries, with specific emphasis placed on the need to look for a consensus-based European strategy that would be based on a review of already existing principles and modalities.³ Besides highlighting the commitment of the V4 countries to protect the EU's external borders, the prime ministers also assessed positively the role of Italy in the whole process. In their letter addressed to Paolo Gentiloni, the V4 heads of government declared their support for Italy in terms of dealing with its migratory pressures, and expressed their willingness to assist both Italy and the EU in putting an end to the "departures from Libya and other parts of north Africa." They suggested focusing on the root causes of migration effectively, by distinguishing real asylum seekers from economic migrants before they enter EU territory. The prime ministers also offered financial and other assistance to Italy in protecting the EU's external border. At the same time, they presented a negative stance against any compulsory relocation mechanism.⁴

In their joint statement in October, the ministers of interior of V4 countries stated that the V4 countries are not prepared to support any proposal of an "automatic and mandatory relocation mechanism."⁵ In their reference to the Common European Asylum System, they noted that such a system should meet the requirements of the 21st century, and not be abused. They declared their full support for the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, in particular with regard to the implementation of joint operations with third countries and the protection of the EU's external border. The ministers also emphasized the need for EU assistance of third countries to be

¹ "Relocation: Commission refers the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland to the Court of Justice," December 7, 2017. Available online: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-17-5002_en.htm (accessed on February 26, 2018).

² Earlier, in September, the EU court dismissed complaints by Hungary and Slovakia over refugee quotas. See, for instance, "EU court says Hungary and Slovakia must accept refugees," *Euractiv*, September 6, 2017. Available online: <https://www.euractiv.com/section/justice-home-affairs/news/eu-court-says-hungary-and-slovakia-must-accept-refugees/> (accessed on February 26, 2018).

³ "Joint statement by the prime ministers of V4 countries on migration," July 19, 2017. Available online: <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/documents/official-statements> (accessed on February 26, 2018).

⁴ "V4 letter to the Prime Minister of Italy," July 19, 2017. Available online: <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/v4-letter-to-the-prime> (accessed on February 26, 2018).

⁵ "Joint declaration of V4 interior ministers," October 5, 2017. Available online: <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/calendar/selected-events-in-2017-170203/joint-declaration-of-v4> (accessed on February 26, 2018).

well targeted, and concluded their statement by saying that the Visegrad Group plays a "strong role within EU forums."⁶

The V4 prime ministers discussed issues related to migration again on the occasion of the European Council meeting in Brussels on December 15th. At their meeting, which was also attended by the prime minister of Italy, Paolo Gentiloni, and the president of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, they agreed to contribute the amount of 35.2 million euros to the Trust Fund for Africa.⁷ The contribution of each V4 country is 8.8 million euros, which means that per capita Slovakia is the biggest contributor (the equal rights, equal contribution mechanism is a long-held principle of Visegrad cooperation). The allocated funds are intended to be spent on strengthening the protection of the Libyan border, and more generally on the prevention of illegal migration.

OTHER EU RELATED ISSUES

With the expected start of discussions on the EU's next multi-annual financial framework, the focus of V4 countries was naturally on the cohesion policy. Already in their joint statement in March 2017, the V4 prime ministers – together with their partners from other net-beneficiary countries such as Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Slovenia – stressed the importance of cohesion policy for the whole region of Central Europe, as well as for the European project as such. Besides assessing the already achieved goals from previous financial periods, they agreed on some recommendations as to how to establish better target cohesion funds and make them accessible to their recipients.⁸ Since V4 countries recognize still-existing discrepancies between "old" EU member states and Central European countries in terms of economic development, their interest is in maintaining a cohesion policy as robust as it is in the current financial period, and minimizing the impact of Brexit on it. Cohesion policy also is one of the issues in which V4 countries can perform as the core of a broader coalition of countries, known also under the name of "friends of cohesion policy." Their role might even increase during talks on the next EU budget.

Another issue that brought the V4 – as well as other Central European countries – together was that of double standards in food quality. The fact that consumers in "new" EU member countries pay disproportionately high prices for the same products of lower quality was found to be unacceptable not only by V4 leaders⁹ but also

⁶ Ibid

⁷ "EU leaders discuss migration, European defence and education on the first day of the European Council," December 15, 2017. Available online: <https://www.vlada.cz/en/media-centrum/aktualne/eu-leaders-discuss-migration-european-defence-and-education-on-the-first-day-of-the-european-council-162279/> (accessed on February 26, 2018).

⁸ "Joint paper of the Visegrad Group, Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania and Slovenia on cohesion policy after 2020," March 2, 2017. Available online: <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/calendar/selected-events-in-2017-170203/joint-paper-of-the> (accessed on February 26, 2018).

⁹ See, for instance, "Joint statement of the prime ministers of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia on dual quality of foodstuffs and other commodities," July 19, 2017. Available online: <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/documents/official-statements> (accessed on February 26, 2018).

by representatives of the European Commission, including its president Jean-Claude Juncker.¹⁰ Though Slovakia did not hold the V4 Presidency in 2017, the V4 prime ministers authorized Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico to complain officially about the inferior quality food products distributed in the region. This was also due to the fact that Robert Fico was the most active among the four in drawing the attention of EU stakeholders to this issue – the meeting of V4 prime ministers in Warsaw in March may serve as an example. As a result, a summit entitled *Equal Quality Products for All* was held in Bratislava on October 13th. Besides the V4 prime ministers, it was also attended by the EU Commissioner for Justice, Consumers, and Gender Equality, Viera Jourova, representatives of governments of EU member states, as well as representatives of the European Parliament responsible for agriculture and internal market, including representatives of several consumer associations.¹¹

Initially, the V4 countries shared a common position on another issue that was broadly discussed in some EU member states, especially in France and Germany – the Posted Workers Directive.¹² In a joint statement, the V4 prime ministers appealed for maintaining a proper balance between the freedom to provide services and the protection of workers. They particularly opposed the broad inclusion of international transport services within the scope of posting, and called for constructive dialogue to achieve an inclusive compromise at the EU level.

At a Salzburg meeting in August, however, with French President Emmanuel Macron, Czech Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka, and Austrian Prime Minister Christian Kern, Robert Fico declared his readiness to reach a solution that would be acceptable also to France, especially in terms of preventing social dumping.¹³ Before the Salzburg meeting Robert Fico called a meeting of the government, at which the issue of the Posted Workers Directive was discussed. In his subsequent statement he assigned a high importance to this issue, declaring that its proper solution was in the national interest of the Slovak Republic.¹⁴ His readiness to reach a compromise could be interpreted as a declaration of Slovak will to join the fastest integrating members of the EU. It is also

¹⁰ “No second class consumers’: Juncker slams double food quality in the EU,” *Euractiv*, October 5, 2017. Available online: <https://www.euractiv.com/section/agriculture-food/news/no-second-class-consumers-juncker-slams-double-food-quality-in-the-eu/> (accessed on February 26, 2018).

¹¹ “Bratislava will be the venue of summit ‘For equal quality of products for all,’” September 29, 2017. Available online: <http://www.vlada.gov.sk/bratislava-will-be-the-venue-of-summit-for-equal-quality-of-products-for-all/> (accessed on February 26, 2018). See also “Double product standards discussed at Bratislava summit,” *Radio Slovakia International*, October 16, 2017. Available online: <http://enrsi.rtvs.sk/articles/topical-issue/145563/double-product-standards-discussed-at-bratislava-summit> (accessed on February 26, 2018).

¹² “Joint statement of the prime ministers of the Visegrad Group on the amendment of posting of workers directive,” May 11, 2017. Available online: <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/joint-statement-on-the> (accessed on February 26, 2018).

¹³ “Kontúry jadra EÚ by mohli byť známe do konca roka, zhodli sa E. Macron a R. Fico,” [The shape of the EU core could be known by the end of the year, agreed by E. Macron and R. Fico] August 23, 2017. Available online: <http://www.vlada.gov.sk/kontury-jadra-eu-by-mohli-byt-zname-dokonca-roka-zhodli-sa-e-macron-a-r-fico/> (accessed on February 26, 2018).

¹⁴ “Stanovisko predsedu vlády SR Roberta Fica,” [Standpoint of the Prime Minister Robert Fico] August 22, 2017. Available online: <http://www.vlada.gov.sk/stanovisko-predsedu-vlady-sr-roberta-fica/> (accessed on February 26, 2018).

worth mentioning that the Czech Republic made use of the summit to seek observer status at Eurogroup meetings.

The format in which the meeting with the French president was organized – the Slavkov Triangle – together with the fact that neither the Polish nor the Hungarian prime minister was invited to the consultations, allowed some Hungarian and Polish media, as well as think tanks, to point out the divisions within the V4.¹⁵ The statements of representatives of the Slovak government on the need for Slovakia to become part of the “core of the EU” strengthened such voices even more.

It may be argued that there are not many countries in the EU where the debate over the EU “core” has been as strong as in Slovakia. The problem is that “the core” has not been defined precisely, but is nonetheless used as a *terminus technicus*. According to the representatives of Slovak government the core should be made up of Eurozone members, who are consequently expected to deepen their integration.

The question remains, however, what role will be assigned to non-Eurozone countries, especially from the Visegrad region – meaning those that are Slovakia's direct neighbors and natural partners for cooperation. The issue of balancing the value of belonging to the “core” with that of continued cooperation in the Visegrad format became one of the key issues throughout the whole of 2017. The increasing criticism of Hungary and especially Poland coming from representatives of Brussels institutions and EU high representatives, as well as some political leaders from important member states, led leading politicians in Slovakia to declare that the EU is more important to Slovakia than the Visegrad Group. During his visit to Germany on the occasion of the commemoration of the signing of the German–Czech and Slovak treaty in April on maintaining a good neighborhood, Robert Fico openly declared that “the V4 is not an alternative to the EU.”¹⁶ The State Secretary Ivan Korčok followed this argumentation with the statement that “if Slovakia had to choose between the EU and the V4, I would unambiguously say the EU.”¹⁷ Referring to the need to make such a choice became popular in Slovak media, despite the fact that there was no need to make it. The V4 as such has never intended to be an integration project competing against the European Union. On the contrary, during its history it has become an important regional initiative precisely within the EU. Even the 2016/2017 Polish and 2017/2018 Hungarian V4

¹⁵ See, for instance, F. Almásson, “How Macron failed in Central Europe,” *Visegrád Post*, August 29, 2017. Available online: <https://visegradpost.com/en/2017/08/29/how-macron-failed-in-central-europe/> (accessed on February 26, 2018), also “Macron snubs Hungary and Poland in tour of central and eastern Europe,” *The Budapest Beacon*, August 24, 2017. Available online: <https://budapestbeacon.com/macron-snubs-hungary-poland-tour-central-eastern-europe/> (accessed on February 26, 2018), and L. Jurczyszyn, L. Ogrodnik, “The French President's meeting with the Heads of Government of the Slavkov Triangle,” *PISM Spotlight*, No. 46/2017, August 25, 2017. Available online: <http://www.pism.pl/publications/spotlight/no-46-2017> (accessed on February 26, 2018).

¹⁶ See, for instance, “Fico: V4 nie je pre Slovensko alternatívou k Európskej únii,” *teraz.sk*, April 3, 2017. Available online: <http://www.teraz.sk/slovensko/fico-sr-nemecko-a-cr-sa-sustredia-na/252554-clanok.html> (accessed on February 26, 2018).

¹⁷ I. Korčok, “Ak si máme vybrať medzi Úniou a V4, vyberieme si Úniu,” [If we are to choose between the Union and the V4, we will choose the Union] *Euractiv.sk*, June 19, 2017. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/buducnost-eu/news/ivan-korcok-ak-si-mame-vybrat-medzi-uniou-a-v4-vyberieme-si-uniu/> (accessed on February 26, 2018).

presidencies did not attempt to change anything in this respect. Highlighting Slovakia's sense of belonging to the core of the EU, at the cost of undermining the importance of the V4 to Slovakia, began to be understood – by certain journalists and analysts, especially from Hungary and Poland – as a desire to escape from the V4.¹⁸ In order to calm such worries, State Secretary Korčok published an article in which he explained Slovakia's position in a more detailed perspective, emphasizing the country's natural interest in the Eurozone as well as its active participation in Visegrad cooperation.¹⁹ Prime Minister Fico went even further than this when he suggested the specific role for Slovakia of a bridge – between Budapest and Warsaw on the one side and Berlin and Paris on the other.²⁰

SECTORAL COOPERATION

Sectoral cooperation continued to be very intensive in 2017, though as compared to political cooperation it has been less visible to the broader public. Wide networks of cooperating specialists at different levels may be considered a significant added value of the Visegrad format. Among the most dynamic sectoral policies were energy and transport infrastructure, digital agenda, and security and defense.

The V4 countries continued their cooperation on joint energy projects, mostly those related to the development of the North–South energy corridor. Preparation of the Slovak–Polish gas interconnector progressed significantly in 2017. The project not only received the positive assessment of the European Commission in terms of its financial support from the Connecting Europe Facility, but the stakeholders involved also signed a grant agreement for the construction work.²¹ In the future the interconnector could possibly be used for the transfer of LNG delivered from new suppliers, including

¹⁸ See, for example, N. Szabó, “The Slovak tide is about to change,” *Duel Amical*, October 3, 2017. Available online: <http://www.duelamical.eu/en/articles/240/slovakia-between-the-eu-and-v4> (accessed on February 26, 2018).

¹⁹ I. Korčok, “Poliaci sa starajú o svoj zlotý, Maďari o forint, my o naše euro. Neznamená to, že sa V4 rozpadá,” [Poles will take care of their zloty Hungarians of their forint and we of euro. It does not] *Denník N*, September 7, 2017. Available online: <https://dennikn.sk/874071/poliaci-sa-staraju-o-svoj-zloty-madari-o-forint-my-o-nase-euro-neznamena-to-ze-sa-v4-rozpada/> (accessed on February 26, 2018).

²⁰ R. Fico, “Stojíme pred vážnou výzvou,” [We are facing a serious challenge] *Hospodárske noviny*, August 8, 2017. Available online: <https://komentare.hnonline.sk/komentare/1007130-stojime-pred-vaznou-vyzvou> (accessed on February 26, 2018). The article was written in the aftermath of the signing of a bilateral treaty between Slovakia and Germany on extended cooperation and coordination. See “M. Lajčák podpísal Memorandum o systémovej medzištátnej spolupráci medzi Slovenskom a Nemeckom,” [M. Lajčák signed a Memorandum on systemic interstate cooperation between Slovakia and Germany] Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, August 4, 2017. Available online: https://www.mzv.sk/it/aktuality/detail/-/asset_publisher/lw1ppvnScIPx/content/m-lajcak-podpisal-memorandum-o-systemovej-medzistatnej-spolupraci-medzi-slovenskom-a-nemeckom?p_p_auth=xxwi1SUN&_101_INSTANCE_lw1ppvnScIPx_redirect=%2Fit%2Faktuality%2Faktivita_ministra (accessed on February 26, 2018).

²¹ “Polish-Slovak gas interconnector,” eustream. Available online: http://www.eustream.sk/en_transmission-system/en_pl-sk-interconnector (accessed on February 26, 2018).

those from the US, via the terminal in Świnoujście. The North–South interconnector may be perceived therefore as a contribution to the diversification not only of routes, but also of suppliers of gas. This goal is in line with the aims of the Energy Union, as promoted by the EU. At the same time, the V4 countries continued to formally oppose construction of the Nord Stream II pipeline, since it goes against their perception of energy security in the region. In terms of energy security it is also worth mentioning the Visegrad (plus Bulgaria and Romania) declaration of agriculture ministers, who have assigned to renewable energy sources of agricultural origin a crucial role for the sustainability of Europe.²²

The development of transport infrastructure continued to be an important issue for the V4, as reflected in the programs both of the Polish and Hungarian V4 Presidencies.²³ From Slovakia's point of view, an important contribution was made to the interconnection of highways in the V4 region by the opening of two portions of the D3 highway connecting Žilina to the Skalité–Zwardoń border crossing on the Polish–Slovak border. Despite this positive development, the major part of the D3 highway still remains to be constructed. The decision of the Hungarian government to complete the missing part of the M15 highway to Bratislava by 2020,²⁴ and the M30 highway from Miskolc to Košice by 2022,²⁵ should also be evaluated positively.

As V4 countries are consistent supporters of the EU single market, they also intensively promote development of the EU's digital market. Specific attention has been paid to support for research, development and innovation, which should enable the V4 countries to compete more effectively in the European and global market. In their Warsaw declaration in March, the V4 prime ministers agreed to promote internationally the Visegrad region as a research and innovation hub. They also committed themselves to adequately exploiting the already existing informal institutions in the area, such as the V4 Innovation Task Force and the V4+ Start-up Regional Platform, in order better to coordinate joint activities on the EU level as well. The prime ministers also recognized the importance of a secure cyber space and efficient data protection.²⁶

²² "Joint declaration of the agricultural ministers of Visegrad Group as well as Bulgaria, Romania on the renewable energy directive after 2020," September 21, 2017. Available online: <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/calendar/selected-events-in-2017-170203/joint-declaration-of-the> (accessed on February 26, 2018).

²³ "Program of the Polish Presidency in the Visegrad Group, July 1, 2016–June 30, 2017." Available online: <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/documents/presidency-programs/program-of-the-polish>, (accessed on February 26, 2018), "2017–2018 Hungarian Presidency – V4 Connects." Available online: <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/documents/2017-2018-hungarian/20172018-hungarian> (accessed on February 26, 2018).

²⁴ "Expansion of M15 between M1, Slovak border launched," February 8, 2018. Available online: <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/news/expansion-of-m15-between> (accessed on February 26, 2018).

²⁵ "New stretch of the Hungarian highway eases travel for Slovaks," *The Slovak Spectator*, January 18, 2018. Available online: <https://spectator.sme.sk/c/20740309/new-stretch-of-the-hungarian-highway-eases-travel-for-slovaks.html> (accessed on February 26, 2018).

²⁶ "Joint declaration of intent of prime ministers of the Visegrad Group on mutual co-operation in innovation and digital affairs," March 28, 2017. Available online: <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/calendar/selected-events-in-2017-170203/joint-declaration-of>. (accessed on February 26, 2018).

Another important area of sectoral cooperation is security and defense. The most visible project so far – the V4 EU Battlegroup, which was on standby between January and June 2016 – is expected to continue. The preparatory forks for Battle Group 2019 have already started. The V4's contribution to the NATO Assurance Measures for the Baltic States in 2017 is also worth mentioning. It started with a Czech deployment in Lithuania, and continued with a Slovak deployment in Latvia, a Hungarian deployment in Estonia, and Poland's deployment in Latvia in the fourth quarter. All in all, the V4 countries were united on the need to fully implement the NATO Warsaw Summit Decisions and to further support the strengthening of NATO's Eastern Flank.²⁷

EXTERNAL RELATIONS – EASTERN PARTNERSHIP, WESTERN BALKANS, V4+

The development of relations with Western Balkan and Eastern Partnership countries has been a priority for the Visegrad Group since the V4 countries' accession to the EU. The regular extended meeting of V4 foreign ministers with their counterparts from EaP countries was actually held twice in 2017 – the April meeting under the Polish V4 Presidency, and the one in August under the Hungarian V4 Presidency. The joint meeting of ministers from Visegrad and Western Balkan countries was held in November, as expected.

The April V4+EaP meeting was organized in Warsaw with the participation of the Commissioner for European Neighborhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, as well as by representatives of Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Malta, Romania, Slovenia, Sweden, United Kingdom and the European External Action Service. In their adopted joint statement, which was also meant as one of the messages to be sent to the November EU–EaP summit in Brussels, the ministers committed themselves to continue supporting the six EaP countries and the Eastern Partnership as a strategic dimension of European Neighbourhood Policy. They also stressed the importance of developing a strategic vision for the EaP, and appealed to the EaP countries to continue their reform processes. In terms of sectoral cooperation, the ministers accented the importance of developing transport and infrastructure interconnections.²⁸

The August V4+EaP meeting in Budapest was organized within a smaller circle, with the participation of V4 and EaP country ministers only. The joint statement that was adopted during this meeting basically repeated the points made in Warsaw. Though the ministers underlined the importance of regional cooperation (and a regional approach), they also stressed the need to differentiate adequately between countries. They welcomed the introduction of the visa free regimes in Georgia and Ukraine. Particular attention was paid to cooperation in the fields of transport and energy. The ministers

²⁷ "See Joint communiqué of the Visegrad Group ministers of defence," February 2, 2017. Available online: <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/documents/official-statements/joint-communiqué-of-the> (accessed on February 26, 2018).

²⁸ "Joint statement on the Eastern Partnership of the foreign ministers of the Visegrad Group," April 12, 2017. Available online: <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/calendar/selected-events-in-2017-170203/joint-statement-on-the-180227> (accessed on February 26, 2018).

also acknowledged the interest of Belarus in deepening the EU–Belarus relationship, and called for the start of negotiations aimed at a new framework agreement.²⁹

The holding of two V4+EaP ministerial summits was not the only unusual occurrence in connection with EaP countries. Poland and Hungary each experienced a worsening of its bilateral relations with the biggest EaP country, Ukraine, which also had an impact at the Visegrad level. The reasons for the deterioration of relations between these two Visegrad countries and Ukraine were similar, but the emphasis was placed on different issues. While for Poland the main problem was the changing narrative of sensitive historical events (such as the Volyn massacre) and diametrically opposed perceptions of certain historical actors (namely Bandera) in Ukraine, what Hungary found unacceptable were the declared changes in Ukrainian language/educational law. Though in the case of Polish–Ukrainian relations there were attempts made to reverse the negative trend,³⁰ the problematic character of Hungarian–Ukrainian bilateral relations is expected to remain unchanged for some months at least, due to the unwillingness on both sides to change their position.

The annual meeting of V4 ministers of foreign affairs and their counterparts from the Western Balkans was also held in an extended format, since representatives of Bulgaria, Croatia, Romania, Slovenia and Estonia also took part in it. Their joint statement assessed positively the progress of (some) of the countries of the region, and expressed full support for the European perspective of the Western Balkan countries.³¹ The ministers underlined the importance of regional cooperation and made reference to the official launch of the Western Balkans Fund, which had been inspired by the International Visegrad Fund. The ministers also expressed appreciation for the speech of Jean-Claude Juncker on the state of the Union,³² as it contained several positive messages related to EU enlargement.

The V4+ format was utilized in order to continue the cooperation of V4 countries with their traditional partners (Nordic and Baltic countries, Bulgaria, Romania, Benelux, Japan, etc.), as well as with new ones. The Hungarian V4 Presidency was especially active in promoting cooperation with new partners such as Israel, Egypt and Liechtenstein. The stated ambition to make V4 a global actor, however, opened up debate again within Visegrad capitals on the need to find a proper balance between the

²⁹ “Joint statement of the ministers of foreign affairs of the Visegrad Group on the occasion of the meeting of ministers of foreign affairs of the V4 and the Eastern Partnership countries,” August 31, 2017. Available online: <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/calendar/selected-events-in-2017-170203/joint-statement-of-the-170904> (accessed on February 26, 2018).

³⁰ See, for instance, “Polish and Ukrainian presidents for lifting ban on exhumations,” President of Poland, December 13, 2017. Available online: <http://www.president.pl/en/news/art,631,president-andrzej-duda-visits-ukraine.html> (accessed on February 26, 2018).

³¹ “Joint statement of the Visegrad Group on the Western Balkans,” October 11, 2017. Available online: <http://www.visegradgroup.eu/calendar/2017> (accessed on February 26, 2018).

³² “President Jean-Claude Juncker’s State of the Union address 2017,” European Union, September 13, 2017. Available online: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-17-3165_en.htm. (accessed on February 26, 2018). See also “State of the Union 2017 – Letter of Intent to President Antonio Tajani and to Prime Minister Juri Ratas,” September 13, 2017. Available online: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/letter-of-intent-2017_en.pdf (accessed on February 26, 2018).

intensification of cooperation among the V4 countries themselves, and the development of ties with non-V4 partners.

THE FUTURE OF THE V4

The Visegrad countries have not always spoken with one voice, and their opinions have differed on a number of issues in the past – the year 2017 was no exception. This trend is expected to continue into the foreseeable future, and as such does not endanger the future of Visegrad cooperation – under the condition, however, that the V4 maintain its low level of institutionalization, in conjunction with its high level of flexibility.

Despite the existence of several important issues binding them together – their common stance on migration, cohesion policy, double standards in food quality, opposition to the Nord Stream II project, and other issues where efforts are still being made to bring their various positions closer together – V4 countries will most probably continue to differ in their views on the future of the European project. Slovakia, as the V4's only Eurozone country, has naturally a different perspective than that of Poland or Hungary (or the Czech Republic under the Babiš government), which have opted to fight for a more important role for member states at the cost of weakening Brussels institutions. Nevertheless, it is in the common interest of V4 countries to prevent the EU from fragmentation. Support for the single market, with a special focus on the digital single market, as well as an acknowledgement of the importance of maintaining the Schengen zone, are shared unanimously by V4 countries.

The flexibility of the V4 will allow Slovakia to be a committed Eurozone member and supporter of the deeper integration of the EU on the one hand, and reliable partner in the Visegrad cooperation on the other. The V4 as such is able to overcome differences in the positions of individual countries and to concentrate on other areas of joint interest, since the willingness to cooperate in areas where cooperation is possible remains an important characteristic feature of Visegrad cooperation. As regards structural differences between V4 countries, including those at the level of European integration, the Nordic countries may provide a good point of reference for the V4. The Nordic cooperation continues to be efficient despite the fact that in terms of EU (as well as NATO) integration, the Nordic countries are even more differentiated than those of the V4: the national currency of Denmark is the crown, the same is true for Sweden, and Norway and Iceland are not even in the EU.

Before making any future predictions, it is needful to understand what the V4 is, and what it is not. It seems that all V4 countries have realistic views as to the V4 and its role in the future. Regardless of their party composition, V4 governments are aware of the achievements and benefits of regional cooperation in the Visegrad format. A wide range of informal institutions at various levels (such as regular meetings of high officials and expert platforms), along with its flexibility, make the V4 a successful and inspiring model of regional cooperation.

The revitalized or newly born formats of regional cooperation in Central Europe in which Slovakia takes part – be it the Slavkov Triangle or the Three Seas Initiative

promoted by Poland – can continue to exist alongside a successful V4. Slovakia is at the very center of the V4, and the seat of the V4's only standing institution, the International Visegrad Fund – its Visegrad neighbors, therefore, and V4 as such, will continue to be of high importance to both current and forthcoming Slovak governments (to say nothing of the significance of its Visegrad neighbors to Slovakia's economy). The goal of Slovakia's next V4 Presidency (July 2018–June 2019), therefore, should be to cultivate Visegrad cooperation further – certainly at the technical and procedural, and hopefully also at the political level – in order to help the V4 contribute effectively to the stability and prosperity of the whole European project.

THE JANUS-FACE OF SLOVAKIA'S EASTERN POLICY IN 2017

ALEXANDER DULEBA

The Russian–Ukrainian crisis, which began in 2014, marks the end of an era in which both the Slovak political class, including the wider public, shared a common understanding of the country's foreign policy priorities. This is the first time since the pre-accession period of Slovakia's foreign policy (before 2004) that the country's political leaders have voiced conflicting narratives regarding an international crisis – including an interpretation of its nature, its meaning for the national interests of Slovakia, and how to respond to it. This article offers an analytical overview of Slovakia's Eastern policy during 2017, which continued to involve the diverging lines presented by leading representatives of Slovak politics.

THE FAILED ATTEMPT TO REVITALIZE A FOREIGN POLICY CONSENSUS

The Janus-faced policy of Slovakia towards the Russian–Ukrainian crisis since 2014 might be summarized as follows.¹ Its first face is represented by President Andrej Kiska, who clearly condemns Russian aggression against Ukraine; views Maidan as the Revolution

¹ For analysis of Slovakia's domestic discourse on the Russian-Ukrainian crisis in the course of 2014–2016 see A. Duleba, "Východná politika SR v roku 2014 v znamení rusko-ukrajinskej krízy," [Eastern policy of SR in 2014 in a light of Russian-Ukrainian crisis] in P. Brezáni, ed., *Ročenka zahraničnej politiky Slovenskej republiky 2014*, Bratislava: Research Center of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association, 2015), pp. 81–100; A. Duleba, "Tri tváre slovenskej východnej politiky v roku 2015," [Three faces of Slovak Eastern Policy in 2015] in P. Brezáni, ed., *Ročenka zahraničnej politiky Slovenskej*

of Dignity of Ukrainian citizens who have a sovereign right to live in a democratic and free country; boosts the European aspirations of Ukraine; supports the anti-Russian sanctions adopted by the West; and finally, calls for increased defense spending and the developing of Slovakia's resilience capacity to protect itself from security threats posed by Russia, including from its disinformation campaign aimed at undermining the unity of the Euro-Atlantic structures and democratic institutions of Western countries.

Prime Minister Robert Fico represents the second face of Slovakia's Eastern policy. On the one hand, he shares the view that the annexation of Crimea by Russia amounts to a violation of international law; however, on the other hand he believes Russia should not be sanctioned by the West for what has happened in Ukraine. He views the domestic developments in Ukraine over the last two decades – above all, the incapacity of the Ukrainian elite to rule the country – a primary cause of the crisis, with Russia's engagement in Ukraine's affairs after Maidan being a secondary effect of it, one provoked by domestic developments in Ukraine. He does not view Maidan as a Revolution of Dignity of Ukrainian citizens – rather he sees it as a coup d'état inspired by the US, part of a geopolitical confrontation between the US and Russia on global scale, by which Slovakia should not be fooled. Prime Minister Fico does not see Russia as a threat to Slovakia; rather he views it as an important business partner, regardless of its conflict with neighboring Ukraine. In his public speeches in the course of the last four years, he has never called for the need to confront the spreading of Russia's narrative of the crisis by the so-called alternative media in Slovakia.

And, finally, the third face of Slovakia's Eastern policy is represented by Foreign and European Affairs Minister Miroslav Lajčák, who has been forced into an in-between position, trying to bring these two conflicting lines of Slovakia's Eastern policy – as represented by the President and the Prime Minister – closer together. Along with practicing Slovak diplomacy in relation to Russia and Ukraine, he insists that Slovakia should strictly follow the common policies of the EU and NATO regarding the crisis.

The year of 2017 brought some new dynamics into the relevant domestic discourse within Slovakia – credit for which should be given to the Chairman of the National Council of the Slovak Republic and leader of the coalition Slovak National Party, Andrej Danko, who has been rather silent on the matter of the crisis over the last four years. However, in November 2017 he paid an official visit to Moscow, during which he accepted an invitation by Chairman of the Russian State Duma Vyacheslav Volodin to speak at the plenary session of the lower house of the Russian parliament. Previously, the privilege to speak to Members of the Russian State Duma had been offered to only eight politicians from EU member states since 1992. Moreover, Danko was the first Slovak politician ever to be given the floor to speak at the State Duma.² The invitation

republiky 2015, Bratislava: Research Center of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association, 2016), pp. 85–100; and J. Marušíak, "Bilateral and multilateral context of the Slovakia's Eastern policy in 2016," in P. Brežáni, ed., *Yearbook of Slovakia's Foreign Policy 2016*, Bratislava: Research Center of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association, pp. 99–118.

² "Predseda Národnej rady SR Andrej Danko dnes popoludní vystúpil s prejavom v pléne Štátnej dумы," [Chairman of the National Council of SR has delivered a speech at the plenary session of the State Duma today afternoon] National Council of the Slovak Republic, November 15, 2017. Available online: <https://www.nrsr.sk/web/Default.aspx?sid=udalosti/udalost&MasterID=54471> (accessed on February 15, 2018).

to address the State Duma on November 15, 2017 came to Danko suddenly, during his visit to Moscow; it was not a planned activity of his visit, nor was his speech well prepared in advance.

The main problem with Danko's speech at the State Duma was not what he said, but rather what he did not say. In his speech, he devoted not a word to Russia's violation of international law in its using military force against Ukraine, its annexation of Crimea, or its interference into domestic Ukrainian affairs. He did, however, emphasize that international security is impossible without a "strong Russia." He didn't say a word of criticism about Russia's support for the so-called alternative media and antisystem political forces in the EU and NATO member states. He did, however – referring to the historical Slavic common roots of "our nations" – express his strong belief as follows: "We are Slavs: our culture, history, but also the way we understand our environment, is interconnected and close to each other. We understand each other, we trust each other."³

Many Slovak observers and journalists who commented on Danko's speech at the State Duma referred to the fact that it was given in the best (or better to say the worst) tradition of naïve Slovak national intellectual romanticism of the 19th century that portrayed Russia as the core of the Slavic world in Europe – a European Slavic superpower which would protect the national freedom of Slovaks, as well as other Slavic nations, against the dominance of Austrians and Hungarians in Central Europe – an illusion which is completely irrelevant to Slovakia's current international position and national interests in the 21st century. As noted by Karel Hirman:

Danko, much like many other Slovak politicians, neglects the fact that in the meantime an independent Ukraine has grown up between Russia and Slovakia. Štúr's "Slavic" constructions were already unrealistic in the 19th century. Recent events in the Balkans, or those happening right now in Ukraine, show that Slavic solidarity can be viewed at most as a romantic illusion.⁴

Nevertheless, Andrej Danko's speech of November 15th at the State Duma became a headliner in Slovakia's domestic Eastern policy discourse in 2017, and brought some new dynamism into it. In this domestic discourse, Danko's speech overshadowed the pro-Russian statements of Prime Minister Robert Fico over the course of the previous four years, thus ushering Andrej Danko into the position of reciprocal polar opposite to President Andrej Kiska in terms of the discourse on Eastern policy. Moreover, in the course of 2017 Prime Minister Fico pointed out – clearly and repeatedly – that even if he did not believe that the sanctions against Russia were right and fair; his government would make no move against the unity of the European Union when it came to its

³ Ibid

⁴ K. Hirman, "Danko, rovnako ako Mečiar z nás robí most," [Danko, much like Mečiar, uses us as a bridge] *Blog N: Karel Hirman*, November 15, 2017. Available online: <https://dennikn.sk/blog/943263/danko-rovnako-ako-meciar-z-nas-robi-most/> (accessed on February 16, 2018). For more about perception of Russia by the first generation of the Slovak national revival elite in the 19th century led by Ľudovít Štúr see A. Duleba, "Slovakia's foreign policy towards Russian-Ukrainian conflict," in: J. Kucharczyk, G. Mesežnikov, eds *Diverging voices, converging policies: The Visegrad states' reactions to the Russia-Ukraine conflict*, Warsaw: Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, 2015, pp. 161–74.

policies towards Russia and Ukraine in the context of the crisis.⁵ This reversing of the poles in Slovakia's Eastern policy discourse, brought on by Chairman of the National Council of the SR Andrej Danko, forced Prime Minister Robert Fico into a position closer to that presented by Foreign and European Affairs Minister Miroslav Lajčák and Slovak diplomacy.

It was President Andrej Kiska – in his speech at the 17th Annual Review Conference on Slovakia's Foreign Policy, held in March 2017 – who identified the country's lost foreign policy consensus as the main challenge to its external relations. He said: "We have a government that is officially pro-European; we have a government that is officially pro-NATO. Yet, however, roughly half of our parliament has a lukewarm attitude – and a certain part of it, actually an alternative approach – towards our official foreign policy priorities. To say nothing of the fact that the government itself, in spite of its declared goals, many times also sends confusing messages."⁶ In his presentation he called for unity and for speaking one language in the field of foreign policy:

We must follow priorities – we shall not cast doubt on them, and we shall communicate them responsibly and consistently both externally and internally. We have to do it in a way that Slovakia is perceived as a partner, which strengthens the implementation of common interests. We have to speak one language at closed-door negotiations with our European partners, but also publicly when addressing our citizens. We have to speak the same language in Bratislava as in Brussels. Schizophrenic communication, which is one thing at home and another abroad, casts doubt on our credibility and weakens our foreign policy.⁷

Again, it was President Kiska – understanding the need to reconfirm our foreign policy priorities that were broken up in consequence of the Russian–Ukrainian crisis – who initiated an unprecedented step in the post-accession history of Slovakia's foreign policy. He invited Prime Minister Robert Fico and Chairman of the National Council Andrej Danko to sign a joint declaration on the foreign policy priorities of Slovakia. And indeed, all the three of these leading representatives of the state met at the Bratislava castle on October 23, 2017 and signed a joint declaration, by which they declared that the unambiguous continuation of a pro-European and pro-Atlantic orientation is in the strategic interest of the Slovak Republic . . . EU and NATO membership represents a fundamental framework for the security, stability and prosperity of our country; it is in line with the values of democracy, the rule of law, and the fundamental human rights and freedoms that create the basis of our state; it expresses the civilizational

⁵ "Fico nesúhlasí so sankciami proti Rusku, ale nechce ísť proti jednote EÚ," [Fico does not go along with sanctions against Russia, but he does not want to go against EU unity] *Denník Politika, WebNoviny.sk*, December 15, 2017. Available online: <http://dennikpolitika.sk/archiv/12233> (accessed on February 16, 2018).

⁶ "Prezident Kiska: Bude to rok pravdy aj pre zahraničnú politiku," [President Kiska: it will be a year of truth for foreign policy also] President of the Slovak Republic, March 16, 2017. Available online: <https://www.prezident.sk/article/prezident-kiska-bude-to-rok-pravdy-aj-pre-zahranicnu-politiku/> (accessed on February 16, 2018).

⁷ *Ibid*

belonging of the Slovak Republic, strengthens its foreign policy leverage, and boosts its development.⁸

One of the declaration's points declares that all three top representatives of Slovakia will take care for the clear and responsible communication of the pro-European and pro-Atlantic orientation of the Slovak Republic – including decisions made jointly by the European Union and NATO – directed towards foreign partners, as well as towards the citizens of Slovakia at home.⁹

The adoption of this joint declaration by the three top representatives of the Slovak Republic should be seen as an important step aimed at restoring a foreign policy consensus within the country. However, it soon became clear that not all three of them took the text of their joint declaration seriously to heart. Less than one month after signing this declaration on the foreign policy priorities of Slovakia and its pro-European and pro-Atlantic orientation – including the promise to communicate them clearly and responsibly at home as well as abroad – Chairman of the National Council of the SR Andrej Danko simply did not mention one word of this in his speech to the Members of the Russian State Duma on November 15, 2017 – which, however, included his elaborating on Slovakia's foreign policy. He spoke about the foreign policy of Slovakia without making reference to what are its priorities, or what he had promised to communicate to foreign partners. By coincidence, it happened that on the same day President Kiska delivered a speech at the plenary session of the European Parliament in Strasbourg. Whereas Danko in Moscow was pointing out that international security is impossible without a “strong Russia,” at the same time Kiska in his speech in Strasbourg identified Russia as a main threat to European security, one which the EU member states should address together.¹⁰ Commenting on the contradictory statements of these two top representatives of Slovakia on the country's foreign policy, Foreign Minister Lajčák said that this does not leave him with a good feeling – stemming from the fact that neither the President nor the Chairman of the Parliament consulted with his ministry regarding their speeches.¹¹

On November 15, 2017, two of Slovakia's political leaders presented very well the country's Janus-faced foreign policy, demonstrating that a restoration of the lost foreign policy consensus – broken up by the Russian-Ukrainian crisis of 2014 – still remains wishful thinking. The year 2017 brought some new dynamics into the country's domestic

⁸ “Vyhlásenie prezidenta, predsedu Národnej rady a predsedu vlády k EÚ a NATO,” [Declaration by the President, Chairman of the National Council and Prime Minister on EU and NATO] President of the Slovak Republic October 23, 2017. Available online: <https://www.prezident.sk/article/vyhlasenie-prezidenta-predsedu-narodnej-rady-a-predsedu-vlady-k-eu-a-nato/> (accessed on February 16, 2018).

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ “Danko zožal v ruskej Štátnej dume standing ovation, Kiska zatiaľ v Štrasburgu varoval pred propagandou Moskvy,” [Danko garners standing ovation at Russian State Duma, whereas Kiska in Strasbourg warns against Moscow propaganda] *HN Slovensko*, November 15, 2017. Available online: <https://slovensko.hnonline.sk/1063297-kym-kiska-v-strasburgu-varoval-pred-propagandou-moskvy-danko-zozal-v-ruskej-statnej-dume-standing-ovation> (accessed on February 16, 2018).

¹¹ “Lajčák: Nemám dobrý pocit, že Danko a Kiska nekonzultovali svoje prejavy,” [Lajčák: I don't have a good feeling about Danko and Kiska have not consulted their speeches] *Denník Postoj*, November 15, 2017. Available online: <https://www.postoj.sk/28366/lajcak-nemam-dobry-pocit-ze-danko-a-kiska-nekonzultovali-svoje-prejavy> (accessed on February 16, 2018).

discourse; however, regardless of the unprecedented adoption of a joint declaration signed by the three top representatives of the state, it did not restore a foreign policy consensus within Slovakia.

POLITICAL DISCOURSE

RUSSIA: ENEMY OR PARTNER?

The perception of Russia – in the context of its actions against Ukraine as well as the hybrid war it has waged against the West and its institutions since 2014, including a disinformation campaign, support for alternative media and antisystem political movements in EU and NATO member states – is the main stumbling block dividing the Slovak political class. Is Russia an enemy or a partner? In 2017, the leading representatives of Slovak politics offered mutually exclusive responses to the above question.

President Andrej Kiska has been clear in his assessment of Russia as a country that currently poses security threats to the West, including Slovakia. In his address at the 17th annual review conference on Slovakia's foreign policy, he characterized the hostile behavior of Russia as follows:

We should remember that many problems we are confronted with come from a consciously premediated hybrid war. It is a strategy of dissemination of disinformation and half-truths with the massive use of social media, and one that targets our main weakness – our incapacity to openly and effectively defend our values. The danger is that the content put forth in this strategy becomes part of the communication of political extremists, and unfortunately is also absorbed by the populist agenda of a large part of the Slovak political scene. The goals of the Kremlin propaganda that I am speaking of have been clearly identified by the European Parliament in its recent resolution – the crumpling of truth, the inciting of uncertainty, the casting of doubt on liberal democracy, an effort made to separate us from our allies in North America, the paralyzing of decision-making mechanisms, the discrediting of European institutions, the creating of the impression that the EU project has failed, the generating of fear and uncertainty among our citizens.¹²

In his statement he also criticized the Slovak government for a profound underestimation of the threats emanating from Russia:

Unfortunately, Slovakia and its security services do little to eliminate hybrid war and targeted propaganda. They do almost nothing. I am repeating what I have said a year ago – we are a target that does not defend itself. We do not defend the basics of our security, prosperity and stability. I am not happy to say this, but I must: our behavior is absolutely

¹² “Prezident Kiska: Bude to rok pravdy aj pre zahraničnú politiku,” *op. cit.*

irresponsible. It does not have any analogy among our neighbors, the concerned states or countries of our region.¹³

The position that has been presented by Foreign and European Affairs Minister Miroslav Lajčák is close to that of President Kiska. After a meeting of foreign ministers of NATO member states in Brussels, in March 2017, he said:

The alliance's policy towards Russia is based on a combination of dialogue on the one hand, and deterrence on the other, which is a line we have to follow henceforward. Currently we have to work on strengthening our own defense and resilience capacities against hybrid threats.¹⁴

Unlike Foreign Minister Lajčák and President Kiska, Prime Minister Fico does not share their concerns regarding Russia. When it comes to President Kiska's criticism of him – for making confusing statements and using two different languages on Russia, one in Brussels and the other in Bratislava – Prime Minister Fico interprets this as an effort by the President to engage in conflict with him and his government at any price. Fico has not responded to the actual substance of Kiska's criticism; however, he has reciprocated, saying that he has no interest in being drawn into conflict with the President; he has pointed out that it is President who permanently wants to evoke conflict with him.¹⁵ Rather than by the Prime Minister himself, a response to the President's criticism was given by the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Defence. Following the President's critical remarks, which he made at the 2017 Annual Review Conference, it was announced that the government had created the National Security and Analysis Centre, which monitors Russian propaganda in Slovakia, including opposition to the EU and NATO. The Centre includes experts from the Slovak Information Service, Defence Intelligence, the Police Corps of the SR, Criminal Investigation Office of the Financial Administration, and the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs.¹⁶

Nevertheless, it should be noted that Prime Minister Robert Fico has not been so vocal in his anti-sanction rhetoric, as compared to previous years. Moreover, in the course of 2017 he repeatedly stressed that his government will not thwart the common policy of the EU towards Russia in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian crisis.¹⁷ At the same time, he expressed clearly his perception of Russia as being on the margin of the 5th Eastern Partnership, at its summit in Brussels in November 2017. He stressed that he never viewed Russia as an enemy and never would. "As the Chairman of the government my interest is to have friendly relations with this country," he said, making reference also to the strategic importance of Slovakia's partnership with Russia in

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ "Lajčák: Proti Rusku sa treba brániť naďalej," [Lajčák: The need for defence against Russia remains] *Sme, SITA*, March 31, 2017. Available online: <https://domov.sme.sk/c/20497818/lajcak-proti-rusku-sa-treba-branit-nadalej.html#ixzz55ylhBXJN> (accessed on February 17, 2018).

¹⁵ "Kiska sa obul do Fica kôli Rusku," [Kiska shoots Fico over Russia] *Pravda, SITA*, March 17, 2017. Available online: <https://spravy.pravda.sk/domace/clanok/423378-kiska-sa-obul-do-fica-kvoli-rusku/> (accessed on February 17, 2018).

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ "Fico nesúhlasí so sankciami proti Rusku, ale nechce ísť proti jednote EÚ," op.cit.

the field of oil and natural gas supply.¹⁸ In other words, Prime Minister Fico does not view Russia's support for alternative media and antisystem political forces – aimed at questioning the Slovakia democratic regime as well as its membership in the EU and NATO – as hostile behavior against the national interests of his country.

As mentioned above, neither does Chairman of the Parliament Andrej Danko share President Kiska's concerns vis-à-vis Russia. Moreover, as he pointed out in his speech at the State Duma, he believes Russia is more than just a partner to Slovakia:

[W]e must praise what we have received, as a historical gift; we must develop our Slavic world together. It is a unique community in the world, which has not at all come about by accident. We are part of it together. This feeling of belonging has helped us to get through difficult periods of our national history. We were not united by a formal ideology, as we thought. Rather it was our Slavic essence, our history, our ancestors.¹⁹

For Danko and other current Slovak nationalists – who understand themselves as followers of the first generation of the Slovak national elite, born of the revolutionary movements of the 19th century within the Habsburg monarchy – relations with Russia have a mysterious, super-temporal significance, one that is part of the Slovak national identity. Russia is not just another country; it represents an ahistorical value per se for the Slovak nation – regardless of what it has done since 2014 against Ukraine, against the liberal democratic regime of modern post-communist Slovakia, and against its transatlantic and European affiliation.

Béla Bugár, the leader of the third coalition party Most-Híd (“Bridge”), responded to Danko's high regard for Russia as follows: “I perceive Russia in a different way. It is unacceptable what this country is doing in Crimea and Ukraine. Therefore, it is good that the sanctions were prolonged.” Bugár agrees that Slovakia should foster good relations with Russia; at the same time, however, it must defend itself against cyber-attacks coming from Russia.²⁰ Members of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Slovak Parliament initiated a hearing with Chairman of the Parliament Andrej Danko, asking him to explain his speech at the Russian State Duma. Representatives of the coalition Most-Híd party – along with those of the opposition parties SAS (Freedom and Solidarity), OĽaNO (Ordinary People and Independent Personalities) and Sme rodina (We are family) – criticized Danko for his uncritical speech at the Russian State Duma, while members of the Committee representing the coalition parties SMER (Social Democracy) and SNS (Slovak National Party) defended his approach, stressing that his speech was in line with

¹⁸ “Fico po samite v Bruseli zdôraznil, že Slovensko nevníma Rusko ako nepriateľa,” [After summit in Brussels Fico stresses that Slovakia does not perceive Russia as an enemy] *Denník N, TASR*, November 24, 2017. Available online: <https://dennikn.sk/minuta/952811/> (accessed on February 17, 2018).

¹⁹ “Predseda Národnej rady SR Andrej Danko dnes popoludní vystúpil s prejavom v pléne Štátnej dумы,” op. cit.

²⁰ “Bugár: Rusko vnímam inak ako Danko” [Bugár: I perceive Russia differently than Danko does] *Rádio Aktuaľ*, 4.1.2018. Available online: <http://radioaktual.sk/bugar-rusko-vnimam-inak-ako-danko/> (accessed on March 19, 2018).

the interests of Slovakia.²¹ In 2017, the diverging lines of differing perceptions of Russia cut across both the coalition and the opposition parties of Slovakia.

UKRAINE AND THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP

Unlike Russia, Ukraine was not a stumbling block in terms of Slovakia's Eastern policy in 2017. Slovakia's position towards Ukraine and the Eastern Partnership countries was voiced throughout the year mostly by Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajčák and President Andrej Kiska. The position they expressed was in line with the declared foreign policy priority of the government led by Prime Minister Robert Fico, namely to provide support for reforms and the implementation of EU Association Agreements by Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova. Commenting on the agenda of the EU Foreign Affairs Council in Brussels, on February 6, 2017, Lajčák stressed that "from our perspective the most important topic is Ukraine. This is our direct neighbor, and it is good to know what the EU is planning to do since the situation there is not good, in either the military or the political sphere." He also expressed his pleasure that the citizens of Georgia already enjoy visa-free travel to the EU, as well as his hope that Ukraine will soon follow.²²

On April 11, 2017, Minister Lajčák – along with his Visegrad counterparts, the foreign ministers of the Czech Republic, Lubomír Zaorálek, and Hungary, Péter Szijjártó – paid a visit to Kyiv. During the visit Minister Lajčák praised Ukraine for achieving further progress in its reforms within the last three years than it had in the last two decades. He stressed that Slovakia supports the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, and sees no solution to the Donbass crisis other than a political process based on the consistent implementation of the Minsk agreements.²³ On April 12, 2017, the three foreign ministers travelled from Kyiv to Warsaw, where the Polish V4 Presidency was hosting the V4 plus Eastern Partnership Summit of foreign ministers. In Warsaw, Minister Lajčák expressed his belief that the 5th Eastern Partnership Summit to be held in Brussels on November 24, 2017 will not only review actual achievements, but also will offer a clear political vision for the Eastern Partnership within the years to come.²⁴

²¹ "Danko: Vystúpenie v Dume bola časť pre SR, za každým slovom si stojím," [Danko: Presentation at Duma was a honor for Slovakia; I stand for each word I have said] *Teraz.sk*, December 15, 2017. Available online: <http://www.teraz.sk/najnovsie/danko-vystupenie-v-dume-bola-cest-pre-sl/298121-clanok.html> (accessed on March 7, 2018).

²² "Lajčák na rokovaní ministrov EÚ: Situácia na Ukrajine nie je dobrá," [Lajčák at the talks of EU ministers: Situation in Ukraine is not good] *Aktuálne.sk*, TASR, February 6, 2017. Available online: <https://aktualne.centrum.sk/zahranicie/europa/lajcak-rokovani-ministrov-eu-situacia-ukrajine-nie-je-dobra.html> (accessed on March 7, 2018).

²³ "M. Lajčák v Kyjeve: „Za ostatné tri roky urobila Ukrajina väčší pokrok, než v predchádzajúcich dvadsiatich“," [M. Lajčák in Kyiv: Ukraine has made bigger progress in the course of the last three years than it did over previous twenty years] Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, April 11, 2017. Available online: https://www.mzv.sk/cestovanie_a_konzularne_info/detail/-/asset_publisher/lw1ppvnSciPx/content/m-lajcak-v-kyjeve-za-ostatne-tri-roky-urobila-ukrajina-vacsi-pokrok-nez-v-predchadzajucich-dvadsiatich (accessed on March 7, 2018).

²⁴ "M. Lajčák: Summit Východného partnerstva musí ponúknuť ďalšiu víziu," [M. Lajčák: Summit of the Eastern Partnership will offer further vision] *Teraz.sk*, April 12, 2017. Available online: <http://www.teraz.sk/slovensko/m-lajcak-summit-vychodneho-partner/254303-clanok.html> (accessed on March 7, 2018).

In their joint declaration adopted at the Warsaw summit, the foreign ministers of V4 countries stated that the EU should offer a membership perspective for the associated countries of the Eastern Partnership.²⁵

A major event in Slovak–Ukrainian relations in the course of 2017 took place on June 11th. Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko and Slovak President Andrej Kiska met at the border crossing point Vyšné Nemecké–Uzhgorod, to celebrate together the launch of visa-free travel for Ukrainian citizens to the EU. In his speech, President Kiska stressed that this day is a great festive occasion for the citizens of Ukraine, as well as for the citizens of the EU and Slovakia. He pointed out:

Slovakia will always stay with you. Slovakia as a country, we politicians of Slovakia, will always do everything we can in order to help you and advise you, but above all to continue to be the main advocates for your decision to follow the direction which you have chosen, to help you to get where you will be as soon as possible – in the center of our democratic Europe.

President Poroshenko added:

This is what we have achieved together, and now the EU door is open to us. This day will be recorded forever in the history of Ukraine as the final exit of our country from the Russian Empire, and as a coming back to the family of European nations. He also expressed his thanks to President Kiska for his absolute support for the territorial integrity of Ukraine and its European integration aspirations.²⁶

The fact that President Poroshenko decided to celebrate the launch of the visa-free regime with the EU on the border with Slovakia – and not on the border with Poland, which has been traditionally viewed as the key advocate of Ukraine within the EU – echoed the growing misunderstandings in Polish–Ukrainian relations that appeared in the course of 2017. Yet in February 2017, the leader of the Polish ruling party Law and Justice, Yaroslaw Kaczynski, addressed Kyiv with an antagonistic message: you will never get into the EU with Bandera.²⁷ The Polish government decided to open and securitize sensitive historical questions in its relations with Ukraine, questions related to the activities of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army in the western part of Ukraine during WWII, accusing it of war crimes committed against the local Polish population. In January 2018 this process resulted in the adoption of a new Polish law providing for

²⁵ “YeS maye nadaty perspektyvu chlenstva dlya Skhidnoho Partnerstva: zayava Vyshehradskoyi chetvirk,” [EU will offer a membership perspective for Eastern partners: declaration by V4] *Yevropeyska pravda*, April 12, 2017. Available online: <http://www.eurointegration.com.ua/news/2017/04/12/7064470/> (accessed on March 7, 2018).

²⁶ M. Kapusta, “Prezident Kiska vyslovil podporu Ukrajine pri jej smerovaní do EÚ,” [President Kiska voices support for Ukraine and its direction towards EU] *Aktuality.sk, TASR*, June 11, 2017. Available online: <https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/496188/prezident-kiska-vyslovil-podporu-ukrajine-pri-jej-smerovani-do-eu/> (accessed on March 7, 2018).

²⁷ B. Latta, “Kaczynski Kyjevu: Bandera alebo Európa,” [Kaczynski to Kyiv: Bandera or Europe] *Pravda*, February 9, 2017. Available online: <https://spravy.pravda.sk/svet/clanok/419350-kaczynski-kyjevu-bandera-alebo-europa/> (accessed on March 7, 2018).

changes to the law on the National Memory Institute, including among other things the banning of "Bandera ideology" in Poland.²⁸

Neither were bilateral relations between Hungary and Ukraine immune to significant deterioration in the course of 2017. In September, Hungarian diplomacy protested against the adoption of a new education law in Ukraine, which introduced compulsory teaching in the Ukrainian language at both primary and high schools. Hungarian Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó characterized the law as "disgraceful and degrading," since it bars ethnic minorities in Ukraine – including 150,000 Hungarians – from teaching and learning at primary schools in their native languages. He noted that Hungary will block any efforts of Ukraine towards NATO and EU integration, so long as Ukraine applies the new education law in practice.²⁹

Thus it happened that Slovakia remained the only direct Western neighbor of Ukraine, that was also a member of the EU and NATO, with relations that were not overshadowed by dark clouds in 2017. As noted by Polish expert Tomasz Pechal – when commenting on the border meeting of Slovak and Ukrainian Presidents on the occasion of launching the visa-free EU travel regime for Ukrainian citizens on June 11th – it was now Slovakia instead of Poland that had become Ukraine's gate to Europe.³⁰

Prime Minister Robert Fico, along with Foreign Minister Lajčák, represented Slovakia at the 5th Summit of the Eastern Partnership that took place in Brussels on November 24, 2017. After the summit, Prime Minister Fico noted that Slovakia expects benefits from the implementation of the Eastern Partnership, especially within the Slovak border regions neighboring Ukraine. In his speech at the summit he noted that the EU should be more forthright towards the Eastern partners and Ukraine in particular. "We all say that we have to help Ukraine. On the other hand, Western countries support Nord Stream 2, a project which weakens Ukraine and Slovakia, as the gas would go a different way," he pointed out.³¹ Although he added that he would never view Russia as an enemy, he was clear in expressing Slovakia's interest in helping Ukraine, including support for the Eastern Partnership.³² In 2017, Prime Minister Fico continued to pursue his double-track Eastern policy aimed at sustaining good relations with both Russia and Ukraine, regardless of the conflict between them.

²⁸ "Law on 'Bandera ideology' dangerous not for Ukraine, but for Poland itself – Viatrovych," *Interfax-Ukraine*, January 27, 2018. Available online: <http://en.interfax.com.ua/news/general/480485.html> (accessed on March 7, 2018).

²⁹ "Maďarská vláda obvinila Ukrajinu z porušovania práv menšín," [Hungarian government indicts Ukraine for violating rights of minorities] *Európske noviny*, September 14, 2017. Available online: <https://europskenoviny.sk/2017/09/14/madarska-vlada-obvinila-ukrajinu-z-porushovania-pravmensin/> (accessed on March 7, 2018).

³⁰ T. Pechal, "Zamist Polshchi: nova brama u Yevropu," [Instead of Poland: a new gate to Europe] *Yevropeyska pravda*, June 13, 2017. Available online: <http://www.euointegration.com.ua/experts/2017/06/13/7067101/> (accessed on March 7, 2018).

³¹ "Fico: EÚ na summite Východného partnerstva urobila kus dobrej roboty," [Fico: EU at the summit of Eastern partnership did rather a good job] *Teraz.sk*, November 24, 2017. Available online: <http://www.teraz.sk/najnovsie/fico-eu-na-summite-vychodneho-partne/294250-clanok.html> (accessed on March 7, 2018).

³² "Fico po samite v Bruseli zdôraznil, že Slovensko nevníma Rusko ako nepriateľa," *op.cit.*

ECONOMIC AGENDA, SANCTIONS AND FOREIGN TRADE

The EU sectoral sanctions against Russia, together with Russia's contra sanctions against the EU introduced in 2014 – as well as of the downturn in oil prices in 2015, including the subsequent depreciation of the Russian Ruble – have cheapened Slovakia's imports from Russia and shrunk significantly the nominal volume of bilateral trade. Consequently, Russia has dropped out of the rank of Slovakia's top ten foreign trade partners over the course of the last four years. By the end of 2016, Russia's share in Slovakia's total imports and exports was 3.95 per cent (2.9 billion US dollars) and 1.55 per cent (1.5 billion US dollars) respectively.³³ The volume of Slovakia's bilateral foreign trade with Russia decreased by more than a half during the same period, from 8.7 billion euros in 2013 to 4.1 billion euros in 2016. Although the trade statistics for the first 10 months of 2017 showed a slight recovery (a total turnover of 4.02 billion euros against 4.07 billion for the whole of 2016), one of the economic outcomes of the Russian-Ukrainian crisis since 2014 for Slovakia is that Russia has become a less important trade partner as compared with the pre-crisis period.³⁴

Within the same period the volume of Slovakia's bilateral foreign trade with Ukraine decreased slightly, from 1.1 billion euros in 2013 to 820 million euros in 2016 – while within the first 10 months of 2017 it had already reached 919 million euros, showing that the political and economic stabilization of Ukraine in the course of the last couple of years has helped to recover bilateral trade, bringing it back to the pre-crisis level.³⁵ The third largest trade partner for Slovakia in Eastern Europe is Belarus, with a bilateral trade turnover of 165 million euros in 2016. The foreign trade of Slovakia with the remaining Eastern Partnership countries in 2016, in terms of total volume, was rather marginal – Moldova: 31.3 million euros, Azerbaijan: 26.3, Georgia: 8.6, and finally Armenia: 2.28.³⁶

In the course of 2017 the Slovak government tried to boost economic cooperation with East European countries, especially Russia and Belarus, through intergovernmental contacts. The 18th session of the Slovak-Russian Intergovernmental Commission on Economic Cooperation, Scientific and Technical Cooperation took place in Moscow in April 2017. The Slovak delegation was led by Economy Minister Peter Žiga, who was accompanied by representatives of about 40 Slovak companies interested in developing business cooperation with Russian partners. The Russian delegation was led by Industry and Trade Minister Denis Manturov. Both sides agreed on the following as priority areas for bilateral cooperation: energy (including nuclear energy), industry, transport and agriculture. In addition, they discussed how to strengthen bilateral cooperation at the region-to-region level, where they saw enormous potential for cooperation, especially between small and medium-sized entrepreneurs.³⁷

³³ "GlobalEdge: Slovakia: trade statistics." Available online: <https://globaledge.msu.edu/countries/slovakia/tradestat> (accessed on March 8, 2018).

³⁴ "Štatistický úrad SR: zahraničný obchod," [Statistical Office of SR: foreign trade]. Available online: <https://slovak.statistics.sk> (accessed on March 8, 2018).

³⁵ *Ibid*

³⁶ *Ibid*

³⁷ "Zasadnutie Medzivládnej komisie pre hospodársku a vedecko-technickú spoluprácu," [Meeting of the Intergovernmental commission on economic, scientific and technical cooperation]

Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico paid a visit to Minsk at the end of April 2017, which was reciprocated by Prime Minister of Belarus Andrey Kobyakov when he paid a visit to Bratislava. Both Prime Ministers agreed that a bilateral annual trade turnover of roughly 160 million euros does not correspond to the economic potential of the two countries and should be stepped up. Prime Minister Fico outlined the prospects for bilateral cooperation as follows:

Neither Belarus nor Slovakia is a large country with the capacity to influence global politics. Therefore, we wish to concentrate first of all on our economic cooperation, showing full respect to one another and without any interference in each other's domestic affairs. . . Slovakia is a member of the EU, its currency is the Euro, and it is part of Schengen. Belarus is a country that is part of the Eurasian Union; there are no customs or tax barriers between Belarus and Russia. So as Slovakia can serve as bridge for Belarus towards Europe, Belarus can serve as a marvelous bridge for Slovakia towards the Eurasian Union.³⁸

Even if Prime Minister Fico was less vocal in the matter of Russian sanctions during the course of 2017, he continued to insist that they are "goals we score in our own net." At the beginning of 2017 he expressed his hope that the new presidential administration of the US, led by newly elected President Donald Trump, would cancel economic sanctions against Russia. In February 2017, at the informal summit of EU leaders in Valetta, he called for his partners from EU member states not to wait for what the new US administration would undertake in this regard, and to initiate in advance the process of cancelling the sanctions. He noted:

I look forward to the moment when the US will say we are cancelling sanctions. . . What will the EU do then, will it follow its big American brother and cancel sanctions as well? In my opinion, right now the EU should have to take a clear position on Russian sanctions, and to say: it is all the same to us if the US cancels sanctions or not, our position is this.

However, even while he continued to repeat that the sanctions are meaningless, and that they weaken Slovakia, he stressed that he would not oppose the unified position of the EU. "If the majority of [EU] states share such an approach, I respect it," he added.³⁹

Embassy of the Slovak Republic to Moscow, May 5, 2017. Available online: https://www.mzv.sk/web/moskva/spravy/-/asset_publisher/qUcjGk6Falrh/content/zasadnutie-medzivladnej-komisie-pre-hospodarsku-a-vedecko-technicku-spolupracu/10182?p_p_auth=T8gQNxCY (accessed on March 8, 2018).

³⁸ "Fico: SR môže byť mostom v Európe, Bielorusko zase pre Euráziu," [Fico: Slovakia can serve as a bridge in Europe, Belarus on its part for Eurasia] *Teraz.sk*, April 27, 2017. Available online: <http://www.teraz.sk/slovensko/slovensko-moze-byt-mostom-v-europe/256846-clanok.html> (accessed on March 8, 2018).

³⁹ "Robert Fico by ďalšie sankcie voči Rusku už nikdy nepodporil," [Robert Fico would never support further sanctions on Russia] *Aktuality.sk*, February 4, 2017. Available online: <https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/412668/robert-fico-by-dalsie-sankcie-voci-rusku-uz-nykdy-nepodporil/> (accessed on March 8, 2018).

It should be noted that the development of US policy regarding Russia under Trump's administration in the course of 2017 did not meet the expectations of Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico. Trump's administration did not ease sanctions against Russia, quite the contrary. On August 2, 2017, US President Trump signed a new act sent to him by Congress, which expanded and tightened sanctions against Iran, Northern Korea and Russia. The sanctions embodied in this new Act went beyond the scope of those imposed on Russia in 2014, targeting also those companies that engage in business with Russia in the construction of new export oil and gas pipelines. This means that Western European companies which, in September 2015, created a consortium with Russian Gazprom for the construction of the Nord Stream 2, are also subject to the new US sanction policy as amended in 2017. However, instead of praising the US's new sanction policy against Russia – which makes the construction of the Nord Stream 2 project more problematic, and thus helps to keep the transit of Russian gas through Ukraine and Slovakia alive; as well as saving roughly 400 million EUR per annum for the Slovak state budget in form of transit fees collected by Slovak gas transit company Eustream, in which the Slovak state owns a 51 per cent share of stocks – Prime Minister Fico preferred to keep silent.⁴⁰ The positive effect of the US sanctions on Slovakia's interests, in the case of the Nord Stream 2 project, highlights the schizophrenic nature of Prime Minister Fico's rhetoric in 2017 in connection with Slovakia's Eastern policy. However, it might be too much to expect that the Prime Minister of Slovakia – after all that he said on the question of Russian sanctions since the start of the Russian–Ukrainian crisis in 2014 – would be able to recognize that in the end these sanctions serve Slovak interests.

CONCLUSION

In 2017 Slovakia continued to exhibit a Janus-faced Eastern policy, which involved diverging lines presented by leading political representatives of the country. The stumbling block dividing the Slovak political class is the perception of Russia in the context of the Russian–Ukrainian crisis. President Kiska and Foreign Minister Lajčák view Russia as a threat to Slovakia's national security, support Western sanctions, boost the European integration of Ukraine, and call for concentrated efforts on the national level aimed at developing Slovakia's defense and resilience capacity to face hybrid attacks from Russia. Prime Minister Fico does not view Russia as a threat, calls for the cancellation of Western sanctions, and does not insist on the need to increase Slovakia's capacity to protect itself from Russia. At the same time, he supports the EU's Eastern Partnership policy and reforms in Ukraine, as these may potentially bring benefits to Slovakia.

The Chairman of the National Council of Slovakia, Andrej Danko, along with other current Slovak nationalists, understands – or rather misunderstands – Russia in the

⁴⁰ For more see P. Szalai, "Gazprom asi nezastavia. Otázky a odpovede o amerických sankciách," [Gazprom will probably not be stopped. Questions and answers regarding American sanctions] *Euractiv.sk*, August 10, 2017. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/energetika/news/gazprom-asi-nezastavia-otazky-odpovede-o-americkych-sankciach/> (accessed on March 8, 2018).

worst tradition of the naïve Slovak romanticism of the 19th century, as a country that has a mysterious and super-temporal significance for Slovakia and its “Slavic” national identity. Russia is not just another country for Danko – it represents an ahistorical value per se for the Slovak nation, regardless of what it has done since 2014 against Ukraine, and against the liberal democratic regime of modern post-communist Slovakia and its transatlantic and European affiliation. In the domestic discourse, Danko’s speech at the Russian State Duma on November 15, 2017 overshadowed the pro-Russian statements of Prime Minister Robert Fico over the course of the previous four years, thus ushering Andrej Danko into the position of reciprocal polar opposite to President Andrej Kiska in terms of the discourse on Eastern policy.

On October 23, 2017, all three top representatives of the Slovak Republic (the President, Prime Minister, and Chairman of the National Council) signed a joint declaration, by which they declared that unambiguous continuation of pro-European and pro-Atlantic orientation is in the strategic interest of the Slovak Republic, and that they would take care for the clear and responsible communication of Slovakia’s pro-European and pro-Atlantic orientation – including decisions made jointly by the European Union and NATO – directed towards foreign partners as well as towards citizens of Slovakia at home.

Nevertheless, soon after the adoption of the declaration, on November 15, 2017 the President and the Chairman of the National Council – the former addressing the European Parliament and the latter speaking at the Russian State Duma – presented again the country’s Janus-face foreign policy, demonstrating that a restoration of the lost foreign policy consensus – broken up by the Russian–Ukrainian crisis in 2014 – still remains wishful thinking. The year 2017 brought some new dynamics into Slovakia’s domestic Eastern policy discourse; however, in spite of the unprecedented adoption of a joint declaration signed by the three top representatives of the state, it did not restore a foreign policy consensus within the country.

THE WESTERN BALKANS – WILL THE EU OVERCOME ENLARGEMENT FATIGUE?

JÚLIUS LŐRINCZ

The question in the heading may seem rather speculative, since an answer in the positive may appear simple and straightforward after the experience of recent years. Someone might argue that the unambiguousness of such a reply is simply wishful thinking that is out of touch with reality. However, a negative answer also does not take into account all the possibilities and elements of reality in Europe and the Western Balkans. The enlargement of the European Union to the southeast of our continent is simply a long-term process, the progression of which is connected with many obstacles, twists and turns affecting its rhythm and pace.

In 2017 we were confronted with the stagnation of this process, but also with the hopes often associated with an awareness that Europe needs a secure, stabilized and prosperous Western Balkans, and that the Balkans need a strong and efficient European Union. These hopes have relied in particular on the speech of European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker in the European Parliament in September, in which he said that if the European Union wants to ensure security and stability, it must maintain a strong and credible enlargement prospect in the Western Balkans.

This statement was encouragingly contradictory to what Juncker said in 2014 when he was elected President of the European Commission. In particular, he stressed then that during his five-year mandate the Union would not enlarge. Although technically this has been true, politically his statement was unfortunate, as it did undermine the forces of reform, and prompted the growth of nationalist tendencies. It is to the credit

of Slovak foreign policy and diplomacy that it has undermined the trend of stagnation and helped overcome the fatigue of enlargement.¹

Juncker's new line has not been mere rhetoric: in the closing months of 2017, the European Commission began work to prepare a new enlargement strategy in the Western Balkans. This is particularly important because the signs of tension and a depressed atmosphere have spread in the region. This is evidenced by certain negative trends in the countries concerned (a long-term absence of the values of the rule of law, destabilizing foreign influences, a dysfunctional judiciary, corruption, crime, etc.) that do not address the social and economic problems of society. It is clear that rhetoric alone is not enough in the Western Balkans for the reconciliation that is needed to really stabilize the region and create the conditions for normal democratic development.

It is a positive sign that, despite the aforementioned negative manifestations in the functioning of society, the population as a whole is still inclined to join the European Union. In Serbia, for example, according to a poll of December 2017 organized by the Ministry of European Integration, 52 per cent of respondents were in favor of membership in the Union, 24 per cent were against, 12 per cent did not know, and 12 per cent did not want to express a view on this issue.²

Public support for accession to the European Union is even higher in Montenegro, where according to opinion polls from December 2017, up to 62.2 per cent of respondents want Montenegro to enter the EU. Only 21.4 per cent were against. Since Montenegro became a member of NATO last year, it should be added that, also in December, 52 per cent of respondents said they supported this move, with 42 per cent against.³

Slovak foreign policy and diplomacy have traditionally paid special attention to the situation in the Western Balkans. In 2017, this was undoubtedly influenced by the fact that Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajčák was elected President of the 72nd General Assembly of the United Nations – which also, in the second half of the year, influenced his traditional activity and presence in his engagement with the Western Balkan countries in particular. It would be untruthful, however, to say that he would “renounce” the Western Balkans, because in European politics he still plays an active role in this region.

Already at the end of February last year, in talks with former Serbian diplomat and now Secretary-General of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) Goran Svilanović,

¹ See “State of the Union 2017 Live, as it happened,” *Euractive.com*, September 13, 2017. Available online: <https://www.euractiv.com/section/future-eu/video/from-scenarios-to-a-vision-for-the-future-of-europe/> (accessed on December 15, 2017).

² “Evropska orijentacija građana Srbije. Ispitivanje javnog mnjenja, decembar 2017. godine,” [European orientation of citizens of Serbia. Public opinion poll, December 2017] Ministry of European Integration of Serbia, 2017. Available online: http://www.mei.gov.rs/upload/documents/nacionalna_dokumenta/istrazivanja_javnog_mnjenja/javno_mnjenje_decembar_17.pdf (accessed on February 15, 2018).

³ “Predstavljeni rezultati istraživanja političkog javnog mnjenja,” [Results of the Public Opinion Poll presented] Center for Democracy and Human Rights, Montenegro, January 10, 2018. Available online: <http://www.cedem.me/programi/istrazivanja/1040-predstavljeni-rezultati-istrazivanja-politickog-javnog-mnjenja> English version available online: <http://www.cedem.me/en/programs/empirical-research/4-activities/1040-results-of-public-opinion-poll-presented> (accessed on January 10, 2018).

in Bratislava, he pointed out: "The Western Balkans require much more of our attention and we have to re-establish it among the priorities of the European Union. It is a question of our credibility, but it is also in our own interest." He pointed out that the Western Balkans have been and remain a foreign policy priority for the Slovak Republic because they "represent a strategic investment in the security and prosperity of Europe."⁴

EUROPEAN STRATEGY, AMBITIOUS SLOVAKIA

Indicative of Lajčák's perception of reality and understanding of the priorities of international politics, and interesting in its own right, is the fact that basically after a year – on February 6, 2018 – the European Commission published its *Strategy for the Western Balkans: a credible prospect for enlargement*. The EC has also spoken of this EU policy as a geostrategic investment in a stable, strong and unified Europe based on common values. I raise this point, because not all member states appreciate the importance of the further enlargement of the Union – in this case in the area of Southeastern Europe. This was also reflected in the preparations for and adoption of the EU's Strategy for the Western Balkans. The unnamed circles involved in the preparation of the abovementioned concept include the Slovak Republic, among those countries that have had more ambitious ideas about the Union's activity in relation to the Western Balkans. For example, Slovakia has joined the eleven EU member states which have proposed that Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Kosovo, Macedonia and Serbia participate in European Union policy talks/meetings before their official accession into the Union.

In addition to Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Ireland, Lithuania, Latvia, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Austria, Slovenia and Italy have also expressed interest in such a process, according to *Reuters* and *EurActiv.sk*. Bulgaria as the presiding country of the Council of the EU in the first half of 2018 places this issue among its top priorities, and this will surely be continued by the upcoming Romanian and then Austrian presidencies.⁵

Representatives of Slovak foreign policy have repeatedly pointed out at many multilateral international forums in 2017, especially to politicians from European countries, that attention must be given to the countries of the Western Balkans. And not just

⁴ "M. Lajčák: Západný Balkán predstavuje pre nás strategickú investíciu do bezpečnosti a prosperity Európy," [M. Lajčák:] Western Balkans pose strategic investment in the security and prosperity of Europe], Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, February 28, 2017. Available online: http://www.mzv.sk/aktuality/detail/-/asset_publisher/lw1ppvnScIPx/content/m-lajcak-zapadny-balkan-predstavuje-pre-nas-strategicku-investiciu-do-bezpecnosti-a-prosperity-euro-py?p_p_auth=HELQ3qRw&_101_INSTANCE_lw1ppvnScIPx_redirect=%2Faktuality%2Fvsetky-spravy%3Frok%3D2017%26mesiac%3D1 (accessed on January 10, 2018).

⁵ "Komisia predstavila stratégiu pre západný Balkán," [Commission presents its Strategy for the Western Balkans] *EurActiv.sk* and *TASR*, February 7, 2018. Available online: <http://api.traq.li/story/viewall3/20527/75557702:91849845,91847259,91852101,91844390,91833599,91084954,90879282,90966271,90989907,91805138,91813173,91813152,91800473,91683940,91672536?sig=628599344273fb9e57eec65257ac10715d6421622a4c6df0c6fc129620e4d959&order=0> (accessed on February 7, 2018).

attention, but also activity must be increased, in terms of cooperation that is aimed at solving the problems of the region, as well as in terms of the process of moving the region closer to the European Union and its integration into the EU. They have pointed out that nationalism is becoming stronger again, reminiscent of the tragic war of the 1990s in the Balkans. The pro-European forces in the region are weakening – EU member states, therefore, must increase their influence there and become more involved. If they do not, there will be other players pushing in the opposite direction, which we are witnessing today. This is to the detriment of the states of the region, because it is obvious that for them there is no better prospect than that of Europe in its full value.

The EU's Foreign Affairs Council (FAC) focused on the issue of the Western Balkans at its March meeting, after the visit of the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, to six countries in the region. In that meeting's discussion, Miroslav Lajčák stated that because the situation is getting worse, "we need to show more political empathy, determination and balance in our policy towards the individual countries of the region."⁶

ENLARGEMENT – A TWO-WAY STREET

These words of Lajčák's touched on an important principle involved in the whole question of EU enlargement in the Western Balkans: it cannot be only a one-way street, but rather a partnership. It is natural and understandable that EU member states explain the values and principles of accession, while sharing their experience. But it is also important that the older members act not only as mentors, but as partners. Candidate countries have their obligations towards the EU, it is true. But the EU has its obligations in this context as well – for example, in its dealings with the countries of the region, to adhere to its own declared values and principles which it wishes to promote there. This strengthens the credibility of the policy and the enlargement process, as well as increasing resistance to negative influences and the pressure of forces that are not interested in the success of European integration. Miroslav Lajčák spoke on these issues at the traditional Munich Security Conference, in February 2017.⁷

⁶ "If we abandon the field, the resulting vacuum will be filled by actors whose actions in the region may be incompatible with our interests and needs. Therefore, it is important in this context to maintain the credibility of enlargement as an important tool for achieving positive change in the region. If we ask our partners to meet our conditions, we must also fulfill our commitments." See "M. Lajčák na FAC: „Na Balkáne musíme ukázať viac politickej empatie, rozhodnosti a vyváženosti našej politiky," [M. Lajčák at the FAC meeting: "In the Balkans, we need to show more political empathy, determination and balance in our policy] Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, March 6, 2017. Available online (in Slovak): http://www.mzv.sk/aktuality/detail/-/asset_publisher/lw1ppvnScIPx/content/m-lajcak-na-fac-na-balkane-musime-ukazat-viac-politickej-empatie-rozhodnosti-a-vyvazenosti-nasej-politiky?p_p_auth=ZQPv3Ouj&_101_INSTANCE_lw1ppvnScIPx_redirect=%2Faktuality%2Fvsetky_spravy%3Frok%3D2017%26mesiac%3D2%26strana%3D7 (accessed on March 6, 2017).

⁷ M. Lajčák at the Munich Security Conference pointed to the fact that the Western Balkans has long been in the European Union's sights and has always played a key role in the European security concept. Nevertheless, the region still seeks stability in the international environment today. "It is naive to think that when we close our eyes, the problems and distrust that are the fundamentals

It is natural that the issue of the Western Balkans has also been a subject of negotiations among Visegrad Four foreign ministers. For example, in October 2017 State Secretary Ivan Korčok represented Slovakia at a major Budapest meeting. It was a meeting of foreign ministers of the V4 and those of Western Balkans countries, with representatives from Bulgaria, Slovenia, Romania, Croatia, and Estonia (as the Council of the EU presidency country). The Director of the newly founded Western Balkan Fund – established as an expression of the long-term interest of V4 countries in helping their partners in the region with the transfer of experience – was also present. Korčok has called the Fund a fully functional tool for mutual development and closer cooperation between citizens and institutions throughout the Western Balkan region.

In their joint statement, the V4 countries (among other things) called on the countries of the Western Balkans to accelerate their efforts and reaffirm their willingness to pass through the door to the EU by implementing responsible policy. According to Ivan Korčok, this region is extremely important for the security and stability not only of V4 countries but of all EU member states. He has described the enlargement policy as an important tool in the process of managing such challenges as the migration crisis and the growth of extremism, nationalism and radicalism. That is why Slovakia has always supported the policy of enlargement. Its effectiveness and success will depend primarily, of course, on the Western Balkan countries themselves – their interest, will and concrete actions.⁸

of the growing nationalism will disappear. Unfortunately, it is our fault that we are less active and less relevant in the Balkan region. Are we really ready to abandon this space and leave it to other players? It is high time we revive the processes that will strengthen the credibility of the vision that the EU represents." Lajčák added that this was one of the reasons why the recently completed Slovak presidency of the Council of the EU chose enlargement as one of its priorities. "We have the key to what people and Western Balkan leaders deserve: political stability, economic development and a functioning infrastructure. That is how we can bring stability, predictability and prosperity." See "M. Lajčák na Mníchovskej bezpečnostnej konferencii: „Západný Balkán vždy zohrával jednu z kľúčových úloh v koncepte európskej bezpečnosti," [M. Lajčák at the Munich Security Conference: „The Western Balkans have always played a key role in the European security concept] Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, February 16, 2017. Available online (in Slovak): http://www.mzv.sk/aktuality/detail/-/asset_publisher/lw1ppvnSciPx/content/m-lajcak-na-mnichovskej-bezpecnostnej-konferencii-zapadny-balkan-vzdy-zohravaj-jednu-z-klucovych-uloh-v-koncepte-europskej-bezpecnosti-?p_p_auth=72qsP7UY&_101_INSTANCE_lw1ppvnSciPx_redirect=%2Faktuality%2Fvsetky_spravy%3Frok%3D2017%26mesiac%3D1%26strana%3D3 (accessed on March 6, 2017).

⁸ "The progress of individual countries in reform efforts and the common interest in regional cooperation must be more credible than in the past. Investing in the future of these countries will thus contribute to building a common European security, stability and prosperity," I. Korčok said at the Budapest meeting. See "I. Korčok na stretnutí ministrov zahraničných vecí v Budapešti: "Investícia do budúcnosti západného Balkánu prispeje k budovaniu spoločnej európskej bezpečnosti," [I. Korčok at the meeting of foreign affairs ministers in Budapest: "Investing in the future of the Western Balkans will contribute to building a common European security] Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, October 11, 2017. Available online: http://www.mzv.sk/aktuality/detail/-/asset_publisher/lw1ppvnSciPx/content/i-korcok-na-stretnuti-ministrov-zahranicnych-veci-v-budapesti-investicia-do-buducnosti-zapadneho-balkanu-prispeje-k-budovaniu-spolocnej-europskej-bezpe?p_p_auth=CxfDpNf2&_101_INSTANCE_lw1ppvnSciPx_redirect=%2Faktuality%2Fvsetky_spravy%3Frok%3D2017%26mesiac%3D9%26strana%3D8 (accessed on October 11, 2017).

THE PROBLEM OF NATIONALISM

One problem in this context is that in the states of the region, the political climate is still rather significantly marked by the same nationalism that played a destructive role in the 1990s during the bloody disintegration of the former Yugoslavia. The current political leaders have not succeeded in overcoming the inherited nationalism – on the contrary, they exploit and abuse it both in their internal political struggles and their external neighborly relations, by maintaining and evoking tensions.

This is also reflected, for example, in the reinvigoration of various concepts invoked in efforts being made to change the political and geographic structure of the Western Balkans. It is an illusion to believe that this is the way to solve persistent problems and crises – and thus such unsuccessful projects as “Great Serbia” or “Great Albania” have been unleashed. At the turn of 2016/2017, Milorad Dodik, President of the Republika Srpska – one of the two entities of Bosnia and Herzegovina – has repeatedly said that it would be ideal if a new Serbian state were to be created from today’s Serbia, northern Kosovo, and Republika Srpska.⁹ The then-president of Serbia, Tomislav Nikolić, responding to Dodik’s words in a speech in Banja Luke, even said that “brother Mile (the familiar form of Dodik’s first name) openly talks about our most intense and lustrous wishes and ideas.”¹⁰ Prime Minister of Albania Edi Rama has similarly said that it would be best if Kosovo and Albania had a common foreign and security policy and also one joint president.¹¹

It should be remembered that in all this decay and bloody disintegration of the former Yugoslavia, one of the most rational decisions made – thanks to the international community – was to apply the principle that the borders of Western Balkan countries would not be redefined. Despite the conflicts and wars, and the associated attempt to change the map of the region, all the new states were formed with the same frontiers in which they had existed as part of the former Yugoslavia according to its 1974 Constitution, which was in force until the country’s demise at the beginning of the 1990s. For example, the 2005 directive on Kosovo Status (USA, Russia, Germany, Great Britain, France, Italy), supported by the European Union and NATO – which has not been

⁹ “Milorad Dodik za Kurir: Doživeću ujedinjenje Srbije i Srpske!” [Milorad Dodik for Kurir: I will still live when Serbia and Republik Srpska unite!] *Kurir*, January 6, 2017. Available online: <http://www.kurir.rs/vesti/politika/milorad-dodik-za-kurir-dozivecu-ujedinjenje-srbije-i-srpske-clanak-2621915> (accessed on January 6, 2017).

¹⁰ See the video of the anniversary celebration of the establishment of Republika Srpska at the official website of the President of the Republic of Serbia. Available online: <http://www.predsednik.rs/pres-centar/vesti/predsednik-nikolic-na-svecanoj-akademiji-povodom-dana-republike-srpske> (accessed on January 6, 2018).

¹¹ Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama, at a celebration commemorating the 10th anniversary of the establishment of independent Kosovo, said that “Albania and Kosovo will have a common foreign policy, not just a joint embassy and diplomatic missions. Why should they not have a joint president as a symbol of national unity and a common national security policy?” See “Rama: Albanija i Kosovo – jedan predsednik, što da ne,” [Rama: Albania Kosovo – one president, why not?] *TANJUG*, February 18, 2018. Available online: https://www.b92.net/info/vesti/index.php?yyyy=2018&mm=02&dd=18&nav_category=640&nav_id=1360212 (accessed on February 18, 2018).

cancelled to this day – defined three fundamental points which have been axioms in the development and implementation of the Kosovo solution concept:

1. No return to pre-1999 (i.e. Kosovo will not be part of Serbia);
2. The disintegration of Kosovo is inadmissible, and
3. Kosovo cannot integrate with any other state and cannot become part of any other state.¹²

To imagine that the complex internal problems of society, inter-state relations, the still-open wounds of the tragic war, and the opening up of a path to a better future, could be addressed by some change in the status quo – including a redrawing of the borders of the states in question – would be very irresponsible, as this could not be done without provoking conflict and violence. Pandora's box would be opened, with unpredictable and dangerous consequences not only for the region itself but for the whole of Europe.

In such a situation, it was undoubtedly a positive thing that in 2017 the voice of the Slovak Republic was heard there, invoking action against the region's nationalist tendencies – tendencies pursued allegedly in the interest of solving the Balkan problems by changing the borders and whole structure of the states of the region. Minister Miroslav Lajčák not only strongly opposed calls for the establishment of ethnically pure states, but also pointed out the extortionist character of these tendencies: "If you don't accept us in the EU, we will unite ourselves" – along ethnic lines, of course, which would, in view of the ethnically mixed populations of the Balkans, entail the forced raising of border issues between practically all the states of the region.¹³

Therefore, in the Strategy for the Western Balkans presented by the European Commission on February 6, 2018 (created after multilateral political discussions in the second half of 2017 as a document outlining a credible prospect), it says that the Union does not wish to import conflict – or unresolved and open questions about borders – into its internal environment, nor can it afford to do so. The EU has not had good experience with such problems, as can be seen in the years of unsettled problems in Cyprus, or the even longer-standing problems with the Croatian–Slovenian border. On the contrary, one of the six dominant initiatives defined in the aforementioned Strategy is to support the reconciliation and development of good neighborly relations, a process

¹² "EU treba spriječiti ideje o podjeli država na Zapadnom Balkanu," [The EU should prevent ideas about the division of states in the Western Balkans] *Jutarnji list*, February 8, 2017. Available online: <http://www.jutarnji.hr/komentari/eu-treba-sprijeciti-ideje-o-podjeli-drzava-na-zapadnom-balkanu/5604503/> (accessed on February 18, 2018).

¹³ M. Lajčák, "Ako ďalej na Balkáne," [What next in the Western Balkans] *Pravda.sk*, April 24, 2017. Available online: <https://nazory.pravda.sk/analyzy-a-postrehy/clanok/427417-ako-dalej-na-balkane/> (accessed on February 18, 2018). The author in an article says, among other things: "Obviously, the fault lies with Europe as well. The rhetoric of recent days, in any case alarming, is the result of the Western Balkans being persuaded in past years of our irreplaceable role in solving their problems, and then leaving the region to help itself. The European Union has voluntarily (under the pressure of other crises) abandoned this region, one that was and is natural to us. The solution, in my opinion, is not having more Balkan countries in the European Union. At least not until all these states have all the required credits in their record book. The solution is to have more EU in the Balkans, more active work in individual countries and regions. Perhaps it is time for us to set up a separate body among the European institutions to deal with this."

in which the key role of candidates for membership in the Union is crucial. Mastering this situation is one of the conditions for the success of their activities within the circle of members of the European Union.

SERBIA AND KOSOVO

Currently, the most seriously problematic relationship in the Balkans is that between Serbia and Kosovo. In the latest Strategy for the Western Balkans, it is emphasized that the progress of both countries in their European direction is firmly linked to progress towards normalizing their relations. In order to achieve the ambitious goal of Serbia joining the European Union by 2025, a legally binding agreement on the normalization of relations with Kosovo will have to be concluded and implemented. This is also related to the fact that Kosovo, as an independent state, has still not been recognized by five EU members, including the Slovak Republic (also Cyprus, Greece, Romania and Spain). Serbia considers this a manifestation of the Union's disunity, which morally weakens the EU's requirement for Serbia to agree to Kosovo's independence. In the eyes of Kosovo, this incoherence undermines the plausibility of the EU's policy in the Western Balkans.

So, how is this specifically about Slovakia's relation to the issue of Kosovo independence? In March 2017, State Secretary Lukáš Parížek visited Serbia, and, in his discussion with colleagues from the Serbian foreign ministry, reiterated Slovakia's readiness to support Serbia's ambition to become an EU member state, as well as its commitment not to change its position in relation to the unilaterally declared independence of Kosovo.¹⁴

During the same year, Henrik Markuš – Head of the Department for Southeastern Europe and Turkey at the Foreign Ministry (currently he already serves as the Slovak ambassador to Republic of Macedonia) – indicated that the Slovak Republic's recognition of Kosovo is a process in which Slovakia is “maximally constructive, anywhere – wherever Kosovo deserves it.” At an event organized on November 24, 2017 by *EurActiv.sk*, he added that “the more (Kosovo) does its homework, the more the skeptical countries will be convinced” of the possibility of Slovakia's recognition of the country.¹⁵

In February 2017, at the 53rd Munich Security Conference, Miroslav Lajčák met with Kosovo's then Foreign Minister Enver Hoxhaj. They discussed the political situation in Kosovo and the development of relations between Belgrade and Pristina, with

¹⁴ “Štátny tajomník L. Parížek navštívil Srbskú republiku,” [State Secretary visits Serbia] Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, March 30, 2017. Available online: http://www.mzv.sk/aktuality/detail/-/asset_publisher/lw1ppvnScIPx/content/statny-tajomnik-l-parizek-navstivil-srbsku-republiku?p_p_auth=x6YkMu4s&_101_INSTANCE_lw1ppvnScIPx_redirect=%2Faktuality%2Fvsetky_spravy%3Frok%3D2017%26mesiac%3D2 (accessed on February 18, 2018).

¹⁵ L. Yar, “Západný Balkán nemá inú možnosť ako európsku integráciu,” [The Western Balkans have no other option than EU integration] *euractiv.sk*, November 27, 2017. Available online: <https://euractiv.sk/section/rozsirovanie/news/zapadny-balkan-nema-inu-moznost-ako-europsku-integraciju/> (accessed on January 15, 2018).

an emphasis on making progress in creating a Community of Municipalities with the Serbian majority. Lajčák reiterated the view that dialogue is the only tool for dealing with open issues with neighbors, in relation both to Serbia and Montenegro. Slovakia supports Kosovo's efforts to achieve visa liberalization, but two important conditions must be met – progress in building the rule of law, and entry into force of the agreement on demarcating the border with Montenegro signed by both parties in 2015.¹⁶ From this point of view, Slovak foreign policy towards Kosovo and the Kosovo issue as such is not insensitive to hard realities. This does not, however, change the fact that the need for taking a dynamic stand on the question of recognition of Kosovo's independence – which is also in the interests of the efficiency and credibility of the process of enlarging European integration in the Western Balkans – is becoming more and more urgent.

SERBIA'S PROGRESS

As for the problems of Serbia, it is important to stress that the process of integrating into the European Union is certainly not just about Kosovo, as some Serbian politicians have claimed in speaking to their local audience. In so doing they hope to divert attention from other essential issues of Serbian society, to awaken a greater disrespect for the European Union, and – in line with Russia's conservative strategy – to isolate Serbia from the process of transformation and modernization. That is why the activities of the EU, and naturally those of Slovakia, are important. Serbia needs a strong and persistent political will to reach consensus on major reforms, particularly in the field of the rule of law and on economic issues. In the accession process, Serbia and the EU are now dealing with two important areas: Chapter 23 on the judiciary and fundamental rights, and Chapter 24 on justice, freedom and security. These are linked to core values and principles of the EU, such as democracy, the rule of law, and an independent judiciary – that is, areas which are indispensable for the introduction of European standards and the strengthening of citizens' rights. In 2017, debates among experts began on those changes requiring implementation of the principles defined in the two chapters. This is not a job that is easy or simple, as it will result in changes to the constitution of Serbia as well. It is likely that such changes will also require the implementation of Chapter 35, which was opened at the very beginning of the accession process and will be on the agenda until it is over. This concerns the solution to the Kosovo question.

Negotiating Chapters 23 and 24 will allow Serbia to achieve solid results in the implementation of reforms at an early stage in the enlargement process. Serbia must

¹⁶ "M. Lajčák v Mníchove: „USA nás ubezpečujú, že euroatlantické partnerstvo je pevné a neochvejné," [M. Lajčák in Munich: "The US assures us that the Euro-Atlantic partnership is firm] Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, February 18, 2017. Available online: https://www.mzv.sk/sr/aktuality/detail/-/asset_publisher/lw1ppvnScIPx/content/m-lajcak-v-mnichove-usa-nas-ubezpecuju-ze-euroatlanticke-partnerstvo-je-pevne-a-neochvejne?p_p_auth=baohyAFk&_101_INSTANCE_lw1ppvnScIPx_redirect=%2Fsr%2Faktuality%2Faktiviti_ministra%3Fstrana%3D6 (accessed on January 15, 2018).

meet a number of preliminary criteria – 50 preliminary criteria for Chapter 23, and 41 preliminary criteria for Chapter 24.¹⁷

Slovakia's efforts regarding Serbia during the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the EU were followed, at the end of February 2017 (during the Maltese Presidency of Council of the EU), by the opening of Chapter 20 on Enterprise and Industrial Policy, and Chapter 26 on Education and Culture, which has already been provisionally closed. At the sixth intergovernmental conference in June 2017, Chapter 7 on Intellectual Property Law and Chapter 27 on the Customs Union were opened.

MONTENEGRO'S LEADERSHIP

In addition to Serbia, the Union is negotiating also with Montenegro. Montenegro is considered the leader in EU membership negotiations, for whom the year 2025 has been set – not as a clear date for accession, but as a date by which the formal stage of its Euro-Atlantic integration could be successfully concluded. As of June 5, 2017, Montenegro is the third country of the former Yugoslavia (after Slovenia and Croatia) to be admitted as a full member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Peter Gajdoš, the Slovak Minister of Defense, visited Montenegro on that same day and was able to congratulate Montenegrin President Filip Vujanović, Speaker of the Parliament Ivan Brajović, and his counterpart, Minister of Defense Predrag Bošković.¹⁸

Slovakia has been instrumental since the beginning of Montenegro's accession process to NATO. Non-governmental organizations from both countries, for example – in cooperation with the relevant ministries (foreign and defense) – organized public discussions for several years across the country. They spoke of the significance and nature of relations within NATO, and the benefits of membership for security, political stability and economic development. The Slovak Foreign Ministry welcomed the day of Montenegro's accession to NATO with a special statement. Minister Miroslav Lajčák stated that Montenegro – now with full membership in NATO and significant progress made in its accession to the European Union – has fulfilled the integration ambitions it has had since its independence in 2006, and has confirmed the decision

¹⁷ "Úspech slovenského predsedníctva: EÚ otvorila dve kapitoly so Srbskom," [Slovak Presidency Success: The EU opens two chapters with Serbia] Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, July 18, 2017. Available online: http://www.mzv.sk/aktuality/detail/-/asset_publisher/1w1ppvnScIPx/content/uspech-slovenskeho-predsednictva-eu-otvorila-dve-kapitoly-so-srbskom?p_p_auth=N1AQcbBU&_101_INSTANCE_1w1ppvnScIPx_redirect=%2Faktuality%2Fvsetky_spravy%3Frok%3D2016%26mesiac%3D6%26strana%3D3 (accessed on January 15, 2018).

¹⁸ "Minister obrany P.Gajdoš navštívil Čiernu Horu v deň jej oficiálneho vstupu do NATO," [Defense Minister P. Gajdoš visits Montenegro on the day of its official accession to NATO] Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, June 12, 2017. Available online: https://www.mzv.sk/web/podgorica/detail/-/asset_publisher/bZtjMy3iNwbo/content/minister-obrany-p-gajdos-navstivil-ciernu-horu-v-den-jej-oficialneho-vstupu-do-nato/10182?p_p_auth=uJROyftw&_101_INSTANCE_bZtjMy3iNwbo_redirect=%2Fweb%2Fpodgorica%2Fspravy (accessed on January 15, 2018).

of its citizenry as to the country's foreign policy direction. NATO accession, he said, is therefore a historical milestone for the country.¹⁹

Montenegro has already opened 28 chapters. However, there is a certain imbalance in this process, as only three chapters have been closed. As in the case of Serbia, the key ones are Chapters 23 and 24, which apply to the rule of law agenda. Montenegro has its biggest concerns with this, as well as with the fight against corruption, public administration, and freedom of press, especially with its public media.

Minister Miroslav Lajčák, at regular meetings with Montenegrin representatives (in 2017 he met with Srdjan Darmanović and Parliament Speaker Ivan Brajović), stressed that Montenegro must not allow its efforts to achieve visible results in the field of reforms to slow down. Slovakia also supports the efforts of the Montenegrin government to convince the political opposition to return to parliament – and in this respect has praised the active communication of Speaker of Parliament Ivan Brajović and Prime Minister Duško Marković, who have demonstrated the government's readiness to engage in political dialogue.

In the series of direct contacts between the highest representatives of Slovakia and Montenegro, besides the visits of Defense Minister Peter Gajdoš one should also mention the calls of Minister of Finance Petr Kažimír, Minister of Education, Science, Research and Sports Peter Plavčan, Foreign Ministry State Secretary Ivan Korčok, and particularly the visit of the Speaker of the National Council of the SR, Andrej Danko. It was the first visit of a Speaker of the Slovak Parliament since Montenegro's independence in 2006. He also met with the most prominent political figure in Montenegro, Social Democrat Party Chairman Milo Djukanović, whom he assured that "We are ready to continue supporting you within EU political forums, while providing concrete assistance in the form of transferring practical experience from our own accession process."²⁰

¹⁹ M. Lajčák highlighted in the ministry's statement Montenegro's successful reform effort, in which it faced many challenges. Let us recall that this country was exposed to enormous Russian pressure regarding its membership in NATO. Minister Lajčák stressed that Montenegro had already belonged to responsible and reliable alliance partnerships even before participating in several NATO activities, such as the participation of its soldiers in the Resolute Support Peace Mission in Afghanistan. He expressed the hope that NATO membership will also help Montenegro maintain momentum in its accession negotiations with the EU, where it is the leader in integration among partner countries in the Western Balkans. See: "Rezort diplomacie uvítal vstup Čiernej Hory do NATO," [Foreign Ministry welcomes the accession of Montenegro to NATO] Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, June 5, 2017. Available online: http://www.mzv.sk/aktuality/detail/-/asset_publisher/lw1ppvnScIPx/content/rezort-diplomacie-uvital-vstup-ciernej-hory-do-nato?p_p_auth=sBWQFxcb&_101_INSTANCE_lw1ppvnScIPx_redirect=%2Faktuality%2Fvyhlasenia_a_stanoviska%3Fstrana%3D3 (accessed on January 15, 2018).

²⁰ "Zahraničnopolitický význam historicky prvej cesty parlamentnej delegácie SR v Čiernej Hore," [The foreign policy significance of the historically first visit of Slovakia's parliamentary delegation to Montenegro] Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, October 4, 2017. Available online: https://www.mzv.sk/web/podgorica/spravy/-/asset_publisher/qUcjGk6Falrh/content/zahranicnopoliticky-vyznam-historicky-prvej-cesty-parlamentnej-delegacie-sr-v-ciernej-hore/10182?p_p_auth=Zgyvt9GE&_101_INSTANCE_qUcjGk6Falrh_redirect=%2Fweb%2Fpodgorica (accessed on January 15, 2018).

THE HOPE FOR ALBANIA AND MACEDONIA

The other countries with a candidate status for EU membership are Albania and Macedonia. Albania has been a candidate country since 2014, but accession negotiations have not yet begun. Slovak MEP Eduard Kukan, who as a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the European Parliament has focused for a long time on the issue of the Western Balkans, has expressed the conviction that Albania will soon be given a deadline for the start of accession talks. So far, he sees the situation as follows: “Albania’s bad political culture is responsible for a two year delay in the negotiation process.”²¹

For Albania, there are still five priority areas in which progress is expected to be a prerequisite for opening accession negotiations. These are the following:

1. progress in public administration reform;
2. strengthening the independence, efficiency and accountability of judicial institutions;
3. the fight against corruption;
4. the fight against organized crime; and
5. strengthening the protection of human rights.

Within this program, for example, the task of comprehensive judicial reform has already been adopted.

The search for answers on how to implement these five tasks were part of the National Convention on the European Union project, implemented by the Slovak Foreign Policy Association in cooperation with European Movement Albania and the relevant ministries. In particular, the project focused on institutionalizing public debate on issues of European integration on the basis of partnerships between governmental, non-governmental, business, and special-interest organizations, as well as strengthening the state’s capacity to negotiate its accession to the EU.

In the case of Slovak–Macedonian relations, the opening of the National Convention on the European Union in November 2017 in the capital city of Skopje was also an important element. Macedonia is the fifth country of the Western Balkans in which the Slovak Foreign Policy Association has successfully implemented this project with the financial support of SlovakAid (and in the case of Macedonia, also USAID). In Macedonia, as elsewhere, the Convention’s objectives are to involve a wider professional public from all segments of society in the formation of national policies related to the European integration agenda, and the transfer of Slovak know-how from its own political, economic and social transformation. It is also about creating a long-term, reliable, interactive and constant information resource for the EU for all components of society. The start of the implementation of the project was connected with the visit of State Secretary Ivan Korčok, whose aim was to express support for the new Macedonian government, and to support it in its efforts to return to the integration trajectory through a concrete form of assistance – the transfer of Slovak experience from its own accession process.

Ivan Korčok met on this occasion with leading Macedonian constitutional actors – Speaker of Parliament Talat Xhaferi, Prime Minister Zoran Zaev, Deputy Prime Minister

²¹ L. Yar, *op. cit.*

for European Integration Bujar Osmani, and Foreign Minister Nikola Dimitrov. "The recent steps taken by the new Macedonian government are very promising, and are an expression of determination and genuine political will to successfully fulfill its Euro-Atlantic integration ambitions in the near future," said Ivan Korčok. At the same time, he expressed appreciation for the efforts of the Macedonian government to resolve relations with neighboring countries in a favorable political climate. Macedonian officials highly praised the comprehensive support of Slovakia on the political level, as well as its concrete assistance – including the sending of Slovak police on joint patrols for border surveillance between the Republic of Macedonia and the Hellenic Republic, and for the prevention and elimination of illegal migration.²²

It is important also to mention that Slovakia has maintained a high level of constructive bilateral relations, even during the dramatic internal political situation Macedonia experienced during 2017. As an example of the sentiment this has engendered, Macedonia's Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister, Oliver Spasovski, when he officially accepted Slovak material assistance to the Macedonian police, called Slovakia a friendly country that has repeatedly held Macedonia's hand when it was most needed.²³

An interesting initiative of the Slovak Embassy in Skopje was its holding a closed viewing of the Slovak film "Abduction." The aim was to give Macedonian politicians greater familiarity with the situation as it was in Slovakia during the so-called period of Mečiarism. This issue is particularly relevant in present-day Macedonia due to a number of similarities between that period and Macedonia's so-called "Gruevism" period (the rule of Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski between 2006–2017), which ended with the formation of a reform government led by Zoran Zaev in May 2017. Invited representatives of the former regime from the VMRO-DPMNE party did not come to the screening. Another opportunity for Macedonians to get acquainted with Slovak film making was the 2nd International Film Festival of Spiritual and Human Values. Thanks to the initiative and cooperation of the Embassy of the Slovak Republic in Skopje, the festival opened with a famous documentary by Slovak director and writer Matej Mináč – "Nicky's Family."

²² "We are watching closely and understand the difficult situation in which Macedonia finds itself after a long-standing political crisis. It is crucial that EU as well as NATO integration continues to have full support at all levels of Macedonian society. It is one of the few processes that are equally supported by all relevant political actors as well as by ethnic and religious communities," the State Secretary said during the opening of the project. See: "I. Korčok slávnostne otvoril Národný konvent o Európskej únii v Macedónsku," [I. Korčok officially opens the National Convention on the EU in Macedonia] Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, November 10, 2017. Available online: http://www.mzv.sk/aktuality/detail/-/asset_publisher/lw1ppvnSciPx/content/i-korcok-slavnostne-otvoril-narodny-konvent-o-europskej-unii-v-macedonsku?p_p_auth=CxfDpNf2&_101_INSTANCE_lw1ppvnSciPx_redirect=%2Faktuality%2Fvsetky_spravy%3Frok%3D2017%26mesiac%3D10%26strana%3D10 (accessed on November 10, 2017).

²³ "Slovensko opakovane podáva Macedónsku ruku pri zvládaní migračnej krízy," [Slovakia repeatedly gives Macedonia a hand in managing the migration crisis] Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, September 20, 2017. Available online: http://www.mzv.sk/aktuality/detail/-/asset_publisher/lw1ppvnSciPx/content/slovensko-opakovane-macedonsku-ruku-pri-zvladani-migracnej-krizy?p_p_auth=OkdF0z9M&_101_INSTANCE_lw1ppvnSciPx_redirect=%2Faktuality%2Fvsetky_spravy%3Frok%3D2017%26mesiac%3D8%26strana%3D5 (accessed on September 20, 2017).

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA – UNFULFILLED EXPECTATIONS

The year 2017 was a period of a certain political stagnation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Although the country had made progress on its path to the European Union in 2016, expectations of continued reform were not wholly fulfilled in 2017, either economically, politically or socially. Issues within these general areas of concern were covered in May by Minister Miroslav Lajčák during his meeting in Mostar with the Chairman of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mladen Ivanić, and Croatian member of the Presidency, Dragan Čović.²⁴

Lajčák accepted in Mostar the European Personality of the Year award for 2016, given by the local daily Evening Letter in recognition of his helping Bosnia and Herzegovina on its path to the European Union. “I am grateful for such appreciation all the more that it is related to the European Union, which I believe in and support,” said Lajčák in his acceptance speech.

The Embassy of the Slovak Republic in Sarajevo took over from the United Kingdom the role of NATO Contact Point Embassy for Bosnia and Herzegovina in January. Its role will be to support the Alliance’s activities in partner countries for two years, and to participate in public diplomacy. The Embassy hopes to raise awareness about the Alliance, to support the intensifying public debate over responses to new security challenges, to provide partners with experience in reforming Slovakia’s own defense and security structures, and to assist Bosnia and Herzegovina with its integration into Euro–Atlantic structures. In the past, Slovak embassies have fulfilled this same role as NATO Contact Point in Ukraine and Serbia.

Another success of Slovak diplomacy was that of Ambassador Drahošlav Štefánek becoming Head of the Office of the Council of Europe in Bosnia and Herzegovina in January 2017. His role will be to lead the continued implementation of the Action Program of the Council of Europe in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as to provide technical assistance and support bodies and institutions, particularly in the areas of capacity building in the judiciary sector (in its applying of European human rights standards at the national level), strengthening of the ombudsman institution in the

²⁴ To both of these Bosnian-Herzegovinan politicians M. Lajčák said: “I am convinced that Bosnia and Herzegovina has the capacity to move forward in the processes of reform and integration much further than it is today. The country needs change in order to modernize and adapt to the present. This is not just about adopting legislation, but about introducing changes into practical life. This means, for example, the Labor Code, laws regulating the banking sector, the business environment, pension and disability insurance, and so on. It seems, however, that after the local elections last year, the pace of these reforms has been slowing down somewhat, which is not good.” The minister also drew attention to the overall context in the region, where the security situation is worsening and relations are now tighter than they were a year ago. In this context, he also mentioned some issues that have recently contributed to the cleavage of the ruling coalition in Bosnia. See: “M. Lajčák si v Mostare prevzal cenu za pomoc Bosne a Hercegovine na jej ceste do EÚ,” [M. Lajčák accepts award for assistance to Bosnia and Herzegovina on its path to the EU] Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, May 18, 2017. Available online: https://www.mzv.sk/web/sarajevo/detail/-/asset_publisher/bZtjMy3iNwbo/content/m-lajcak-si-v-mostare-prevzal-cenu-za-pomoc-bosne-a-hercegovine-na-jej-cesto-do-eu/10182?p_auth=SyeTUCz9&_101_INSTANCE_bZtjMy3iNwbo_redirect=%2Fweb%2Fsarajevo%2Fspravy (accessed on May 18, 2017).

fight against discrimination of the rights of national minorities, and the strengthening of judicial expertise in the application of freedom of expression and media in South East Europe.

INSTEAD OF A CONCLUSION

Lastly, we would like to emphasize that the Western Balkans has long been in the sights not only of Slovakia, but of the whole of the European Union. It has always played a very important role in the concept of European security. Nevertheless, the region has not yet achieved stability, either domestically or in terms of the international arena. This is a great challenge for Europe, and also, of course, for Slovakia.

In connection with the Western Balkans there has been much discussion about breakthroughs and momentums. It became clear only afterwards whether the events and moments we witnessed were really breakthroughs. Today, however, it seems that we are experiencing an important stage in the awakening of relations between the Western Balkans and the rest of Europe. At least, signals coming from the European Union seem to betoken the will to put an end to the fatigue of enlargement. Such signals have been visible in previous years as well, and it is worth mentioning that they have come from Slovak diplomacy.

The second half of 2017 was mainly associated with the European Commission's preparations to develop and complete the Strategy for the Western Balkans – a credible enlargement prospect that was published in February 2018. It highlights in particular that the policy is geared towards geostrategic investment in a stable, strong and unified Europe based on common values. In the strategy presented, the European Commission sets out six flagship initiatives that will further strengthen cooperation in several areas and support the transformation process in the Western Balkans. These initiatives focus on specific areas of common interest: the rule of law, security and migration, socio-economic development, transport and energy interconnection, the digital agenda, and reconciliation and good neighborly relations.

As described above, Slovakia has for many years (2017 was not exception) been contributing in many ways to similar initiatives. That is why Slovakia is now a good brand within the Western Balkans, with a reputation as a reliable partner. That is why there is a strong feeling of the long-term deficit in contributing to the socio-economic development of Western Balkan countries, as compared with other countries. The EU as a whole is today the most important donor and investor, and at the same time the largest trading partner of the Western Balkans, with a total annual trading volume of 43 billion euros (2016).²⁵ Of course, the potential of Slovakia cannot be compared to that of the larger member countries of the Union. The picture, however, is not so different when compared to that of the smaller states, which are also better able to use their capacity in trade and other forms of economic cooperation in the Western Balkans. It is important to remember that in this area of our relations, mutual underestimation and prejudice still exist. It seems that Slovakia has underestimated the

²⁵ "Strategy for the Western Balkans: EU sets out new flagship initiatives and support for the reform-driven region," Strasbourg, February 6, 2018.

possibilities offered in this regard by the Berlin Process, which began in 2014, being initiated by Angela Merkel.

Its purpose was, and still is, to help overcome the fatigue of enlargement in a time of crisis in relations between the European Union and Russia (because of the latter's policy towards Ukraine), and to show that the Union has not taken its hands away from the Western Balkans. This is a political message to the states of the region, and at the same time a strong impetus for economic projects that will bring the Balkan countries closer together and, of course, closer to the EU. After summits at Berlin, Vienna, Paris and Trieste, the fifth summit of the Berlin Process will take place in London. The Berlin Process, along with the forthcoming (in May) EU Joint Summit with the Western Balkan countries in Sofia – which will focus on the implementation of the abovementioned new enlargement strategy – are two key political events pertaining to the southeastern part of Europe and its integration with the rest of Europe. For Slovakia, this is an opportunity to demonstrate its consistency in fulfilling one of the strategic tasks of Slovak foreign policy, its activity in the Western Balkans.

III.

SLOVAKIA'S FOREIGN
POLICY TOOLS

SLOVAK OFFICIAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION IN 2017

MARIÁN ČAUČÍK

All quiet on the Slovak ODA Front – this is what could be said when reflecting on the year 2017 from a development cooperation point of view. Implementation of the eight main development cooperation programs under the SlovakAid logo in 2017 was much like it was in 2016, and – just as one year ago – it may again be said that the results achieved in 2017 were adequate to the inadequate resources invested, bearing in mind the Slovak ODA system’s year-long stagnation.

Apart from a few new developments – such as the first project from the Emergency Trust Fund for Africa, entrusted to lead by Slovak entities or the official visit of President Andrej Kiska in Kenya – in the political field, ODA has not really moved substantially one step ahead. Rather, it seems that quite a few pending systemic issues have been neglected: neither the missing National Strategy for Global Education nor the Humanitarian Assistance Concept have been elaborated, the new modality of Framework contracts and Block Grants for Slovak development actors has not started, and the agreed increment of bilateral ODA funding was neglected in formulating the 2018 State Budget.

It will be good to start with the self-evaluation of the development cooperation system, as it appeared in the government document Memorandum OECD DAC Peer Review 2018 Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Assistance of the Slovak Republic (prepared in 2017):

The government of the Slovak Republic (SR) does not have a top-level statement that would connect development cooperation with national interests, global challenges and foreign policy orientation. Such a statement needs to be drafted and adopted. However, the government is

aware of the importance of the role of development cooperation, and therefore the Manifesto of the Government of the Slovak Republic 2016–2020 includes the need to annually increase development aid funds in compliance with the commitments of the SR in the EU, the UN and the OECD.

Despite the negative impacts caused by economic crises in the past, the SR has succeeded in maintaining a stable level of ODA in recent years. In relation to the target values adopted at the EU level (to achieve a 0.17 per cent ODA/GNI share in 2010 and 0.33 per cent in 2015): in 2015, a 0.1 per cent ODA/GNI share was achieved, while in 2016 the ODA/GNI share increased to 0.12 per cent. The SR is willing to gradually fulfill its commitments depending on the development of the country's own economic situation. During the validation of the new mid-term strategy, the SR is striving to gradually increase its ODA budget, especially in relation to its bilateral portion.

Thus it is stated in the Memorandum for the DAC Peer Review of the Slovak Republic 2018 in the fields of Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Assistance, Bratislava 2017.

THE 2030 AGENDA

In January 2017 the Government adopted a document, developed by Foreign Ministry, on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the International Environment, which includes Slovakia's commitment to continue increasing the ODA budget so as to achieve a target of 0.33 per cent of the ODA/GNI by 2030, depending on the possibilities within the state budget in individual years.

BILATERAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

After the Slovak Government agreed to the ODA allocation for 2017, Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajčák announced an agreement with the Finance Ministry, that every year the expenses for direct bilateral development cooperation will be increased by 10 per cent.¹ This has been done for the state budget allocation for 2018, where the allocation has increased to 7.214 million euros (from 6.55 million euros in 2017). However, the indicative budgets for 2019 and 2020 are projected to remain at the same level, which is contrary to the agreement and also to the claims made in the DAC Peer review Memo.

¹ "Slovensko každoročne navýši výdavky na rozvojovú pomoc, hovorí Lajčák," [Slovakia to increase its development cooperation budget annually] *Sme*, February 22, 2017. Available online: <https://domov.sme.sk/c/20466230/slovensko-kazdorocne-navysi-vydavky-na-rozvojovu-pomoc-hovori-lajcak.html> (accessed on February 18, 2018).

No joint effort or negotiation of the Minister of Foreign and European Affairs with the Minister of Finance for the practical implementation of a gradual increase in the share of official development cooperation to the promised level was publicly recorded in 2017.

The key programming document in the area of development cooperation is the Medium-Term Strategy for Development Cooperation of the SR 2014–2018, which lays down its vision, main goals, principles, and territorial and sectoral priorities – while at the same time defining the programs, instruments and mechanisms which are to be used for reaching the set goals. The Slovak Republic has eight programs and 13 instruments of bilateral development cooperation, which are obviously not seen as being in proper proportion to the modest budget.

MULTILATERAL ODA ALLOCATIONS

In contrast to bilateral aid, multilateral allocations have been growing in recent years. Annual aid in the form of multilateral contributions accounts for more than 80.6 per cent of the total volume of Slovak ODA.² The Slovak Republic pays more than 80 per cent of its multilateral official development aid into the EU budget and the EDF. The proportion of multilateral contributions going towards bilateral ODA is repeatedly criticized by the Slovak NGDO Platform, who say that “millions are flowing as contributions to those institutions where Slovakia can monitor their impact on tangible help only in a very limited way.”

SLOVAK AID AT HOME

Both bilateral and multilateral development aid are considered to be tools targeted towards the “outside,” where Slovakia is providing financial aid either to concrete countries and partners or to international organizations. There is one important development cooperation program aimed at the Slovak public, which is meant to educate people at home and provide information about the above-mentioned programs and financial contributions, and their importance – Global and Development Education.

Because of its growing importance in the context of the migration crisis, and the challenges and opportunities connected with Global Education, the focus of this article will be on Global Education in the Slovak ODA system.

² See official document of the Government of the Slovak Republic. Available online: http://www.rokovania.sk/File.aspx/ViewDocumentHtml/Mater-Dokum-209020?prefixFile=m_ (accessed on March 8, 2018)

BASIC FRAMEWORK FOR GLOBAL EDUCATION IN SLOVAKIA

Global Education has been regarded as an integral part of the new system of official development cooperation in the Slovak Republic since its launch in 2004.

In 2007, Act 617/2007, relating to official development cooperation, development education is considered to be an official part of development cooperation. It is understood as a basic form of aid, with the Act explicitly stating that Slovakia would carry out development education.³

In Act 392/2015 on Development cooperation, development education is understood as a development approach that leads to a deeper understanding of diversity and inequality in the world, the causes of their existence, and the possibilities for solving related problems.

Another important strategic document, the Medium-term Strategy for Development Cooperation of the Slovak Republic for 2014–2018 recognizes the Development Education and Public Awareness Program as a program that enhances integration of the development agenda into school plans and curricula at all levels of the Slovak education system. The program is also intended to increase the awareness of the general and professional Slovak public, media, and relevant stakeholders concerning the meaning and importance of development cooperation, as well as to increase their involvement in development activities.

In 2012 the first National Strategy for Global Education entered into force for the period 2012–2016, after a process of preparation involving multiple stakeholders. The implementation of the Strategy was based on action plans to be adopted on an annual basis. The main bodies responsible for tasks were the Ministry of Education, the National Institute for Education, the Methodological-Pedagogical Centre, IUVENTA, the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, the SAIDC and the NDGO Platform.

The strategy defined global education as an educational approach leading to a deeper understanding of diversity and inequality in the world, the causes of their existence, and the possibilities for solving related problems. The education should increase awareness of global issues related to each individual, the development of his critical thinking within these issues, and a deeper understanding of areas and topics related to the whole world. Global education also includes global development education (education related to the issue of developing countries and poverty in the world), environmental education, multicultural education, peace education and human rights education in the global context.

FUNDING FOR GLOBAL EDUCATION

Since 2005, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has supported the activities of Slovak organizations in development education and public awareness through projects under SlovakAid. Within the National Program for Official Development Cooperation there is a yearly budget for such activities, with a budget of approximately one

³ See “Zákon o oficiálnej rozvojovej pomoci 617/2007 Z. z., [Act 617/2007 on development assistance]. Available online: <http://www.epi.sk/zz/2007-617> (accessed on January 30, 2018).

million euros being made available within the education field from 2005–2011. In 2016, four projects with a total funding of 139,518 euros were approved within the framework of the development education program. The projects focused on introducing development subjects into the university education system, the cooperation of community leaders and self-governments in conflict resolution, and the challenges of contemporary urban planning in Afghanistan.

In 2017, no substantial steps were taken. As in the previous year, four new projects totaling 135,313.80 euros were approved for NGOs active in global education at Slovak universities. The new global education budget for 2018 stayed with the same allocation of 100,000 euros. The new government document specifying the Development cooperation program for 2018 states (regarding the development education program): "The core of this program in the next period will be support for integration of development issues into the education curricula of various levels of Slovak schools."⁴

The global education program under the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs has been funded inadequately for a long time. The regular budgetary item does not provide enough funding either for ongoing or new activities. The migration crisis, the parliamentary elections of March 2016, and growth of extremism have shown the need to invest much more into solidarity programs, global subjects and integration in both the formal and non-formal education sectors.

A similar situation can be seen within the Ministry of Education, which supports accredited children and youth organizations with systemic grants. The budgetary item for support of non-formal education and regular work with youth through civil society organizations has stagnated for many years below the level of two million euros a year. These organizations have relevant programs of informal education where global and citizen educational themes and approaches can be integrated. Youth organizations are aiming at a very important target group and have direct access to and an impact on their members, and beyond to their peers.

Unfortunately, both the Education Ministry and the Foreign and European Affairs Ministry failed to initiate an increase in funds for development and global education both in the 2017 and 2018 budgets, though there are positive prerequisites for this stated in the current Government Manifesto:

The Government recognizes the importance of working with young people and the importance of non-formal education for further value development among young people, for enhancing their personal, social and labor skills, and for eradicating extremism and totalitarian ideas in society. The Government gives credit to civic society organizations for their contribution in this area and will create adequate conditions for them.⁵

⁴ "Zameranie bilaterálnej rozvojovej spolupráce Slovenskej republiky na rok 2018," [Slovak bilateral assistance plan for 2018] Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic, 2018. Available online: http://slovakaid.sk/sites/default/files/zameranie_bilaterálnej_rozvojovej_spoluprace_slovenskej_republiky_na_rok_2018.pdf (accessed on March 12, 2018).

⁵ See "Manifesto of the Government of the Slovak Republic 2016–2020," Government of the Slovak Republic, 2016. Available online: <http://www.vlada.gov.sk/data/files/6489.pdf> (accessed on March 12, 2018).

HOW YOUNG PEOPLE THINK ABOUT DEVELOPMENT, DEMOCRACY AND THE EU

According to a 2016 survey of the Eurobarometer, almost four-fifths (79 per cent) of the Slovak population consider aid to people in developing countries important. More than a half (54 per cent) of Slovaks agree with the statement that the fight against poverty in developing countries should be one of the main priorities of the EU or the national government. Overall, according to the indicators, the attitude of Slovaks is below the European average, where 89 per cent think helping people in developing countries is important and 69 per cent think it should be a priority of the EU and the national governments.

There is a positive trend in support of development aid among young people. Two-thirds (66 per cent) of Slovaks agree with the statement that aid given to developing countries contributes to strengthening peace and equality in the world. The same share of Slovak citizens (66 per cent) is of the opinion that development aid is an effective way to tackle irregular migration.⁶

Obviously the views of young people on global issues are interrelated with the conditions in which they live, and with how they perceive their own society and their position within it.

It is alarming that 63 per cent of Slovak young people expressed the feeling that they have been marginalized and excluded from economic and social life. Only 49 per cent think that training and school and university education in Slovakia are well adapted to the current work world.⁷

In another opinion poll, targeting young people in V4 countries, participants were asked how they feel within their own country, how they envision their future, whether they have an influence on how society works, and in what ways they are politically involved.

The findings of this survey are alarming as well, as they show a deep mistrust among young people towards state institutions. More than 80 per cent of them do not trust the government or parliament, 67 per cent do not trust the courts. Many respondents feel they cannot influence what is happening within society or the country – as many as 43 per cent of them think they do not have an influence on how the state or institutions work. This mistrust extends across the V4 regions. However, young people do see meaning in civic initiatives outside the political system – 69 per cent of respondents say they trust youth and student activities. Another sign of hope is that young people have not totally given up interest in politics. They know politics concerns them, but they do not discuss it in public. They talk about politics with friends and parents in particular; less at school. Very few young people actively enter public space – only eight per cent of them have personally taken part in a public rally or demonstration, 10 per cent have participated in boycotts of prod-

⁶ “Special Eurobarometer 441 – The European Year for Development – Citizens’ views on Development, Cooperation and aid,” European Commission, February 2, 2016. Available online: https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/special-eurobarometer-441-european-year-development-citizens-viewson-development-cooperation-and-aid_en (accessed on January 30, 2018).

⁷ “European youth in 2016. Special Eurobarometer of the European Parliament: European Parliament, May 2016. Available online: http://www.europarl.europa.eu/pdf/eurobarometre/2016/eye2016/eb85_1_eye_2016_analytical_overview_en.pdf (accessed on January 30, 2018).

ucts, and six per cent have taken part in distributing leaflets with political content in the last year.⁸

A strong signal is sent from the 30 per cent of Slovaks aged 15 to 24 who say it is a bad thing for their country to be in the EU – the most euro-sceptic group, according to an online opinion poll carried out in late January-early February in Germany, Austria, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and the Czech Republic. Only 13 per cent of Germans share a similar view, according to the Bertelsmann Foundation which commissioned the poll.⁹ According to another V4 opinion poll, conducted on behalf of the International Republican Institute in March 2017, 54 per cent of young people perceive the EU as an association of sovereign states with little connection to individual citizens and think that citizens owe their loyalty and sacrifice to their states, not to the EU. About 47 per cent of young Slovaks see access to the common market and border-free travel as the greatest benefit Slovakia receives through its EU membership, while for 30 per cent the greatest benefit is the EU financial aid. This is obviously too small a portion when it comes to believing in and having a positive attitude towards the common European project. The prevalence of this negative view was shown again by the same poll, with 57 per cent of young Slovaks identifying themselves with the statement “the European Project played a major role in creating modern Europe, but the world has changed and the Project needs to be rethought.”¹⁰

This radicalization of the Slovak political scene was confirmed by the results of the parliamentary elections in March 2016 in which extremist party Kotleba–Ľudová strana Naše Slovensko reached 8.04 per cent of the votes, with the results of a FOCUS exit-poll showing that the major support came from young people aged 18 to 39 years. This age group constitutes up to 70 per cent of Kotleba's electorate. An alarming statistic brought out by Oľga Gyárfašová and Martin Slosiarik reveals that among first-voters, ĽSNS received the votes of 22.7 per cent of this age group.¹¹

The election campaign introduced a lot of anti-migrant rhetoric and attitudes into Slovak society, by the ruling party SMER and its top leaders as well. The tough rhetoric on the migrant issue continued in 2016 and 2017, coming especially from Prime

⁸ See “Prieskum Rady mládeže Slovenska: Táto krajina nie je pre mladých,” [Opinion Poll of Youth Council of Slovakia: this country is not for the youth], Youth Council of Slovakia September 27, 2017. Available online: <http://mladez.sk/2017/09/27/prieskum-rady-mladeze-slovenska-tato-krajina-nie-je-pre-mladych/> (accessed on January 30, 2018).

⁹ See “Almost a third of Slovak youth is sceptical about EU membership,” March 28, 2017. Available online: http://enrsi.rtvs.sk/articles/topical-issue/129809/almost-a-third-of-slovak-youth-is-sceptical-about-eu-membership?__hsfp=jednllswhl cordper cent3Ddtordper cent3Ddtordper cent3Ddt (accessed on January 30, 2018).

¹⁰ “Public opinion in Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic and Slovakia,” Center for Insight in Survey Research, 2017. Available online: https://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/four_country_full_presentation_may_24_2017.pdf (accessed on January 30, 2018).

¹¹ M. Veľšic, *Mladí ľudia a riziká extrémizmu, výskumná štúdia* [Young people and risks of extremism. Research study] Bratislava: Institute for Public Affairs, 2017, p. 13. Available online: http://www.ivo.sk/buxus/docs/publikacie/subory/Mladi_a_rizika_extremizmu.pdf (accessed on March 12, 2018).

Minister Robert Fico, although we could see different opinions voiced by members of the Slovak government at the international (EU and UN) level.¹²

CIVIC EDUCATION AS A NEW CHALLENGE AND OPPORTUNITY

After the March 2016 election, civil society representatives obviously saw a big need to start new and powerful programs to tackle all the problems described above, the radicalization and anti-EU mood in context of Brexit, and developments in other European countries.

A good example of efforts to meet all the above-mentioned challenges can be seen in Germany's system of political education (which in the Slovak context would rather be called civic education), aimed at supporting civic emancipation and the stabilization of the democratic system of government. Germany's political education tackles such themes as democracy, human rights, migration, the EU, integration, global issues, and issues of national memory, and is based on principles forbidding indoctrination, the exchange of views, critical thinking, and balance. Concrete activities are aimed at particular target groups and implemented in a pluralistic system involving various actors, institutions and initiatives. The meaningful participation of young people in society is an important factor as a way of carrying out political education programs, and also as a goal that creates trust in society and the democratic system. Government institutions are in charge of formal political education within the school system, in civil and military service, with the further education of government officers, and also in non-formal education. They make their own programs but at the same time support independent and non-governmental providers of education such as political foundations, private sector foundations, church education facilities, trade unions, NGOs, etc.

In 2013, German ministries financed programs of political education in the amount of over 350 million euros, with financial support for the projects of civil society actors amounting to 42 per cent of the total budgeted, or almost 150 million euros.

At about the same level (150 million euros) is the budget of Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with its own political education projects, civic and political projects of political foundations, projects supporting European ideas, and the large majority of funds going to support cultural relations with foreign actors via non-political ones. In the experience of Germany, one of the strongest assets of the country's political education system has been the decentralized and pluralistic structure of the education providers themselves, with their diverse political, societal and world views safeguarding freedom and diversity within this modern democratic society.

¹² "Lajčák v OSN bránil utečncov: Musím využiť ich ekonomický potenciál a integrovať ich," [Lajčák defends refugees at the UN: we must use their economic potential and integrate them] *DennikN*, June 6, 2016. Available online: <https://dennikn.sk/481606/lajcak-osn-branil-utecencov-musime-vyuzit-ekonomicky-potencial-integrovat/> (accessed on January 30, 2018).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The conclusion of this article was written in March 2018, when massive protests against the Slovak government were just starting after the murder of journalist Ján Kuciak and his fiancée – at which time a delegation of members of the European Parliament visited Slovakia and spoke with government representatives, police, prosecutors, NGOs and journalists. One of their findings was that although Slovakia has fairly good legislation, the problem lies rather in the people and institutions themselves, and their credibility. In a word, they found a big discrepancy between legislative setup and reality.¹³

In the modest opinion of the author, Slovak official development cooperation can be seen in the same light. On the one hand, along with its fairly good legislation, Slovakia also has the strategies and institutions needed for playing the role of a modern donor in the globalized world, in a way that is appropriate to the country's size and possibilities. The development cooperation's political owner – the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs – is skilled in positive imaging and uses every opportunity to present SlovakAid and our experience with it as a success story. On the other hand, the stagnation of the system, lack of vision and finances, and weak political leadership has at the same time been the reality in recent years. Repeated statements such as “the Slovak Republic is willing to gradually fulfill its commitments depending on the development of the country's own economic situation” in officially approved documents are in deep contrast with the government's inaction in this direction. The country's economic situation has never been better, with forecasts for the near future optimistic as well. Slovak ODA lacks a more ambitious and trustworthy vision and real political leadership. As this article is being finalized in March 2018, the new government has been approved by the National Council with the same program mandate as the government of 2016–2018. The leading topics in the Government Manifesto regarding foreign policy are: the presentation of Slovakia abroad, modern and professional foreign service, security policy, and international economic policy. In fact the only explicit reference to development cooperation is that mentioned in the chapter on international economic policy, which reads:

In the area of development cooperation, the Government will particularly support the transfer of Slovakia's know-how in the area of public administration, acquired in the process of economic transformation. The Government will also help strengthen the role of the private sector in supporting sustainable development.”¹⁴

In comparison with the previous legislation documents re: Development and Global Education, it is interesting that in the current Government Manifesto neither development education nor global education are mentioned, and the term solidarity

¹³ “Nedôvera ľudí v inštitúcie, korupcia a absencia nezávislej kontroly. Europoslanci zhodnotili stav na Slovensku,” [Distrust of people in institutions, corruption, and absence of independent control. MEPs assess the situation in Slovakia] *noviny.sk*, March 14, 2018. Available online: <https://www.noviny.sk/politika/316633-nedovera-ludi-v-institutcie-korupcia-a-absencia-nezavislej-kontroly-europoslanci-zhodnotili-stav-na-slovensku> (accessed on March 14, 2018).

¹⁴ See “Manifesto of the Government of the Slovak Republic 2016–2020,” *op. cit.*

is mentioned only in the context of fighting health treatment and the social exclusion of people in Slovakia, or in terms of setting more stringent rules in the provision of social benefits to people who refuse to work.

Political leaders have spoken many times about solving the migration crisis through focusing on the root causes of migration in those countries that are its source. Such measures, including a rise in the relevant bilateral ODA budget and programs, would receive the support both of the expert and wider public. Instead, what we are witnessing are ad hoc political decisions, such as when Prime Minister Robert Fico decided that almost 9 million euros (part of the V4 plan for its 35 million euro contribution) be allocated for the equipping and training of security forces in charge of protecting the borders of Libya. Robert Fico presented this decision as a sign of solidarity – the money in his view would be “effectively spent” because “we can check on the spending together with the Italian side.” He also assured Juncker that the “V4 countries saved 24 million euros set aside by the European Commission for the same purpose, and now the EC can use it for something else.”¹⁵

When Slovak citizens witness such statements from the Prime Minister, and at the same time the voice of Foreign Affairs Ministry is not heard, it is very difficult if not impossible to build trust and public support within the country for ODA. Lots of hopes were raised when Miroslav Lajčák was elected as Chair of the 72nd UN General Assembly, but it seems Slovak ODA has not benefited from this big achievement – with engagement in global issues at the global and national levels not always being in line with each other.

In response to radicalization and expressions of extremism among young people, it is seen as necessary to invest much more in programs oriented towards the young. Germany with its political education system can be an inspiring example for Slovakia and other European countries witnessing the danger of disintegration of their civil society, alternative facts, and fake news. Under the pressure of the current challenges, civic education is an inevitable task.

Representatives of civil society are suggesting that a framework be established for many more programs supporting democracy within formal and non-formal education. The ministries of Foreign Affairs and of Education should take the lead in this effort. One program that is currently running well, and that could be enhanced in the context of civic education, is the SlovakAid program for sending volunteers and development workers to developing countries.

With its flexibility and appropriate administrative demands, the Volunteer-Sending Program has been assessed as one of the best operating components of Slovak official development cooperation.

The application of new modalities in development cooperation was already one of the recommendations in the OECD’s 2011 Special Peer Review and 2015 Mid Term Review. Multi-annual framework contracts with key NGOs and other partners are mentioned as primary contracts. This modality should be put into practice by the MFEA SR as soon as possible.

¹⁵ “Krajiny V4 prispejú Libyi sumou 35 miliónov eur,” [V4 countries to contribute 35 million euros to support Libya] *actuality.sk*, December 14, 2017. Available online: <https://www.aktuality.sk/clanok/547964/krajiny-v4-prispeju-libyi-sumou-35-milionov-eur/> (accessed on January 30, 2018).

As for the country's commitments as spelled out in the 2014–2018 Mid-Term Strategy of Development Aid, the Strategy for Multilateral Development Cooperation is yet to be prepared, and the same can be said of the National Strategy for Global Education for 2017–2021, which is still missing.

Furthermore, the Slovak NGDO Platform has collected numerous suggestions in its Aidwatch 2017 report, for improving the bilateral ODA system as implemented by the Foreign Ministry and SlovakAid agency.¹⁶

It seems that nowadays government institutions are undergoing a crisis of trust within Slovak society, hoping to maintain or regain it – but every crisis is potentially an opportunity to start something anew. A qualitatively new chapter in Slovak development cooperation can be started, if it acquires real political leadership based on true interest and solidarity, ready to implement already-existing documents and strategies with more ambition, and in line with the motto “For a respectable Slovakia.”

¹⁶ “Aidwatch 2017,” Slovak NGDO Platform, 2017. Available online: www.mvro.sk/sk/e-kniznica/category/2-publikacie?download...aidwatch-2017 (accessed on January 30, 2018).

IV.

ANNEXES

A CHRONOLOGY OF IMPORTANT EVENTS IN SLOVAK FOREIGN POLICY IN 2017

January 15 State Secretary Lukáš Parížek represents Slovakia at an international ministerial conference in Paris on the Middle East peace process. The conference aims at confirming international support for a just and permanent solution to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

January 16 At the Paris OECD headquarters, Prime Minister Robert Fico signs a memorandum on the strengthening of cooperation in fighting corruption.

January 19 Minister Miroslav Lajčák participates in the World Economic Forum at Davos. The main topic is how to deal with feelings of uncertainty, discontinuity and deep estrangement.

January 24 Minister Lajčák attends a “High-Level Dialogue: Building Sustainable Peace for All” at UN Headquarters in New York. He stresses in his speech that ensuring a safer world must be in the interest of all developed and lesser-developed countries. He also meets bilaterally with Swedish counterpart Margot Wallström, with whom he discusses the future of the EU after Brexit.

January 26 The Embassy of the Slovak Republic in Sarajevo officially takes over – from the Embassy of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland – the role of NATO Contact Point Embassy for Bosnia and Herzegovina.

January 31 President Andrej Kiska receives representatives of the Venice Commission in the Presidential Palace. President asks, among others, to interpret and comment on the stalemate regarding the election of constitutional judges in Slovakia.

Prepared by Anna Průšová of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association, based on data from the websites of the President of the Slovak Republic, the Office of the Government of the Slovak Republic, National Council of the Slovak Republic, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic, and the Ministry of Defense of the Slovak Republic.

February 2 President Kiska calls Petro Poroshenko to discuss the situation in eastern Ukraine. He asks about the recent developments there, expressing deep concern about the escalation in violence resulting in additional victims, and the suffering particularly of civilians. President Kiska agrees with President Poroshenko that the earliest possible introduction of a visa-free regime by the EU would be a great encouragement to Ukraine's citizens.

February 2 The engagement of troops from V4 countries in the Baltics, and areas of V4 cooperation with NATO's Very High Readiness Joint Task Force, are the main issues on the agenda of the V4 defense ministers' meeting in Poland's Niepołomice.

February 2 The members of the National Council of the Slovak Republic endorse the deployment of 152 service personnel on a training mission to Latvia.

February 12–15 President Kiska on an official visit to Kenya – en route, he meets in Cairo with Tarek Kabil, Egypt's Minister of Trade and Industry. During an official visit to Nairobi, he holds an informal meeting with former UN Secretary General Pan Ki-mun.

February 13 Military Intelligence Director Ján Balciar is awarded by the President of the Republic of Poland, Andrzej Duda, for his significant contribution to the development of mutual cooperation between the two countries.

February 15 The defense ministers of Slovakia and the Czech Republic sign a cooperation agreement on the protection of airspace.

February 17 Lukáš Parížek receives a delegation from Indonesia. The partners assess positively the level of friendly relations and increasing intensity of bilateral contact, which is reflected in the deepening political, commercial, economic and cultural relations.

February 20 During the International Defence Exhibition and Conference IDEX 2017, Defense Minister Peter Gajdoš talks with the leaders of the United Arab Emirates. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss potential areas of cooperation between Slovakia and the UAE in the field of security and defense.

February 28 Minister Lajčák welcomes Slovak honorary consuls. The meeting is dedicated to an evaluation of the events of 2016 and the challenges for 2017. This meeting in Slovakia has traditionally been an opportunity to discuss mutual support and cooperation in developing trade and economic relations between the countries represented by honorary consuls and Slovakia, and a more effective presentation of Slovakia abroad.

March 2 President Kiska receives Guido Raimondi, President of the European Court of Human Rights. They discuss the Court's situation, including measures it has recently taken to ensure that people can assert their rights more quickly. They also speak about its relationship with Slovak courts, as well as about a project that would intensify dialogue between the European Court and the national courts of member states of the Council of Europe.

March 3 Robert Fico receives the UK's Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, David Davis. They discuss the consequences of Brexit and possibilities for making the UK's withdrawal from the EU beneficial to both sides.

March 6 Prime Minister Fico receives Vietnam's Minister of Public Security, Tô Lam. They discuss the possibility of improving economic and business relations between the two countries. They also sign an agreement on cooperation in the area of prevention of crime and the fight against it.

March 10 Minister Lajčák meets with Jean-Marco Ayrault, France's Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Development. They discuss their strategic partnership, the future of the European Union, Brexit, migration, the Balkans, the situations in Syria and Libya, as well as bilateral economic and cultural cooperation.

March 13 President Kiska calls and congratulates Hungarian President János Áder on his re-election.

March 16–17 Speaker of the National Council Andrej Danko attends an Extraordinary Conference of Parliament Chiefs in Rome. The main topics are the future of the EU, preparations for a European summit to be held in Rome at the end of March, an assessment of the EU's 60 years in operation, and the forthcoming Rome Declaration.

March 16 The 17th Annual Review Conference on Slovak Foreign and European Policy takes place, organized by SPPA in cooperation with Slovakia's MFEA. The focus is on an evaluation of the first Slovak Presidency of the Council of the EU, current security challenges, and the preparation of Slovakia's Security Strategy.

March 22 At the invitation of US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, a meeting of 68 members of the Global Coalition against Daesh is held in Washington, D.C. The Slovak Republic is represented by Miroslav Lajčák.

March 23 Radovan Javorčík becomes head of Slovakia's Permanent Representation to NATO.

March 27–30 President Kiska makes a state visit to Israel and a working visit to Palestine. He visits the Israel Institute of Technology, Technion, and the Rambam Medical Centre. During his visit the Slovak–Israeli Science and Innovation Society is founded in Israel. Kiska discusses cooperation and current foreign policy topics with Israeli President Reuven Rivlin.

April 5 President Kiska receives the representative of the Crimean Tartar people, Mustafa Dzhemilev – a member of the Ukrainian Parliament, former political prisoner, and life-long defender of human rights, freedom and democracy. They discuss the situation in Crimea.

April 6 President Kiska receives Romania's Minister of Foreign Affairs Teodor-Viorel Melescanu, who is on an official visit to Slovakia at the invitation of Minister Lajčák. Minister Melescanu informs Kiska of the current situation in Romania and the priorities of the new government. They discuss the two countries' preparations for the upcoming NATO summit in Brussels.

April 18 António Guterres appoints Slovakia's Oľga Algayerová as Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Europe in Geneva.

April 17–30 Slovak soldiers in Latvia participate in Exercise Summer Shield 2017.

April 23–24 Andrej Danko opens the Conference of Speakers of EU Parliaments in Bratislava, where they agree to set up a Europol control group. Prime Minister Fico attends this Conference and receives President of the European Parliament Antonio Tajani. The main topics are an assessment of the Slovak Presidency in the Council of the EU, the current Maltese Presidency, EU developments, the French presidential election, and Brexit.

April 24 President Kiska receives Antonio Tajani, President of the European Parliament. The main topic is the current situation in Europe, including the ongoing debate over the further objectives of European integration.

April 26 President Kiska meets with Austrian President Alexander Van der Bellen, who arrives for his first official visit to Slovakia. They discuss how to bring optimism back to the European Union, and bilateral relations.

May 2 President Kiska receives Prince Albert II of Monaco on an official visit. They discuss ways to fully realize the potential of smaller countries, for example in terms of tourism and innovation.

May 5 Minister Lajčák meets António Guterres in New York. They discuss the escalation of tensions in Southeast Asia as a result of the Pyongyang ballistic missile tests, the ongoing conflict in Syria, other developments in the Middle East, and the UN peacekeeping reforms.

May 8 Minister Lajčák meets with US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson to discuss the fight against terrorism, and Slovakia's contribution to the fight against Daesh.

May 15 Ivan Korčok participates in a meeting of the Inter-departmental Coordination Group for Brexit, at the level of state secretaries.

May 15 Peter Gajdoš meets with Georgian State Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration, Viktor Dolidze. They address current topics of common interest in security development, and spend time also exploring potential areas of Slovak-Georgian defense cooperation.

May 15 President Andrej Kiska welcomes Georgian President Giorgi Margvelashvili. They discuss ways of improving cooperation between Slovakia and Georgia, and further steps to foster both economies. The two presidents also discuss Georgia's difficult security situation, with Kiska offering assurance that our country fully supports Georgia's NATO membership ambitions. The Georgian President also meets with Andrej Danko and Robert Fico.

May 25 Minister Lajčák and Peter Burian, EU Special Representative for Central Asia, discuss strategies for the sustainable development of that region.

May 26 President Kiska at a meeting of heads of NATO member states in Brussels. The main topics of the meeting are the fulfilment of member state commitments, and NATO's defense and anti-terrorism activities.

May 31 Miroslav Lajčák is elected as President of the 72nd General Assembly of the United Nations.

June 2 The Slovak and Austrian presidents meet in Vienna, where Andrej Kiska speaks at the Pioneers Festival Technology Conference.

June 16–17 Robert Fico, Miroslav Lajčák, and Minister of Finance Peter Kažimír take part in a working visit to Iceland. The main topics are mutual bilateral cooperation and current issues of international politics.

June 1-17 Slovak soldiers participate in the international exercise Saber Strike 2017 in Latvia.

June 19 Leaders of the V4 and Benelux discuss the future of the EU and migration. At a meeting in Warsaw, they fail to agree on the question of quotas.

June 20 Minister Lajčák receives European Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development Neven Mimica. The visit is an opportunity to discuss issues related to the implementation of Agenda 2030 as well as UN and European Union priorities in the context of the upcoming 72nd UN General Assembly.

June 20 Minister Lajčák says that relations between Slovakia and Cuba are experiencing a positive phase, during the first visit of Cuba's Minister of Foreign Affairs Bruno Rodríguez Parrillo to Slovakia.

June 20 Lukáš Parížek receives European Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development Neven Mimica during the latter's official visit to the Slovak Republic. They discuss European development policy.

June 20–21 President Kiska pays an official visit to Croatia. He meets with the highest constitutional officials, including President Kolinda Grabar Kitarović, Prime Minister Andrej Plenković, and Parliamentary Speaker Gordan Jandroković. The talks focus mainly on strengthening mutual cooperation, particularly in economic areas and tourism. Foreign-political issues were also among the topics.

June 21 Minister Lajčák meets with OECD Secretary-General José Ángel Gurría on the occasion of the presentation of the new publication *Economic Review: Slovak Republic 2017*.

June 21 Lukáš Parížek opens the 2nd session of the Intergovernmental Vietnamese–Slovak Joint Commission for Economic Cooperation in Bratislava. The Vietnamese delegation is led by Vietnam's Deputy Minister for Industry and Trade, Hoang Quoc Vuong. Both sides confirm that they are interested in expanding cooperation in all areas such as energy, informatics, science, defense, education, culture, and tourism.

June 22 State Secretary of Defense Ministry Róbert Ondrejcsák at a working meeting in Norfolk, Virginia. He discusses with his partners the current issues facing Slovakia's defense and security policy, and US priorities after the start of the new administration.

June 27 Andrej Danko meets with Korea's President Moon Jae-in, and Chairman of the National Assembly Chung Sye-kyun, in Seoul. They subsequently have a more intense parliamentary discussion. Danko mentions Slovakia's natural and geothermal springs as being an opportunity for investment, and touches on the possibilities of tourism. The main topic is Slovakia's business environment.

July 4 Minister Lajčák and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe agree, during a talk in Tokyo, that cooperation with Japan needs to be further intensified.

July 11 Minister Lajčák participates in an informal OSCE Meeting of Foreign Ministers in Mauerbach. The main topics are the deteriorating security situation in Europe, the prevention of violent extremism, and the promotion of dialogue on security.

July 12 Minister Lajčák meets with Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the United Arab Emirates. They discuss relations between Slovakia and the United Arab Emirates.

July 13–14 Minister Lajčák attends an official visit to the People's Republic of China at the invitation of the Chinese government. He meets with Vice President Li Yuanchao and Foreign Affairs Minister Wang Yi, with whom he discusses key topics of the three UN agenda pillars, including efforts toward reform and an evaluation of bilateral relations.

July 18 Miroslav Lajčák participates in a high-level New York event on the financing of sustainable development, organized by current UN General Assembly President Peter Thomson.

July 19 The V4 countries and Israel establish a joint working group on counter-terrorism.

July 19 Robert Fico meets with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for bilateral talks. They speak about Slovak–Israeli relations, cooperation in the automotive industry, the modernization of the army, and the possibility of sending scientists from Slovakia to Israel, since the latter is a leader in innovation and modern technologies.

July 27 Robert Fico discusses the dual quality of food and products in Brussels.

August 4 Minister Lajčák signs a Memorandum on systematic inter-state cooperation between Slovakia and Germany.

August 18 Minister Lajčák signs a bilateral agreement with Brazil. Family members of Slovak diplomats in Brazil – and vice versa – will be able to work in the receiving country without having to apply for a work permit.

August 25 A further 92 Slovak soldiers depart for UNFICYP in Cyprus, under the ongoing rotation of troops.

August 31 Ivan Korčok meets with Major General Courtney P. Carr, Commander of the Indiana National Guard.

August 31 Lukáš Parížek attends a meeting of ministers of the V4 and six Eastern Partnership countries in Budapest. The meeting is aimed at discussing the latest developments in the Eastern Partnership initiative.

August 31 Peter Gajdoš meets with the Adjutant General of the Indiana National Guard, Maj. Gen. Courtney P. Carr, at the MOD Main Building. Topics of discussion include longstanding Slovak–US defense ties and opportunities for ensuring continuity of cooperation in the upcoming period.

September 4–6 Lukáš Parížek on a working visit to the State of Israel. He is received by Tzipi Hotovely, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs. They discuss the deepening of cooperation in the field of security and defense. During a working lunch with Director General of Mashav Gil Haskel, they discuss the continuation of the joint trilateral development cooperation project.

September 7 The informal meeting of EU defense ministers in Estonia's Tallinn is dominated by the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) initiative, and responses to a simulated cyber-attack.

September 12 Miroslav Lajčák is sworn in as President of the 72nd session of the UN General Assembly.

September 18 Ivan Korčok meets with Mexico's Secretary of Foreign Affairs Carlos de Icazo in New York. They discuss current issues of their bilateral relations.

September 18 President Kiska receives the Leader of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe in the European Parliament, Guy Verhofstadt. They speak about the current situation in Europe, especially about the causes of populism and spreading extremism. They agree that the basis for policymakers' efforts to find common European solutions to the current challenges must always be shared values.

September 19–23 Ivan Korčok and Andrej Kiska attend the opening of the plenum of the 72nd UN General Assembly session in New York and meet with incumbent President of the UN General Assembly Miroslav Lajčák. Kiska also addresses the session. He meets afterwards with UN Secretary-General Guterres and Lajčák (President of the 72nd General Assembly of the United Nations), talks with Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko, and also with Michael Bloomberg, former mayor of New York. At the end of the meeting Kiska has a discussion with Facebook representatives from California on how to prevent the spread of hatred on social networks.

October 2 Andrej Danko on a working visit to Montenegro. This is a historic visit – the first visit to the country by the Speaker of the National Council of the SR since the establishment of mutual diplomatic relations.

October 2 President Kiska receives OSCE Secretary General Thomas Greminger. They discuss current security developments in Europe, the situation in Ukraine, and the spread of extremism and propaganda in Slovakia and the European Union.

October 3 On an official visit to the Hellenic Republic, Peter Gajdoš holds a bilateral meeting with Greek Minister of National Defense, Panos Kammenos. Topics of discussion include options for joint training and education, cooperation on NATO and EU defense, and international crisis management operations.

October 3 Lukáš Parížek meets with Radomír Boháč at the OSCE (in the presence of a permanent representative of the SR), with partners from selected ministries, to prepare for the Slovak Republic's historical first presidency of the OSCE.

October 6 Milan Chrenko, Director General of Slovakia's Ministry of Environment, is unanimously elected Vice-Chairman of the OECD Committee for Environmental Policy for 2018.

October 13 The V4 and other states of the European Union express very clearly at the Consumer Summit in Bratislava that they do not wish to be regarded as second-class citizens.

October 16 Andrej Danko takes part in the 137th session of the Inter-Parliamentary Union in Saint Petersburg.

October 18 Robert Fico meets in Strasbourg with GRECO experts who are engaged in the fight against corruption.

October 19 President Kiska receives South Korea's Speaker of the National Assembly, Chung Sye-kyun, on the occasion of his official visit to Slovakia.

October 23 Lukáš Parížek addresses the SFPA international conference in Bratislava on the future of the Eastern Partnership (*Taking Stock of the Eastern Partnership: achievements, prospects and a role for the V4. Towards the Fifth Eastern Partnership Summit in Brussels*) ahead of the upcoming 5th Eastern Partnership Summit.

November 8 Peter Gajdoš participates in a meeting of NATO defense ministers. The focus of the meeting is mainly on ensuring an effective provision of collective defense, and on the stability of the security environment.

November 12–15 Andrej Danko pays an official visit to the Russian Federation. The aim is to develop a dialogue for the benefit of both countries – recognizing that in the framework of bilateral relations, parliamentary relations are also important. The delegation meets with Chairman of the State Duma Vyacheslav Volodin, and Chairwoman of the Federation Council Valentina Matviyenko.

November 15 Andrej Kiska speaks at the plenary session of the European Parliament in Strasbourg. This is the first speech by a Slovak head of state in the European Parliament since the country joined the European Union.

November 17 President Kiska welcomes Frank-Walter Steinmeier, President of the Federal Republic of Germany, on his official visit to Slovakia. The two presidents discuss the further deepening of Slovak–German relations – which are already excellent – as well as their common interest in building a strong and united European Union.

November 21–23 President Kiska on an official visit to Mexico. At the National Palace, Kiska meets with the Mexican head of state, Enrique Peña Nieto. The two presidents discuss bilateral relations between the two countries and their economic cooperation, and sign a joint declaration and other bilateral agreements.

November 21 Lukáš Parížek holds working meetings with the OSCE High Representatives in Vienna. They discussed the possibility of strengthening the dialogue and mutual trust between OSCE participating states and the preparation of the OSCE Slovak Presidency in 2019

November 27 Lukáš Parížek co-opens the Second Ministerial Conference on “China and Central Eastern Europe – Innovation Forum 2017” in Bratislava.

November 29–30 Robert Fico and Lukáš Parížek attend the 5th Summit of the African Union and the European Union in Abidjan, the capital of Côte d’Ivoire. The main topic of the summit is African youth and their future on the African continent. Other topics are peace and security, investment and job creation, public administration, education, and migration. The Slovak Republic will actively contribute to one of the most important EU instruments for economic support, the political stabilization of African countries.

November 29–December 1 The 10th year anniversary SET Plan Conference, conjoined with the Central European Energy Conference, takes place in Bratislava. For the first time, the SET Plan conference takes place in the same country two years in a row. It focuses on an evaluation of SET Plan priorities, and on market integration in Central Europe.

December 1 Andrej Danko discusses the strengthening of cooperation between the parliaments of V4 countries, at the Informal Meeting of the Speakers of Parliament of V4 countries in Budapest.

December 4 Ivan Korčok leads a Slovak delegation in Budapest to negotiate with the other V4 countries, as well as with partner countries Bulgaria, Greece, Croatia, Romania, Slovenia and Serbia. The debate focuses on three key thematic areas: energy networks and interconnections, the further enlargement of the EU, and the future of the EU.

December 5 Ivan Korčok attends a working luncheon of EU foreign ministers and US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, in Brussels. The key themes discussed include issues of mutual relations, Iran's nuclear program, the situation in eastern Ukraine and relations with Russia, and the Middle East peace process.

December 7 Lukáš Parížek addresses the plenary session during the OSCE Ministerial Council in Vienna. He discusses several security issues, such as the rise of radicalism and extremism, the fight against terrorism, cyber-attacks, and the conflict in Ukraine.

December 7 Lukáš Parížek meets his Japanese counterpart Kazuyuki Nakan at the OSCE Ministerial Council in Vienna. They confirm a common interest in deepening their economic cooperation, and discuss the adoption of a EU-Japan Free Trade Agreement.

December 18 Robert Fico visits the United Nations in New York and meets with UN Secretary-General António Guterres and General Assembly Chairman Miroslav Lajčák. He speaks with the Secretary-General about the situation in Ukraine, the Western Balkans, and EU enlargement and migration.

TREATIES, AGREEMENTS, CONVENTIONS PUBLISHED IN 2017

PRESIDENTIAL TREATIES AND AGREEMENTS

1. Agreement between the Slovak Republic and the Republic of Armenia on avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income and property
(Bratislava, May 15, 2015, published under No. 6/2017 Z. z.)
2. Agreement between the Slovak Republic and Georgia on international transport of passengers and goods
(Bratislava, November 13, 2015, published under No. 13/2017 Z. z.)
3. Agreement between the Slovak Republic and the Republic of India on reciprocal protection of investments
(Bratislava, September 25, 2006, published under No. 11/2008 Z. z.)
expired on April 29, 2017, published under No. 24/2017 Z. z. withdrawn from by India
4. Agreement between the Slovak Republic and United Arab Emirates on avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income
(Abu Dhabi, December 21, 2015, published under No. 58/2017 Z. z.)
5. Agreement between the Slovak Republic and Republic of Turkey on international transport of passengers and goods
(Ankara, December 11, 2014, published under No. 80/2017 Z. z.)
6. Agreement between the Slovak Republic and Montenegro on social security
(Podgorica May 20, 2016, published under No. 119/2017 Z. z.)
 - 6.a) Implementation agreement on implementing the Agreement between the Slovak Republic and Montenegro on social security
(Podgorica, May 20, 2016, published under No. 119/2017 Z. z.)

7. Agreement between the Slovak Republic and the Czech Republic on mutual protection of the air space
(Brussels, February 15, 2017, published under No. 309/2017 Z. z.)
8. Agreement between the Slovak Republic and the Islamic Republic of Iran on reciprocal protection of investments
(Teheran, January 19, 2016, published under No. 207/2017 Z. z.)
9. Agreement between the Slovak Republic and the Kingdom of the Netherlands in respect of the Netherlands Antilles concerning the automatic exchange of information regarding savings income the form of interest payments
(exchange of notes, Bratislava, June 1, 2004, The Hague, August 27, 2004, published under No. 316/2005 Z. z. and No. 2/2007 Z. z.)
expired on January 1, 2018, published under No. 209/2017 Z. z.
10. Agreement between the Slovak Republic, the Czech Republic and the Republic of Austria on three-state border point Dyje – Morava
(Vienna, September 29, 2015, published under No. 231/2017 Z. z.)

GOVERNMENTAL TREATIES AND AGREEMENTS

1. Agreement between the Government of the Slovak Republic and the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan on cooperation in combating illicit trafficking of narcotics, psychotropic substances and precursors
(Tashkent, September 20, 2016, published under No. 37/2017 Z. z.)
2. Agreement between the Government of the Slovak Republic and the Government of the Republic of Korea on economic cooperation
(Bratislava, February 28, 2017, published under No. 98/2017 Z. z.)
3. Amendment 1 to the Agreement between the Government of the Slovak Republic and the Government of Hungary on construction of the bridge of Hornad river and access roads on joint border between towns of Kechnec and Abaujvár
(Bratislava, December 15, 2016, published under No. 120/2017 Z. z.)
4. Agreement between the Government of the Slovak Republic and the Government of Arab Republic of Egypt on cooperation in the field of science, education, culture and sport
(Cairo, August 28, 2016, published under No. 116/2017 Z. z.)
5. Agreement between the Office of the Government of the Slovak Republic and the OECD on voluntary allowance of Slovakia to OECD for the assessment of the key anti-corruption related legislation in the Slovak Republic and mapping of risks
(exchange of letters, March 30, 2017 and April 24, 2017, published under No. 159/2017 Z. z.)
6. Agreement between the Government of the Slovak Republic and the Government of the Republic of Belarus on scientific and technical cooperation
(Bratislava, April 27, 2017, published under No. 214/2017 Z. z.)

7. Agreements on the taxation of savings income between the Slovak Republic and the States of Guernsey
(exchanges of letters, Bratislava, June 1, 2004, Guernsey, November 19, 2004, published under No. 268/2005 Z. z. and published under No. 16/2007 Z. z.)
expired on November 13, 2016, published under No. 210/2017 Z. z.
8. Agreements on the taxation of savings income between the Slovak Republic and the Jersey
(exchanges of letters, Bratislava, June 1, 2004, Jersey, April 19, 2004, published under No. 267/2005 Z. z. and published under No. 15/2007 Z. z.)
expired on November 14, 2016, published under No. 211/2017 Z. z.
9. Agreement between the Government of the Slovak Republic and the Government of the Republic of Belarus on cooperation and mutual assistance in extraordinary situations
(Minsk, November 25, 2016, published under No. 212/2017 Z. z.)
10. Memorandum of understanding on the implementation of the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2014–2021 between the Slovak Republic and the Kingdom of Norway
(Bratislava, November 28, 2016, published under No. 262/2017 Z. z.)
11. Memorandum of understanding on the implementation of the EEA financial mechanism 2014–2021 between the Slovak Republic and Iceland, The Principality of Lichtenstein, The Kingdom of Norway
(Brussels, November 25, 2016, Bratislava, November 28, 2016, published under No. 263/2017 Z. z.)
12. Change to Agreement between the Government of the Slovak Republic and the Government of the United States of America concerning the J. W. Fulbright Commission for educational exchange in the Slovak Republic, signed on March 22, 2005 in Bratislava (announcement No. 198/2005 Z. z.)
(exchange of notes, April 18, 2017 and June 30, 2017, published under No. 303/2017 Z. z.)
13. Agreement between the Government of the Slovak Republic and the Government of Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan on exemption of visa requirements for diplomatic passports holders.
(Amman, May 20, 2017, published under No. 308/2017 Z. z.)

MINISTERIAL TREATIES AND AGREEMENTS

1. Agreement between the Ministry of Interior of the Slovak Republic and the Ministry of Public Safety of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam on cooperation in the field of prevention and combating the criminal activities
(Bratislava, March 6, 2017, published under No. 62/2017 Z. z.)
2. Agreement between the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic and the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Affairs of Hungary on mutual visa representations
(exchange of notes, March 2, 2017 and March 10, 2017, published under No. 65/2017 Z. z.)

3. Agreement between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Hungary on mutual visa representations through their diplomatic and consular missions
(exchange of notes, September 23, 2010 and September 24, 2010, published under No. 400/2010 Z. z.)
expired, published under No. 65/2017 Z. z.
 - 3.a) Amendment to Agreement between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Hungary on mutual visa representations
(exchange of notes, published under No. 164/2011 Z. z.)
expired, published under No. 65/2017 Z. z.
4. Agreement between the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic and the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Affairs of Hungary on mutual visa representations
(exchange of notes, June 11, 2015 and July 14, 2015, published under No. 199/2015 Z. z.)
expired, published under No. 65/2017 Z. z.
5. Amendment No. 2 to the Agreement between the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic and the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation on cooperation in the field of education from November 7, 2006
(Moscow, April 28, 2017, published under No. 155/2017 Z. z.)
6. Two-year agreement on cooperation between the Ministry of Health of the Slovak Republic and the Regional Office of the World Health Organization for Europe for 2018–2019
(Budapest, September 13, 2017, published under No. 253/2017 Z. z.)
7. Change No. 4 to Protocol between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic on execution of the Agreement between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic on mutual visa representations through their diplomatic missions and consular offices, signed on November 4, 2011 in Prague
(exchange of notes, October 6, 2017 and November 28, 2017, published under No. 345/2017 Z. z.)

MULTILATERAL TREATIES AND AGREEMENTS

1. Amendments to Implementing regulations of the European Patent Convention
(Munich, December 14, 2016, published under No. 5/2017 Z. z.)
2. Changes and amendments to Annexes to the European agreement concerning the international carriage of dangerous goods by inland waterways (ADN)
(Geneva, August 26, 2016, published under No. 9/2017 Z. z.)
19. Convention on jurisdiction, applicable law, recognition, enforcement and co-operation in respect of parental responsibility and measures for the protection of children
(The Hague, October 19, 1996, published under No. 34/2017 Z. z. – convention party – Republic of Turkey)

3. Changes and amendments to Convention on international carriage of dangerous goods by rail (RID) – Annex to Convention concerning international carriage by rail (COTIF) from May 9, 1980 in the version of Protocol 1999 on modification to Convention concerning international carriage by rail (COTIF) from May 9, 1980 (Bern, May 25, 2016, published under No. 52/2017 Z. z.)
4. Changes and amendment to Annexes and to European Agreement concerning the international carriage of dangerous goods by road (ADR) (Geneva, published under No. 53/2017 Z. z.)
5. Changes to Implementing regulations to Madrid Agreement concerning international registration of marks and the Protocol relating to that Agreement (Geneva, October 6, 2016, published under No. 75/2017 Z. z.)
6. Changes to Implementing regulations of the European Patent Convention (Geneva, October 11, 2016, published under No. 78/2017 Z. z.)
7. Paris Agreement (Paris, December 12, 2015, published under No. 99/2017 Z. z.)
8. Changes to Implementing regulations to Madrid Agreement concerning international registration of marks and the Protocol relating to that Agreement (Geneva, October 6, 2016, published under No. 107/2017 Z. z.)
9. Convention of 25 October 1980 on international access to justice – Costa Rica became party on June 1, 2016 (published under No. 117/2017 Z. z.)
10. Changes to Implementing regulations to Madrid Agreement concerning international registration of marks and the Protocol relating to that Agreement (Geneva, October 6, 2016, published under No. 118/2017 Z. z.)
11. Protocol on North Atlantic Treaty on accession of Montenegro (Brussels, May 19, 2016, published under No. 154/2017 Z. z.)
12. Changes and amendments to Agreement on international goods transport by rail (SMGS) (Sochi, June 5–8, 2017, published under No. 187/2017 Z. z.)
13. Changes to Implementing regulations of the European Patent Convention (The Hague, June 29, 2017, published under No. 201/2017 Z. z.)
14. Association Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their member states, of the one part, and Ukraine, of the other part (Brussels, March 21, 2014, published under No. 203/2017 Z. z.)
15. Common Aviation Area Agreement between the European Union and its member states, of the one part, and the Republic of Moldova, of the other part (Brussels, June 26, 2012, published under No. 204/2017 Z. z. preliminary executed)
16. Minamata Convention on mercury (Kumamoto, October 10, 2013, published under No. 220/2017 Z. z.)

17. European Convention in cinematographic co-production (revised)
(Rotterdam, January 30, 2017, published under No. 259/2017 Z. z.)

18. Depositing of two statements of the Slovak Republic to Convention on mutual administrative assistance in tax matters
note: deposited with SG OECD
deposited on August 28, 2017
published under No. 287/2017 Z. z.

19. Acts of the Universal Postal Union from the Ninth additional protocol to the Constitution of the Universal Postal Union, First additional protocol to the General regulations of the Universal Postal Union, Universal Postal Convention and the Postal Payment Services Agreement
(Istanbul, October 6, 2016, published under No. 350/2017 Z. z.)

STRUCTURE OF THE STATE ADMINISTRATION AUTHORITIES ACTING IN INTERNATIONAL AND EUROPEAN AFFAIRS IN 2017

AS OF FEBRUARY 2018

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Foreign Personell and Payroll Department

Head of the Department: Ol'ga Beňová, tel.: 02/5978 2130, olga.benova@mzv.sk

Human Resources Development Department

Head of the Department: Rastislav Hindický, tel.: 02/5978 2110, rastislav.hindicky@mzv.sk

Directorate of Economy and General Administration

Director General: Silvia Toldyová, tel.: 02/5978 2801, silvia.toldyova@mzv.sk

Finance Department

Head of the Department: Ivana Čermáková, tel.: 02/5978 2810, ivana.cermakova@mzv.sk

Department of Investments, Real Estates and Services

Head of the Department: František Zemanovič, tel.: 02/5978 2850, frantisek.zemanovic@mzv.sk

Public Procurement Department

Head of the Department: Adriana Gajdošová, tel.: 02/5978 2890, adriana.gajdosova@mzv.sk

Accounts and Properties Reporting Department

Head of the Department: Andrea Ondříšková, tel.: 02/5978 2700, andrea.ondrisekova@mzv.sk

Directorate General for Information Technology and Security

Director General: Milan Kováč, tel.: 02/5978 2001, milan.kovac@mzv.sk

Department of Operation and Security of Information and Communication Technologies

Head of the Department: Katarína Hanzalová, tel.: 02/5978 2050, katarina.hanzalova@mzv.sk

Department of Security, Classified Materials, Archive, and Registry

Head of the Department: Vladimír Kopecký, tel.: 02/5978 2080, vladimir.kopecky@mzv.sk

Department of Services and Processes Electronization

Head of the Department: Vladimír Ježek, tel.: 02/5978 2090, vladimir.jezek@mzv.sk

MINISTRY OF ECONOMY OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Mierová 19, 827 15 Bratislava

tel.: 02/4854 1111

www.economy.gov.sk, www.mhsr.sk

Minister

Peter Žiga

State Secretary

Vojtech Ferencz

Rastislav Chovanec

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Kutuzovova 8, 832 47 Bratislava

tel.: 0960 11 22 33

www.mosr.sk, mod.gov.sk

Minister

Peter Gajdoš

State Secretary

Marián Saloň

Róbert Ondrejcsák

Secretary-General of Service Office

Director: Ján Holko

MINISTRY OF INTERIOR OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Pribinova 2, 812 72 Bratislava

tel.: 02/5094 1111, 02/5094 4397

www.minv.sk

Minister

Robert Kaliňák

State Secretary

Denisa Saková

Rudolf Urbanovič

MINISTRY OF FINANCE OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Štefanovičova 5, 817 82 Bratislava

tel.: 02/5958 1111

www.mfsr.sk, www.finance.gov.sk

Minister

Peter Kažimír

State Secretary

Radko Kuruc

Dana Meager

MINISTRY OF CULTURE OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Námestie SNP 33, 813 31 Bratislava

tel.: 02/2048 2111

www.culture.gov.sk, www.mksr.sk, mksr@culture.gov.sk

Minister

Marek Maďarič

State Secretary

Ivan Sečík
Konrád Rigó

MINISTRY OF HEALTH OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Limbová 2, 837 52 Bratislava 37
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www.health.gov.sk, office@health.gov.sk

Minister

Tomáš Drucker

State Secretary

Andrea Kalavská
Stanislav Špánik

MINISTRY OF LABOUR, SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND FAMILY OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Špitálska 4, 6, 8, 816 43 Bratislava
tel.: 02/2046 0000
www.employment.gov.sk

Minister

Ján Richter

State Secretary

Branislav Ondruš
Ivan Švejna

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE, RESEARCH AND SPORT OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Stromová 1, 813 30 Bratislava
tel.: 02/5937 4111
www.minedu.sk

Minister

Peter Plavčan (until September 13, 2017)
Martina Lubyová (since September 13, 2017)

State Secretary

Peter Krajňák
Olga Nachtmannová

MINISTRY OF JUSTICE OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Župné námestie 13, 813 11 Bratislava
tel.: 02/8889 1111
www.justice.gov.sk

Minister

Lucia Žitňanská

State Secretary

Mária Kolíková
Monika Jankovská

Directorate of International Law

Director General: Michal Kotlárík, tel.: 02/8889 1349, ms.smep.sek@justice.sk
Department of Private International Law
Head of the Department: Tatiana Hačková, tel.: 02/8889 1258

MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Nám. Ľ. Štúra 1, 812 35 Bratislava
tel.: 02/5956 1111
www.enviro.gov.sk, www.minzp.sk

Minister

László Solymos

State Secretary

Norbert Kurilla
Boris Susko

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Dobrovičova 12, 812 66 Bratislava
tel.: 02/5926 6111
www.mpsr.sk

Minister

Gabriela Matečná

State Secretary

Gabriel Csicsai
Anton Stredák

MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT AND CONSTRUCTION OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Námestie slobody 6, 810 05 Bratislava
tel.: 02/5949 4111
www.telecom.gov.sk

Minister

Arpád Érsek

State Secretary

Viktor Stromček
Peter Ďurček

ANTIMONOPOLY OFFICE OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Drieňová 24, 826 03 Bratislava

tel.: 02/4829 7111

www.antimon.gov.sk

Chairman

Tibor Menyhart, tel.: 02/4829 7230, predseda@antimon.gov.sk

STATISTICAL OFFICE OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

Miletičova 3, 824 67 Bratislava

tel.: 02/50236 222

www.statistics.sk

President

Alexander Ballek, tel.: 02/5542 5802, alexander.ballek@statistics.sk

LIST OF THE EMBASSIES OF THE EU, NATO, AND SOME OTHER COUNTRIES

THE EMBASSIES IN THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC AND THEIR HEADS AS OF JANUARY 2018

Country	Start of diplomatic relations	Adress of embassy	In charge of embassy (LoC)
The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan	-	Na Karlovce 1387/6 160 00 Praha 6 Czech Republic	Homayun Kamgar <i>chargé d'affaires</i>
The Republic of Albania	1. 1. 1993	Podjavorinskej 4 811 03 Bratislava	Enkeleda Mërkuri <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
People's Democratic Republic of Algeria	1. 1. 1993	Rudolfingerasse 18 A-1190 Vienna Austria	Fauzia Mebarki <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Principality of Andorra	3. 6. 1996	Kärtnering 2A/13 A-1010 Vienna Austria	Marta Salvat Batista <i>chargé d'affaires</i>
The Republic of Angola	30. 9. 1993	Seilerstätte 15/1/10 1010 Vienna Austria	Maria de Jesus Ferreira <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Argentine Republic	1. 1. 1993	Goldschmiedgasse 2/1 A-1010 Vienna Austria	Rafael Mariano Grossi <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Republic of Armenia	14. 11. 1993	Na Pískách 1411/95 160 00 Praha Czech Republic	Tigran Seiranian <i>Ambassador Designated</i>
The Commonwealth of Australia	1. 1. 1993	Mattiellstrasse 2 A-1040 Vienna Austria	Brendon Charles Hammer <i>Ambassador Designated</i> <i>LoC: March 3, 2017</i>
The Republic of Azerbaijan	27. 11. 1993	Hügelgasse 2 A-1130 Vienna Austria	Galib Israfilov <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
		Hviezdoslavovo nám. 14 811 02 Bratislava	Jafar Huseyn Zada <i>chargé d'affaires for Slovak Republic</i>
The People's Republic of Bangladesh	3. 3. 1993	Dovestr.1 D-105 87 Berlin Germany	Imtiaz Ahmed <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>

Country	Start of diplomatic relations	Adress of embassy	In charge of embassy (LoC)
The Kingdom of Belgium	1. 1. 1993	Prinz-Eugen-Strasse 8-10 A-1040 Vienna Austria	Willem Van de Voorde <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Republic of Benin	19. 1. 1993	Englerallee 23 D-14159 Berlin Germany	Josseline Marie Louise da Silva Gbony <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Republic of Belarus	1. 1. 1993	Jančova 5 811 02 Bratislava 1	Igor Leshchenya <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Plurinational State of Bolivia	5. 3. 1993	Waagasse 10/8 A-1040 Vienna Austria	Víctor A. Veltzé michel <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: January 17, 2018 Ricardo Martínez Covarrubias <i>chargé d'affaires</i>
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1. 1. 1993	Opletalova 27 110 00 Praha Czech Republic	Nenad Škipina
The Republic of Botswana	-	6 Stratford Place W1C 1AY London United Kingdom	Roy Warren Blackbeard <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Federative Republic of Brasil	1. 1. 1993	Palisády 47 811 06 Bratislava	Luís Antonio Balduino Carneiro <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: April 10, 2017
The Republic of Bulgaria	1. 1. 1993	Kuzmányho 1 811 06 Bratislava 1	Yordanka Chobanova <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: January 18, 2017
Burkina Faso	1. 8. 1997	Strohgasse 14c A-1030 Vienna Austria	Dieudonné Kere <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: November 7, 2017
The Republic of Burundi	29. 6. 1999	Berliner Strasse 36 D-10715 Berlin Germany	Else Nizigama Ntamagiro <i>Ambassador Designated</i> LoC: January 17, 2018
The Republic of Cyprus	1. 1. 1993	Michalská 12 811 01 Bratislava	Nearchos Palas <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Republic of Chad		Korovy Val 7, Moscow, Russian Federation	Youssef Abassalah <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Czech Republic	1. 1. 1993	Hviezdoslavovo nám. 8 P.O.Box 208 810 00 Bratislava	Lívia Klausová <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Montenegro	1. 1. 1993	Mahlerstrasse 12/5/4 1010 Vienna Austria	Ivan Milić <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Republic of Chile	1. 1. 1993	Lugeck 1/311 A-1010 Vienna, Austria	Armin Andereya <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The People's Republic of China	1. 1. 1993	Jančova 8b 811 02 Bratislava 1	Lin Lin <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Kingdom of Denmark	1. 1. 1993	Führichgasse 6 A-1010 Vienna Austria	Liselotte Kjærsgaard Plesner <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Representation of European Commission in the SR	-	Palisády 29 811 06 Bratislava	Dušan Chrenek <i>Head of Representation</i>
European Parliament Information Office	-	Palisády 29 811 06 Bratislava	Robert Hajšel <i>Director</i>

Country	Start of diplomatic relations	Adress of embassy	In charge of embassy (LoC)
The Arab Republic of Egypt	1. 1. 1993	Panská 14 811 01 Bratislava	Amr Wañik Elhenawy <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Republic of Ecuador	1. 1. 1993	Andrássy út 20.1/2. 1061 Budapest Hungary	Maria del Carmen González Cabal <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Republic of Estonia	1. 1. 1993	Wohlebengasse 9/12 A-1040 Vienna Austria	Rein Oidekivi <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia	-	Boothstrasse 20a D-12207 Berlin Germany	Kuma Demeksa Tokon <i>Ambassador Designated</i>
The Republic of the Philippines	1. 1. 1993	Laurenzerberg 2/II/ZWG A-1010 Vienna Austria	Sulpicio M. Confiado <i>chargé d'affaires</i>
The Republic of Finland	1. 1. 1993	Hellichova 1 118 00 Prague Czech Republic	Helena Elisabet Tuuri <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The French Republic	1. 1. 1993	Hlavné námestie 7 812 83 Bratislava 1	Christophe Léonzi <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Republic of the Gambia	18. 8. 1995	Avenue F. D. Roosevelt 126 1050 Brussels Belgium	Teneng Mba Jaitèh <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Republic of Ghana	-	Na Zatorce 89/6 160 00 Praha 6 – Bubeneč Czech Republic	Virginia Hesse <i>Ambassador Designated</i>
Georgia	25. 11. 1993	Michalská 9 811 01 Bratislava	Revaz Gachechiladze <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Republic of Guatemala	15. 4. 1993	Prinz Eugen Strasse 18/1/ Top7 A-1040 Vienna Austria	Antonio Roberto Castellanos López <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Republic of Guinea	16. 3. 1993	Jägerstrasse 67-69 DE-10117 Berlin Germany	Mamadou Bouliwel Sou <i>chargé d'affaires</i>
The Republic of Guinea-Bissau	-	Kronenstrasse 72 DE-10117 Berlin Germany	Malam Djassi <i>Ambassador Designated</i>
The Hellenic Republic	1. 1. 1993	Hlavné námestie 4 811 01 Bratislava 1	Maria Louisa Marinakis <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Kingdom of the Netherlands	1. 1. 1993	Fraňa Kráľa 5 811 05 Bratislava 1	Hendrik-Cornelis van der Kwast <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: September 12, 2017
The Republic of Honduras		Cuxhavener Strasse 14 DE-10555 Berlin Germany	
The Republic of Croatia	1. 1. 1993	Mišíkova 21 811 06 Bratislava 1	Aleksandar Heina <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: October 11, 2017
The Republic of India	1. 1. 1993	Dunajská 4 811 08 Bratislava	Harsh Kumar Jain <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: January 17, 2018
The Republic of Indonesia	1. 1. 1993	Brnianska 31 811 04 Bratislava 1	Adiyatwidi Adiwoso Asmady <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: September 12, 2017
The Republic of Iraq	1. 1. 1993	Radvanská 15 811 01 Bratislava	Hadeel Talal Al-Azawi <i>First Secretary</i>

Country	Start of diplomatic relations	Adress of embassy	In charge of embassy (LoC)
The Islamic Republic of Iran	1. 1. 1993	Jauresgasse 9 A-1030 Vienna Austria	Ebadollah Molaie <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Ireland	1. 1. 1993	Carlton Savoy Building Mostová 2 811 02 Bratislava	Hildegard Ó Riain <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: October 11, 2017
The Republic of Iceland	1. 1. 1993	Naglergasse 2/3/8 A-1010 Vienna Austria	Þórhur Ingvi Guðmundsson <i>chargé d'affaires</i>
The State of Israel	1. 1. 1993	Slávičie údolie 106 811 02 Bratislava	Zvi Aviner Vapni <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Jamaica	1. 1. 1993	Schmargendorfer Strasse 32 D-12159 Berlin Germany	Margaret Ann Louise Jobson <i>Ambassador Designated</i>
Japan	1. 1. 1993	Hlavné nám. 2 813 27 Bratislava	Jun Shimmi <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Republic of Yemen	1. 1. 1993	Reisnerstrasse 18 – 20 1030 Vienna Austria	Samy Al-Basha <i>chargé d'affaires</i>
The Hashemite Kingdom of Yordan	3. 3. 1993	Rennweg 17/4 A-1030 Vienna Austria	Hussam Abdullah Ghodayeh Al Husseini <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Republic of South Africa	1. 1. 1993	Sandgasse 33 A-1190 Vienna Austria	Tebogo Joseph Seokolo <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Kingdom of Cambodia	-	Benjamin-Vogelsdorf Str. 2 D-13187 Berlin Germany	Touch Sopharath <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Republic of Cameroon	-	Ulmenallee 32 D-14050 Berlin Germany	
Canada	1. 1. 1993	Laurenzerberg 2 A-1010 Vienna Austria Carlton Savoy Building Mostová 2 811 02 Bratislava	Heidi Alberta Hulan <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: January 17, 2018 John von Kaufmann <i>chargé d'affaires, Bratislava</i>
The State of Qatar	-	Schottenring 10/Top 7a 1010 Vienna Austria	Ali bin Jassim Al-Thani <i>Ambassador</i> LoC: November 7, 2017
The Republic of Kazakhstan	1. 1. 1993	Pod Hradbami 662/9 160 00 Prague Czech Republic Kancelária v Bratislave Gunduličova 6 811 05 Bratislava	Serzhan Abdykarimov <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Republic of Kenya	1. 1. 1993	Andromeda Tower, 16th Floor Donau-City Strasse 6 1220 Vienna Austria	Michael Adipo Okoth Oyugi <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Kyrgyz Republic	1. 1. 1993	Otto-Suhr-Allee 146 D-10585 Berlin	Erines Otorbajev <i>Ambassador Designated</i>

Country	Start of diplomatic relations	Adress of embassy	In charge of embassy (LoC)
The Republic of Colombia	1. 1. 1993	Stadiongasse 6-8/15 A-1010 Vienna Austria	Jaime Alberto Cabal Sanclemente Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
The Republic of the Congo	30. 6. 1998	Wallstrasse 69 D - 10179 Berlin Germany	Jacques Yvon Ndovhu Ambassador Designated
The Democratic Republic of the Congo	18. 2. 1993	Soukenická 34/1765 110 00 Prague Czech republic	Albertine Kabambi Milebwe Musenge chargé d'affaires
The Republic of Korea	1. 1. 1993	Štúrova 16 811 02 Bratislava	Lee Tae-Ro Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
The Democratic People's Republic of Korea	1. 1. 1993	Na Větru 395/18 162 00 Prague Czech Republic	Kim Pyong II Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
The Republic of Costa Rica	6. 10. 1993	Wagramer Strasse 23/1/1/2-3 A-1220 Vienna Austria	Herbert Daniel Espinoza Solano Consul General, chargé d'affaires
The Republic of Cuba	1. 1. 1993	Somolickéého 1/A 811 05 Bratislava	Yamila Sonia Pita Montes Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary LoC: January 18, 2017
The State of Kuwait	1. 1. 1993	Lodná 2 811 02 Bratislava	Essa Y. K. E. Alshamali Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
The Lao People's Democratic Republic	-	Sommerhaidenweg 43 A-1180 Vienna Austria	Phoukhao Phommavongsa Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
The Kingdom of Lesotho	8. 5. 1995	Via Serchio 8 001 98 Rome Italy	Lineo Irene Molise-Mabusela Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary LoC: November 7, 2017
The Lebanese Republic	1. 1. 1993	Oppolzgasse 6/3 A-1010 Vienna Austria	Ibrahim Assaf chargé d'affaires
Libya	1. 1. 1993	Révova 45 811 02 Bratislava	Khalid Salem M. Shaban chargé d'affaires
The Republic of Lithuania	1. 1. 1993	Löwengasse 47/4 A-1030 Vienna Austria	Loreta Zakarevčienė Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
The Republic of Latvia	1. 1. 1993	Stefan Esders Platz 4 A-1190 Vienna Austria	Inese Seglina chargé d'affaires
The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg	1. 1. 1993	Sternwartestrasse 81 A-1180 Viedeň Austria	Marc Ungeheuer Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary LoC: November 7, 2017
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	1. 1. 1993	Kinderspitalgasse 5/2 A-1090 Vienna Austria	Vasilka Poposka Trenevska Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
The Republic of Madagascar	16. 2. 1996	Koursovoy Per. 5 119 034 Moscow Russian Federation	Eloi A. Maxime Dovo Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Hungary	1. 1. 1993	Štefánikova 1 811 05 Bratislava	Tibor Pető Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary LoC: September 12, 2017
Malaysia	1. 1. 1993	Floridsdorfer Hauptstrasse 1-7 Florido Tower 24.řl. A-1210 Vienna Austria	Dato' Adnan Bin Othman Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary

Country	Start of diplomatic relations	Adress of embassy	In charge of embassy (LoC)
The Republic of Malawi	-	Westfälische Strasse 86 D-10709 Berlin Germany	Michael Barth Kamphambe Nkhoma <i>Ambassador Designated</i>
The Republic of Mali	-	Ambasciata del Mali Via Antonio Bosio, 2 00161 Roma/Italia	Bruno Maiga <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Republic of Malta	1. 1. 1993	Opernring 5/1 1010 Vienna Austria	Anthony Licari <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Kingdom of Morocco	1. 1. 1993	Hasenauerstrasse 57 A-1180 Vienna Austria	Loffi Bouchaara <i>Ambassador Designated</i> LoC: November 7, 2017
The Islamic Republic of Mauritania	-	Kommandantenstrasse 80 D-10117 Berlin, Germany	Mohamed Mahomud Ould Brahim Khilil <i>Ambassador Designated</i>
Republic of the Union of Myanmar	-	Kneza Miloša 72 11000 Beograd Serbia	Myo Aye <i>Ambassador Designated</i> LoC: March 1, 2017
The Republic of Moldova	1. 1. 1993	Löwengasse 47/10 A-1030 Vienna Austria	Andrei Popov <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Mongolia	1. 1. 1993	Na Marně 5 160 00 Prague Czech Republic	Nyamaa Naranbat <i>Ambassador Designated</i>
The Republic of Namibia	9. 12. 1997	Zuckerandlgasse 2 A-1190 Vienna Austria	Simon Madjumo Maruta <i>Ambassador Designated</i> LoC: March 1, 2017
The Federal Republic of Germany	1. 1. 1993	Hviezdoslavovo nám. 10 813 03 Bratislava	Joachim Bleicker <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Nepal	4. 3. 1994	Guerickestrasse 27 D-10587 Berlin Germany	Ramesh Prasad Khanal <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: November 7, 2017 Prakash Mani Paudel <i>chargé d'affaires</i>
The Federal Republic of Niger	1. 1. 1993	Rennweg 25 A-1030 Vienna Austria	Vivian Nwunaku Rose Okeke <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: November 7, 2017
Republic of the Niger	-	Machnowerstraße 24 D-14165 Berlin Germany	
The Republic of Nicaragua	5. 1. 1993	Joachi-Karnatz-Alle 4 10557 Berlin Germany	Karla Luzetta Beleta Brenes <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Kingdom of Norway	1. 1. 1993	Palisády 29 811 06 Bratislava	Inga Magistad <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
New Zealand	1. 1. 1993	Mattellistrasse 2-4/3 A-1040 Vienna Austria	Nicole Jocelyn Roberton <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: January 17, 2018
The Sultanate of Oman	3. 3. 1993	Wahringer Strasse 2-4/24-25 A-1090 Vienna Austria	Badr Mohammed Zaher Al Hinai <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Islamic Republic of Pakistan	1. 1. 1993	Hofzeile 13 A-1190 Vienna Austria	Ayesha Riyaz <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>

Country	Start of diplomatic relations	Adress of embassy	In charge of embassy (LoC)
The State of Palestine	1. 1. 1993	Červeňova 15 811 03 Bratislava	Attalla S. A. Qubia Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary LoC: May 10, 2017
The Republic of Panama	-	Goldschmiedgasse 10/403 1010 Vienna Austria	Paulina Francesci Navarro Ambassador Designated LoC: March 1, 2017
The Republic of Paraguay	8. 1. 1993	Prinz Eugen Strasse 18/1/7 A-1040 Vienna Austria	Horacio Norgués Zubizarreta Ambassador Designated
The Republic of Peru	1. 1. 1993	Mahlerstrasse 7/22 A-1010 Vienna Austria	Juan Fernando Javier Rojas Samanez Ambassador Designated LoC: March 1, 2017
The republic of Poland	1. 1. 1993	Paulínyho 7 814 91 Bratislava	Leszek Soczewica Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
The Republic of Portugal	1. 1. 1993	Ventúrska 16 811 01 Bratislava	Ana Maria Coelho Ribeiro Da Silva Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
The Republic of Austria	1. 1. 1993	Astoria Palace Hodžovo námestie 1/A 811 06 Bratislava	Helfried Carl Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Romania	1. 1. 1993	Tichá 45/A 811 02 Bratislava 1	Steluta Arhire Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Russian Federation	1. 1. 1993	Godrova 4 811 06 Bratislava 1	Alexei Leonidovič Fedotov Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
The Rwandese Republic	-	Jägerstrasse 67-69 D-10117 Berlin Germany	Igor Cesar Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
The Republic of El Salvador	1. 1. 1993	Prinz Eugen Strasse 72/2/1 A-1040 Vienna Austria	Lucía Rosella Badía Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary LoC: March 1, 2017
The Republic of San Marino	1. 1. 1993	Via Cisono 27 48100 Ravenna Italy	Severino Bollini Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	16. 6. 1995	Formanekgasse 38 A-1190 Vienna Austria	Khalid bin Ibrahim Al-Jindan chargé d'affaires LoC: November 7, 2017
The Republic of Senegal	-	Dessauer Strasse 29/29 D-10963 Berlin Germany	
The Republic of Seychelles	-	Boulevard Saint Michel, 28 1040 Brussels Belgium	Thomas Selby Pillay Ambassador Designated
The Republic of Sierra Leone	-	Rublevskoe šosse, 26/1, of. 58-59 121615 Moscow Russian Federation	John Bobor Laggah Consul
The Republic of Singapore	12. 2. 1993	MFA, Tanglin 248163 Singapore	Chay Wai Chuen Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
The Republic of Slovenia	1. 1. 1993	Ventúrska 5 813 15 Bratislava 1	Gregor Kozovinc Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary LoC: November 11, 2017
Federal Republic of Somalia	-	Simferopolsky Bulvar 7a-145 117 556 Moscow, Russian Federation	Mohamed Mahmoud Handule Ambassador Designated

Country	Start of diplomatic relations	Adress of embassy	In charge of embassy (LoC)
The United Arab Emirates	3. 1. 1993	Chimanistrasse 36 A-1190 Vienna Austria	Hamad Al Kaabi Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary LoC: November 7, 2017
The United kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	1. 1. 1993	Panská 16 811 01 Bratislava 1	Andrew Garth Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
The United States of America	1. 1. 1993	Hviezdoslavovo námestie 4 811 02 Bratislava 1	Adam Harold Sterling Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
The United Mexican States	1. 10. 1993	Renngasse 5 A-1010 Vienna Austria	Alicia Buenrostro Massieu Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
The Republic of Serbia	1. 1. 1993	Búdkova 38 811 04 Bratislava 1	Šani Dermaku Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
The Democratic Socialist republic of Sri Lanka	15. 2. 1993	Weyringergasse, 33-35 A-1040 Vienna Austria	Priyane Wijesekera Ambassador Designated
The Republic of the Sudan	27. 7. 1993	Reisnerstrasse 29/5 A-1030 Vienna Austria	Mohamed Hussein Hassan Zaroug Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
The Kingdom Of Swaziland	-	Avenue Winston Churchill 188 1180 Brussels Belgium	
The Holy See	1. 1. 1993	Nekrasovova 17 811 04 Bratislava 1	Mons. Giacomo Guido Ottonello Apostolic Nuncio LoC: September 12, 2017
The Syrian Arab Republic	1. 1. 1993	Daffingerstrasse 4 A-1030 Vienna Austria	Bassam Ahmad Nazim Al Sabbagh Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
The Kingdom Of Spain	1. 1. 1993	Prepoštská 10 811 01 Bratislava 1	Luis Belzuz De Los Rios Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary LoC: May 10, 2017
Switzerland	1. 1. 1993	Michalská 12 811 06 Bratislava 1	Alexander Wittwer Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
The Kingdom of Sweden	1. 1. 1993	Liechtensteinstrasse 51 A-1090 Vienna Austria	Helen Eduards Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
The Republic of Tajikistan	-	Universitaetstr. 8/1a A-1090 Vienna Austria	Ismatullo Nasredinov Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
The Republic of Italy	1. 1. 1993	Palisády 49 811 06 Bratislava	Gabriele Meucci Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary LoC: January 18, 2017
The United Republic of Tanzania	1. 1. 1993	Eschenallee 11 D-14050 Berlin Germany	Abdallah Saleh Possi Ambassador Designated
The Kingdom of Thailand	1. 1. 1993	Cottagegasse 48 A-1180 Vienna Austria	Songsak Saicheua Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
The Republic of Tunisia	1. 1. 1993	Sieveringerstrasse 187 A-1190 Vienna Austria	Ghazi Jomaa Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
The Republic of Turkey	1. 1. 1993	Holubyho 11 811 03 Bratislava 1	Hatice Ashgül Üğdül Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary LoC: January 18, 2017

Country	Start of diplomatic relations	Adress of embassy	In charge of embassy (LoC)
Turkmenistan	1. 1. 1993	Argentiniierstrasse 22/II/EG A-1040 Vienna Austria	Silapberdi Ashirgeldiveich Nurberdiyev <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Ukraine	1. 1. 1993	Radvanská 35 811 01 Bratislava 1	Jurij Muška <i>chargé d'affaires</i> <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: February 8, 2017
The Eastern Republic of Uruguay	-	Mahlerstrasse 11/2/2 A-1010 Vienna Austria	Bruno Javier Machado Faraone <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Republic of Uzbekistan	20. 1. 1993	Pötzeleinsdorfer Strasse 49 A-1180 Vienna Austria	Rustamdjan Khakimov <i>chargé d'affaires</i>
The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela	1. 1. 1993	Prinz Eugen Strasse 72/1/L1 A-1040 Vienna Austria	Dulfa Dalila Hernández Medina <i>chargé d'affaires</i>
The Socialist Republic of Vietnam	1. 1. 1993	Dunajská 15 811 08 Bratislava	Minh Trong Duong <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i> LoC: January 17, 2018
The Republic of Zambia	5. 5. 1993	Axel-Springer Strasse 54 A D-10117 Berlin Germany	Chalwe Lombe <i>Counselor</i>
The Republic of Zimbabwe	3. 3. 1993	Chemin William Barbery 27 1292 Chambésy Geneva Switzerland	Taonga Mushayavanhu <i>Ambassador Designated</i>
Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St. John of Jerusalem of Rhodes and of Malta	1. 1. 1993	Kapitulská 9 811 01 Bratislava	Alfred Prinz von Schönburg-Hartenstein <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>

LIST OF CONSULATES IN THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

THE HEADS OF THE CONSULATES AS OF FEBRUARY 2018

State	Address of the consulate in the SR	Consul
The Republic of Azerbaijan	Klobučnícka 4 811 01 Bratislava	Džalal Gasymov <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of Albania	Mostná 56 949 01 Nitra	Valér Husarovič <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Commonwealth of the Bahamas	Ventúrska 10 811 01 Bratislava	Michal Lazar <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The People's Republic of Bangladesh	Pod záhradami 41 841 01 Bratislava	Štefan Petkanič <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Kingdom of Belgium	Moskovská cesta 10/B 040 11 Košice	Dany R. E. Rottiers <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Kingdom of Belgium	Moskovská 13 811 08 Bratislava	Bart Waterloos <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Belize	Krajná ulica 56C 821 04 Bratislava	Miroslav Strečanský <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of Belarus	Osadská 679/15 028 01 Trstená	Marián Murín <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Montenegro	Mudroňova 3/B 811 01 Bratislava	Rudolf Autner <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of Chile	Klzává 31/C 831 01 Bratislava	Jaroslav Šoltys <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Kingdom of Denmark	Bajkalská 5/A 831 03 Bratislava	Michal Lörintz <i>Honorary General Consul</i>
The Republic of Ecuador	M.R.Štefánika 58 036 01 Martin	Ján Molitor <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of Estonia	Drieňová 3 821 01 Bratislava	Peter Pochaba <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia	Bojnická 3 831 04 Bratislava	Štefan Rosina <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of Philippines	Cesta na Senec 15725/24 830 06 Bratislava	Pavol Konštiak <i>Honorary General Consul</i>
The Republic of Finland	Moyzesova 5 811 05 Bratislava	Karol Kállay <i>Honorary General Consul</i>
Georgia	Hlavná 24 040 01 Košice	Franco Pigozzi <i>Honorary Consul</i>

Prepared by Anna Průšová, Slovak Foreign Policy Association

Source: Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic

State	Address of the consulate in the SR	Consul
The Republic of Guatemala	Vajnorská 8/A 831 04 Bratislava	Zoroslav Kollár <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Kingdom of The Netherlands	Košická 44 P.O. Box 21 080 01 Prešov	Matúš Murajda <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of Iceland	Palisády 39 811 06 Bratislava	Otto Halás <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The State of Israel	Garbiarska 5 040 01 Košice	Peter Frajt <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Jamaica	Porubského 2 811 06 Bratislava	Marián Valko <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Kingdom of Jordan	Mostová 2 813 07 Bratislava	Jaroslav Rebej <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of South Africa	Fraňa Kráľa 1 851 02 Bratislava	Milan Lopašovský <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of Kazakhstan	Ventúrska 3 811 01 Bratislava	Štefan Rosina <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Kyrgyz Republic	Miletičova 1 821 08 Bratislava	Tibor Podoba <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of Colombia	AC Diplomat Palisády 29/ A 811 06 Bratislava	Anton Siekel <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Democratic Republic of Congo	Kučičdorfská dolina 4 902 01 Pezinok	Pavol Jánošík <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of Costa Rica	Prepoštská 6 811 01 Bratislava	Tomáš Chrenek <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Lao People's Democratic Republic	Panská ulica 27 811 01 Bratislava	Bounthong Bounthong <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Kingdom of Lesotho	Slávičie údolie 31 811 02 Bratislava	Dušan Blattner <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of Lithuania	Cukrová 14 813 39 Bratislava	Marián Meško <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of Latvia	Krmanova 1 040 01 Košice	Miroslav Repka <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg	Prievozska 4/A 821 09 Bratislava	Peter Kríško <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Malaysia	Jaškova 2 821 03 Bratislava	Igor Junas <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of Maldives	Lazaretská 29 811 09 Bratislava	Andrej Matko <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of Mali	Mikulášska 3 - 5 811 02 Bratislava	Eugen Horváth <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of Malta	Palisády 33 811 06 Bratislava	Martin Hantabál <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Kingdom of Morocco	Krajná 86 821 04 Bratislava	Lubomír Šídala <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of Moldova	Zámocká 16 811 01 Bratislava	Antonio Parziale <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Republic of Moldova	Hlavná 81 040 11 Košice	Ján Varga <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Principality of Monaco	Mostová 2 811 02 Bratislava	Miroslav Výboh <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Mongolia	Národná trieda 56 040 01 Košice	Peter Slávik <i>Honorary Consul</i>
The Federal Republic of Germany	Timonova 27 040 01 Košice	Juraj Banský <i>Honorary Consul</i>

State	Address of the consulate in the SR	Consul
The Republic of Nicaragua	Vrbová 22 900 43 Hamuliakovo	Vladimír Kašfák Honorary Consul
The Sultanate of Oman	Sasinkova 12 811 08 Bratislava	Oszkár Világi Honorary Consul
The Republic of Paraguay	Rigeleho 1 811 02 Bratislava	Martin Šamaj Honorary Consul
The Republic of Peru	Tuhovská 5 831 07 Bratislava	Andrej Glatz Honorary Consul
The Republic of Poland	Nám. osloboditeľov 1 031 01 Liptovský Mikuláš	Tadeusz Frackowiak Honorary Consul
Romania	Kapitulská 1 Banská Bystrica	Ladislav Reháč Honorary Consul
Romania	Nám.sv. Mikuláša 2 064 01 Stará Ľubovňa	Marián Gurega Honorary Consul
Russian federation	Moldavská 10/B 040 11 Košice	Ladislav Štefko Honorary Consul
The Republic of El Salvador	Záhradnícka 62 82108 Bratislava	Igor Moravčík Honorary Consul
The Republic of Senegal	Kálov 655/10 010 01 Žilina	Souleymane Seck Honorary Consul
The Republic of Seychelles	Beblavého 4 811 01 Bratislava	Andrej Hryc Honorary Consul
The Republic of Sierra Leone	Partizánska 16 811 03 Bratislava	Branislav Hronec Honorary General Consul
The United Mexican States	Prepoštská 8 811 01 Bratislava	Václav Míka Honorary Consul
The Republic of Serbia	Jesenského 12 040 01 Košice	Eva Dekanovská Honorary Consul
The Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka	Mostová 2 811 02 Bratislava	Peter Gabalec Honorary Consul
The Syrian Arab Republic	Tatranská 1 841 06 Bratislava-Záhorská Bystrica	Mustafa Al-Sabouni Honorary Consul
The Kingdom of Spain	Hutnícka 1 040 01 Košice	Daniel Lučkaníč Honorary Consul
Switzerland	Vajanského 10 080 01 Prešov	Helena Virčíková Honorary Consul
The Kingdom of Sweden	Tomášikova 30 821 01 Bratislava	Vladimír Kestler Honorary General Consul
The Kingdom of Thailand	Viedenská cesta 3-7 851 01 Bratislava	Alexander Rozin Honorary General Consul
The Republic of Turkey	Kuzmányho 16 974 01 Banská Bystrica	Vladimír Soták Honorary Consul
The Republic of Turkey	Mlynská ulica 2 040 01 Košice	Štefan Melník Honorary Consul
The Republic of Uganda	Ružová dolina 25 821 09 Bratislava	Andrej Brna Honorary Consul
Ukraine	Budovateľská 29 093 01 Vranov nad Topľou	Stanislav Obický Honorary Consul
The Eastern Republic of Uruguay	Trnkova 46 851 10 Bratislava	Milan Beniak Honorary Consul
The Republic of Uzbekistan	Business Centrum Lake Side Park Tomášikova 64 831 04 Bratislava	Ľudovít Černák Honorary Consul
The Socialist Republic of Vietnam	Hlavná 70 040 01 Košice	Rastislav Sedmák Honorary Consul

LIST OF THE EMBASSIES OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC, PERMANENT MISSIONS, CONSULATES GENERAL, SLOVAK INSTITUTES ABROAD

EMBASSIES OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC, PERMANENT MISSIONS, CONSULATES GENERAL, SLOVAK INSTITUTES AND THEIR HEADS AS OF FEBRUARY 2018

Embassy	Accredited	Address	Head of the Embassy
Abuja	Nigeria, Niger, Benin, Ghana, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Equatorial Guinea, Senegal, Gambia, Cameroon, Gabon, Cape Verde, Burkina Faso, Mali, Liberia, Togo, São Tomé and Príncipe, Côte d'Ivoire	21st Crescent, Off Constitution Avenue, Central Business District Abuja, Nigeria	Peter Holásek <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Abu Dhabi	The United Arab Emirates	Al Mataf Street No. 16, Villa 2 Abu Dhabi United Arab Emirates	Dušan Horniak <i>Ambassador</i>
Addis Abeba	Djibouti Republic, Ethiopia, Central African Republic	Yeka Sub-City, Woreda 13, Kebele 20/21, House No.: P7 CARA-VIL Compound Addis Abeba Ethiopia	Jozef Cibula <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Ankara	Turkey	Atatürk Bulvarı 245 06692 Ankara Turkey	Anna Tureníčová <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Astana	Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan	D.A Kunajeva 1, C 11 010 000, Astana Kazakhstan	Peter Juza <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Athens	The Hellenic Republic (Greece)	Georgiou Saferi 4, Palaio Psychiko 154 52 Athens Greece	Iveta Hricová <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Bangkok	Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar	9-th Floor, South Sathorn Road 25 Bangkok 10 120 The Kingdom of Thailand	Stanislav Opiela <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Beijing	China, Mongolia	Ritan Lu, Jianguomen Wai, 100 600 Beijing The People's Republic of China	Dušan Bella <i>chargé d'affaires</i>
Beirut	Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Syria	Weavers Center, 14th FL. Clemenseau Street, Beirut Lebanon	Lubomír Macko <i>Head of the Mission</i>
Belgrade	Serbia	Bulevar umetnosti 18 110 70 Novi Beograd Serbia	Dagmar Repčėková <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Berlin	Germany	Hildebrandstraße 25 10785 Berlin Germany	Peter Lizák <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>

Prepared by Anna Průšová, Slovak Foreign Policy Association

Source: Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic

Embassy	Accredited	Address	Head of the Embassy
Bern	Switzerland, Liechtenstein	Thunstrasse 63 3074 Muri b. Bern, Switzerland	Andrea Elscheková Matisová <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Brasilia	Brazil, Ecuador, Columbia, Venezuela, Surinam, Guyana	SES, Avenida das Nações, Qd. 805, Lote 21 B CEP 70 200-902 Brasilia, D.F. Brazil	Milan Cigáň <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Brussels	Belgium, Luxemburg	Avenue Moliere 195 1050 Brusel Belgium	Stanislav Vallo <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Budapest	Hungary	Stefánia út 22 – 24. 1143 Budapest XIV Hungary	Rastislav Káčer <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Buenos Aires	Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay	Figuroa Alcorta 3240 Buenos Aires Argentina	Branislav Hitka <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Bucharest	Romania	Strada Otetari 020 977 Bucuresti Romania	Ján Gábor <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Cairo	Egypt, Chad, Yemen, Lybia, Mauritania, Oman, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Sudan, Tunisia	3 Adel Hosen Rostom P.O. Box 450 11794 – Ramses Post Office Dokki, Cairo Egypt	Valér Franko <i>Ambassador</i>
Canberra	Australia, New Zealand, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Papua-New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu	47 Culgoa Circuit, O'Malley 2606 Canberra Australia	Igor Bartho <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Chisinau	Moldova	A. Sciuseva 101 Chisinau Moldova	Dušan Dacho <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Copenhagen	Denmark	Vesterled 26 – 28 2100 Copenhagen Denmark	Boris Gandel <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Delhi	India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Bhutan	50-M, Niti Marg, Chanakyapuri 110021 New Delhi India	Žigmund Bertók <i>Head of the Mission</i>
Dublin	Ireland	80 Merrion Square South Dublin 2 Ireland	Igor Pokojný <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
The Hague	Netherlands	Parkweg 1 2585 Den Haag Netherlands	Roman Bužek <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Hanoi	Vietnam	12 Ba Huyen Thanh Quan Ba Dinh District Hanoi Vietnam	Igor Pacolák <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Havana	Antigua a Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Haiti, Jamaica, Cuba, Saint Lucia, Saint Christopher and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago.	Calle 66, No. 521 Entre 5B y 7, Miramar, Playa Havana Cuba	Ladislav Straka <i>Head of the Mission</i>
Helsinki	Finland, Estonia	Vähäniityntie 5 00570 Helsinki Finland	Tibor Králik <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Jakarta	Brunei, East Timor, Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore	Jalan Profesor Mohammad Yamin 29 Jakarta 103 10 Indonesia	Michal Slivovič <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>

Embassy	Accredited	Address	Head of the Embassy
Kuwait	Kuwait, Bahrein, Quatar	Block No. 2, Street No. 16 Villa No. 22 131 23 Area Surra Kuwait	Pavol Svetík <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Kyiv	Ukraine	Jaroslavov val 34 019 01 Kyiv Ukraine	Juraj Siváček <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Lisbon	Portugal	Avenida da Liberdade 200 5 Esq., 1250-147 Lisbon Portugal	Oldřich Hlaváček <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
London	The United Kingdom	25, Kensington Palace Gardens W8 4QY London The United Kingdom	Lubomír Rehák <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Ljubljana	Slovenia	Bleiweisova 4 1000 Ljubljana Slovenia	Eva Ponomarenková <i>Head of the Mission</i>
Madrid	Spain, Andorra, Morocco	C/Pinar, 20 28006 Madrid Spain	Vladimír Grác <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Mexico City	Mexico, Guatemala, Honduras, Salvador, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Panama, Belize	Julio Verne 35 11 560 Mexico City Mexico	Anna Gažurová <i>Ambassador Designated</i>
Minsk	Belarus	Volodarskogo 6 220 030, Minsk Belarus	Jozef Migaš <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Moscow	Russian Federation	J. Fučíka 17/19 115 127 Moscow Russian Federation	Peter Priputen <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Nairobi	Kenya, Comoros, Burundi, Congo, Seychelles, Rwanda, Somalia, Uganda, Tansania, Eritrea, South Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo	Jakaya Kikwete Rd., P.O.Box 30 204 00 100 Nairobi Kenya	František Dlhopoček <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Nicosia	Cyprus	Kalamatas Street No. 4 Strovolos, 2002 Nicosia, Cyprus	Ján Škoda <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Oslo	Norway, Iceland	Thomas Heftyes gate 24 N-0244 Oslo Norway	Denisa Frelichová <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Ottawa	Canada	50 Rideau Terrace K1M 2A1, Ottawa, Ontario Canada	Andrej Droba <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Paris	France, Monaco, Algeria	125 rue du Ranelagh 75016 Paris France	Igor Slobodník <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Podgorica	Montenegro	Crnogorskih Serdara 5 81000 Podgorica Montenegro	Roman Hlobeň <i>Head of the Mission</i>
Prague	Czech Republic	Pelléova 12 160 00 Prague Czech Republic	Peter Weiss <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Pretoria	South Africa, Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mauritius, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, Zambia, Zimbabwe	930 Arcadia Street Arcadia 0083 Pretoria South Africa	Monika Tomašovičová <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Prishtina	Serbia (Kosovo)	Selim Berisha č. 11, Dragodan, 10000 Pristina Kosovo, Serbia	Lubomír Batáry <i>Head of the branch office</i>
Riga	Latvia, Lithuania	Smišū iela 8 1050 Riga Latvia	Peter Határ <i>Head of the Mission</i>

Embassy	Accredited	Address	Head of the Embassy
Rome	Italy, Malta, San Marino	Via dei Colli della Farnesina 144VI/A00194 Rome Italy	Ján Šoth <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Sarajevo	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Trnovska 6 710 00 Sarajevo Bosnia and Herzegovina	Martin Kačo <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Skopje	FYROM (Macedonia)	Budimpeštanska 39 1000 Skopje FYROM	Martin Bezák <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Sofia	Bulgaria	Blv. Janko Sakazov 9 1504 Sofia Bulgaria	Manuel Korček <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Seoul	South Korea, North Korea	28, 10gil Hannamdae-ro, Yongsan-gu Seoul South Korea	Milan Lajčiak <i>Head of the Mission</i>
Stockholm	Sweden	Arsenalsgatan 2/3 TR, Box 7183 10 388, Stockholm Sweden	Martina Balunová <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Taipei (Slovak economic and cultural office)	Republic of China (Taiwan)	333 Keelung Road, Section 1 110 Taipei Taiwan	Martin Podstavek <i>Head of the Mission</i>
Tashkent	Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan	Kičik Bešjogoč 38 100070 Tashkent Uzbekistan	Ján Bóry <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Tehran	Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan	72 Moghadassi St., Niavaran St., 1971836199, P.O.Box 19395-6341, Tehran Iran	Ľubomír Golián <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Tel Aviv	Israel, Palestine	Jabotinsky 37 P.O. Box 6459 Tel Aviv Israel	Peter Hulényi <i>Head of the Mission</i>
Tirana	Albania	Rruga Skenderbej 8 Tirana Albania	Milan Čigánik <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Tripoli	Libya, Tunisia, Mauritania, Chad	Hay Al-Andalus, Gargaresh Street 3 km, Tripolis Libya	
Tbilisi	Georgia	13 Mtskheta Str., Apt. 23, 0179 Tbilisi Georgia	Rudolf Michalka <i>Head of the Mission</i>
Tokyo	Japan, Micronesia, Marshall Islands, Palau	2-11-33, Moto-Azabu, Minato-ku 106-0046 Tokyo Japan	Marián Tomášik <i>Head of the Mission</i>
Vatican (The Holy See)	Vatican (The Holy See), Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St. John of Jerusalem of Rhodes and of Malta	Via dei Colli della Farnesina 144 00135 Rome Vatican	Peter Sopko <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Vienna	Austria	Armbrustergasse 24 A-1190 Vienna Austria	Peter Mišík <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Warsaw	Poland	Litewska 6 00-581 Warsaw Poland	Dušan Krištofik <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Washington	USA	3523 International Court, NW 20008 Washington D.C. USA	Peter Kmec <i>Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary</i>
Zagreb	Croatia	Prilaz Gjure Deželica 10 10000 Zagreb Croatia	Juraj Priputen <i>Ambassador</i>

PERMANENT MISSIONS

Permanent mission	Address	Head of the Mission
PM International Organizations Vienna	Blaastraße 34 A-1190 Vienna Austria	<i>Radomír Boháč</i>
PM EU Brussels	Avenue de Cortenbergh 107 1000 Brussels Belgium	<i>Peter Javorčík</i>
PM NATO Brussels	Boulevard Leopold III NATO HQ 1110 Brussels Belgium	<i>Radovan Javorčík</i>
PM OECD Paris	28, Avenue d'Eylau 750 16 Paris France	<i>Juraj Tomáš</i>
PM UN New York	801 Second Avenue 10017 New York USA	<i>František Ruzička</i>
PM UN Geneva	9, Chemin de l'Ancienne Route 1218 Grand Saconnex Switzerland	<i>Fedor Rosocha</i>
PM Council of Europe Strasbourg	1 Rue Ehrmann 67000 Strasbourg France	<i>Marek Eštok</i>
PM UNESCO Paris	1, rue Miollis 757 32, Paris France	<i>Klára Novotná</i>

CONSULATES GENERAL

State	Address	Consul Genral
The People's Republic of China	1375 Huaihai Central Road 200031 Shanghai	<i>Petra Hullová</i>
Hungary	Derkovits sor 7 5600 Békéscsaba	<i>Igor Furdík</i>
Poland	Św. Tomasza 34 31 027 Cracow	<i>Ivan Škorupa</i>
Russian Federation	Orbeli č. 21/2 194 223 Saint Petersburg	<i>Augustín Čísár</i>
USA	801 Second Avenue, 12th Floor New York, N.Y. 10017	<i>Ladislava Begeč</i>
Germany	Vollmannstrasse 25d 819 25 Munich	<i>Ján Voderadský</i>
Turkey	3. Levent Bambu Sokak No: 6 343 30 Istanbul	<i>Jozef Šesták</i>
Ukraine	Lokoty 4 880 00 Uzhhorod	<i>Miroslav Mojžita</i>

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Name	Address	Head
Slovak Institute Berlin	Hildebrandstr. 25 10785 Berlin Germany	<i>Viera Polakovičová</i>
Slovak Institute Budapest	Rákóczi út. 15 H-1088 Budapest Hungary	<i>Gabriel Hushegyi</i>
Slovak Institute Moscow	Ul. 2 Brestská 27 125-056 Moscow Russia	<i>Ján Šmihula</i>
Slovak Institute Paris	125 Rue de Ranelagh F-75016 Paris France	<i>Daniel Jurkovič</i>
Slovak Institute Prague	Nám. Republiky 1037/3 110 00 Praha 1 Czech Republic	<i>Vladimír Valovič</i>
Slovak Institute Rome	Via dei Colli della Farnesina 144 00135 Rome Italy	<i>Peter Dvorský</i>
Slovak Institute Warsaw	Krzywe Kolo 12/14a PL-00 270 Warsaw Poland	<i>Milan Novotný</i>
Slovak Institute Vienna	Wipplingerstrasse 24 --26 A-1010 Vienna Austria	<i>Alena Heribanová</i>

LIST OF CONSULATES OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC HEADED BY THE HONORARY CONSULS

THE HEADS OF THE CONSULATES AS OF FEBRUARY 2018

State	Consulate	Consul
Albania	Tirana	Faik Dizdarii <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Argentina	La Plata	Eduardo Kabát <i>Honorary General Consul</i>
Armenia	Yerevan	Gagik Vladimirovič Martirosian <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Australia	Brisbane	Michal Horvath <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Australia	Melbourne	Eugénia Mocnay <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Australia	Perth	Pavol Faix <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Australia	Sydney	Milan Neklapil <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Austria	St. Pölten	Veit Schmid-Schmidfelden <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Austria	Innsbruck	Jurgen Bodenser <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Austria	Linz	Harald Papesch <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Austria	Salzburg	Gerald Hubner <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Austria	Eisenstadt	Alfred Tombor <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Bahamas	Nassau	Isacc Chester Cooper <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Bangladesh	Dhaka	Miran Ali <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Belgium	Antwerp	Gunnar Riebs <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Belgium	Gent	Arnold Vanhaecke <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Belgium	Mons	Peter De Nil <i>Honorary Consul</i>

State	Consulate	Consul
Bielorusko	Bresst	Mikhail Kozich Honorary Consul
Belarus	Vitebsk	Alexej Syčov Honorary Consul
Bolivia	La Paz	Hernán Guido Vera Ruiz Honorary Consul
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Medjugorie	Rajko Zelenika Honorary Consul
Brazil	Belo Horizonte	Renato Werner Victor de Queiroz Honorary Consul
Brazil	Recife	João Alixandre Neto Honorary Consul
Brazil	Rio de Janeiro	Mohamad Façal Mohamad Said Hammoud Honorary Consul
Bulgaria	Varna	Edita Blagoevova Honorary Consul
Czech Republic	Brno	Jaroslav Weigl Honorary Consul
Croatia	Osijek	Ivan Komak Honorary Consul
Croatia	Split	Goran Morović Honorary Consul
Chile	Santiago	Paul Nador Honorary Consul
China	Hong Kong	Willy Lin Honorary Consul
Cyprus	Limassol	Angelos Gregoriades Honorary Consul
Denmark	Aarhus	Claus Søgaard Poulsen Honorary Consul
Egypt	Alexandria	Mohamed Moustafa el Naggari Honorary Consul
Estonia	Tallinn	Even Tudeberg Honorary Consul
Ethiopia	Addis Abeba	Feleke Bekele Safo Honorary Consul
Philippines	Cebu City	Antonio N. Chiu Honorary Consul
Philippines	Manilla	Robert Chin Siy Honorary General Consul
Finland	Teerijärvi	Mikael Ahlbäck Honorary Consul
France	Grenoble	Menyhért Kocsis Honorary Consul
France	Lille	Alain Bar Honorary Consul
France	Brumath	Christian Rothacker Honorary Consul
France	Marseille	Marc-André Distanti Honorary Consul
France	Bordeaux	Philippe Lorette Honorary Consul
Grécko	Chania	Stavros Paterakis Honorary Consul

State	Consulate	Consul
Grécko	Thessaloniki	Konstatinos Mavridis Honorary Consul
Grécko	Patras	Phaedon Couniniotis Honorary Consul
Grécko	Pireus	Michael Bodouroglou Honorary Consul
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Israel	Haifa	Josef Pickel Honorary Consul
Israel	Ha Sharon	Karol Nathan Steiner Honorary Consul
Israel	Jerusalem	Martin Rodan Honorary Consul
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Italy	Milan	Luigi Cuzzolin Honorary Consul
Italy	Napoli	Franca Serao Honorary Consul
Italy	Trieste	Miljan Todorovič Honorary Consul

State	Consulate	Consul
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Italy	Torino	Giuseppe Pellegrino Honorary Consul
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Japan	Kirishima	Masahiro Jamamoto Honorary Consul
Japan	Utsunomiya	Eichii Ishikawa Honorary Consul
Yemen	Sana'a	Adel Mohamed Al Huraibi Honorary Consul
Jordan	Amman	Khaldun A. Abuhassan Honorary General Consul
South Africa	Cape Town	Geoffrey Leighton Ashmead Honorary Consul
Camerun	Yaoundé	Mohamadou Salihou Honorary Consul
Canada	Montreal	Dezider Michaletz Honorary Consul
Canada	Vancouver	Pavol Hollosy Honorary Consul
Canada	Toronto	Michael Martinček Honorary Consul
Kazakhstan	Almaty	Marat Džachanovič Sabalakov Honorary Consul
Kazakhstan	Karaganda	Alexej Petrovič Nefjodov Honorary Consul
Kazakhstan	Kurčatov	Kairat Kamalovič Kadyrzanov Honorary Consul
Kenya	Mombasa	Christoph Modigell Honorary Consul
Kirgizstan	Bishkek	Igor Konstantinovič Gusarov Honorary Consul
Colombia	Medellin	Jenaro Pérez Gutiérrez Honorary Consul
South Korea	Busan	Oh Myung Hwan Honorary Consul
Liechtenstein	Vaduz	Fabian Frick Honorary Consul
Lithuania	Kaunas	Vytautas Mikaila Honorary Consul
Macedonia	Skopje	Vlade Stojanovski Honorary Consul
Malaysia	Kota Kinabalu	Wong Khen Thau Honorary Consul
Malawi	Blantyre	Salim David Bapu Honorary Consul
Malta	Valletta	Godwin Edvard Bencini Honorary Consul
Morocco	Casablanca	Kamil Ouzzani Touhamy Honorary Consul

State	Consulate	Consul
Mauritius	Port Louis	Yatemani Gujadhur Honorary Consul
Mexico	Cancún	Francisco Edmundo Lechón Rosas Honorary Consul
Mexico	Monterrey	Jorge García Segovia Honorary Consul
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Mongolia	Ulanbatar	Gotov Dugerjav Honorary Consul
Mozambique	Maputo	Ismael Mussá Manguera Honorary Consul
Nepal	Kathmahandu	Pasang Dawa Sherpa Honorary Consul
Nigeria	Port Harcourt	Eze Clifford Amadi Honorary Consul
Norway	Bergen	Morten L. Gjesdahl Honorary Consul
Norway	Drammen	Zuzana Opavská Wahl Honorary Consul
New Zealand	Auckland	Peter Kiely Honorary Consul
Oman	Muscat	Mohammed S. Al-Harthy Honorary Consul
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Palestine	Betlehem	George Suliman Malki Jabra Honorary Consul
Panama	Panama	Julio César Benedetti Honorary Consul
Paraguay	Cuidad del Este	Charif Hammoud Honorary Consul
Paraguay	Asunción	Alex Hammoud Honorary Consul
Peru	Lima	Teresa Koetzle-Daly Honorary Consul
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Poland	Gliwice	Marian Czerny Honorary Consul
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Poland	Zakopané	Wiesław Tadeusz Wojas Honorary Consul
Portugal	Madeira	Roberto Rodrigo Vieira Henriques Honorary Consul
Romania	Salonta	Miroslav Iabloncsik Honorary Consul

State	Consulate	Consul
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Russian Federation	Chanty-Mansijsk	Eduard Vasiljevič Lebedev <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Russian Federation	Omsk	Jurij Viktorovič Šapovalov <i>Honorary Consul</i>
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Russian Federation	Vladivostok	Apres Gvidonovič Voskanian <i>Honorary Consul</i>
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Singapore	Singapore	Cheo Guan Ow <i>Honorary Consul</i>
Serbia	Niš	Stela Jovanovič <i>Honorary Consul</i>
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Syria	Lakatia	Anas Dib Joud <i>Honorary Consul</i>
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State	Consulate	Consul
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Vietnam	Ho Chi Minh City	Huy Ho <i>Honorary General Consul</i>
Zambia	Lusaka	Jaroslav Kulich <i>Honorary Consul</i>

NUMBERS OF THE MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC IN PEACE MISSIONS

AS OF FEBRUARY 2018

Mission	Country	Number of the Slovak Armed Forces Members
UN		
UNFICYP (United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus) – UN	The Republic of Cyprus	169
UNTSO (United Nations Truce Supervision Organization) – UN	Syria, Israel	2
NATO		
RS (Resolute Support)	Islamic Republic of Afghanistan	42
NTCBI (NATO Training and Capacity Building Activity in Iraq)	Iraq	25
EU		
ALTHEA	Bosnia and Herzegovina	41
EUNAVFOR MED SOPHIA (European Union Naval Force Mediterranean)	Mediterranean	10

V.

AUTHORS

AUTHORS

Vladimír Bilčík studied political science and economics at Swarthmore College in the USA, European politics at the University of Oxford in the UK and political theory at Comenius University in Bratislava. He has been working as an analyst and Head of the EU research program at the Research Center of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association since September 1999. From December 2005 he has also been working as assistant professor in the department of political science at the Faculty of Philosophy of the Comenius University. In 2002–2003 he worked as advisor to the Representative of the Slovak Government in the Convention on the Future of Europe. Vladimír Bilčík has researched and published on EU reform, EU foreign and security policy, Eastern Partnership and post-Brexit EU. (bilcik@sfp.sk)



Marián Čaučík is the director of *Dobrá novina* – the Development Cooperation Program of eRko. In 1990 he co-founded the Christian Children Communities Movement (eRko) where he served as executive secretary and chairman. Under his leadership, eRko has supported development projects in Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia and South Sudan since 1995, and has become one of the leading development NGOs in Slovakia. He was a founding member of the Slovak NGDO Platform and served as its chairman and board member. He has been actively involved in setting up the Slovak ODA system. In 2015 he was an Ambassador of the European Year for Development. (maros@erko.sk)





Alexander Duleba graduated from the National Taras Shevchenko University of Kyiv in 1989. In 1990–1993, he worked at the University of Pavol Jozef Šafárik in Prešov. From May 1993 to August 1995, he worked as an analyst for the MFA's Slovak Institute for International Studies. Since September 1995, he has been working at the Research Center of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association, and from May 2000, as its Director and Head of the Eastern Europe research program. He got his Phd at the Institute for Political Sciences of the Slovak Academy of Sciences in 1998 and the Assistant Professor (Doc.) degree from the Comenius University in Bratislava in 2009. Since May 2010 he has been teaching at the Prešov University. (duleba@sfpa.sk)



Dušan Fischer works with the International Security Department at the Research Center of the Slovak Foreign Policy Association. He is currently working as an operational analyst at the Lessons Learned Management Division of the NATO Joint Analysis Lessons Learned Center in Lisbon, Portugal. Among his research areas are European security and defense cooperation, NATO assurance and deterrence measures, and US foreign, security, and defense policy. He obtained a degree in American Studies at Heidelberg University and completed the Program on Applied Security Studies at George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany. Previously, he has worked at the NATO Headquarters Supreme Allied Command Transformation in Norfolk, Virginia. He lectures on the topics of American studies, and European and transatlantic security. (fischer@sfpa.sk)



Miroslav Lajčák began his professional career when joining Czechoslovakia's Foreign Ministry in 1988. He was Ambassador to Japan between 1994 and 1998, and later Ambassador to Belgrade, with accreditation to Macedonia and Albania, between 2001 and 2005. Before becoming Slovak Foreign Minister in January 2009, he served in the capacity of High Representative and EU Special Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina from July 2007 to March 2009. He was the mediator and personal representative of the EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana, in overseeing the Montenegro's referendum in 2006. In 2010–2012, he served as Managing Director for Europe and Central Asia for the European Union's External Action Service. Since 2012, he has served as Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic. On May 31, 2017, the General Assembly of the United Nations elected Miroslav Lajčák as President of its 72nd session, which spans from September 2017 to September 2018. (kami@mzv.sk)

Július Lőrincz has been working as a professional journalist for over forty years. The former Yugoslavia was the focus of his interest in the seventies, and his interest there increased during the crisis years of the 1990s. He is the author and co-author of numerous interviews published in the newspaper *Pravda*, with important political figures of the region. In 2002–2005, he worked for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic, at the Slovak Embassy in Zagreb. He cooperates on a long-term basis with various non-governmental organizations, especially in activities related to the Western Balkans. (julius.lorincz@gmail.com)



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Pavol Szalai works as an analyst and editor at EurActiv.sk. His focus is on European energy and climate policies. He has previously worked at Electricité de France, the European Commission, and the Slovak Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs. He holds a Master's degrees in Political Studies from Comenius University in Bratislava, and from Sciences Po, Paris. He worked with RC SFPA from 2006–2008. (szalai@euractiv.sk)



Martin Vlachynský is an analyst at the Institute of Economic and Social Studies. He graduated with a degree in Economic Policy from the Faculty of Economics and Administration, Masaryk University, and a degree in Economics, Management and International Relations from the Graduate Business School, Aberdeen University. After several years in the private sector he joined INESS where he has been since 2012. His main focus is on economic competitiveness, business environment, European economic policies, and the energy sector. He currently leads the project Top20, advocating policy reforms to improve the competitiveness of the Slovak economy. (martin.vlachynsky@iness.sk)



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- organizes expert events and participates in international scientific cooperation in the field of international relations and security;
- contributes to the fostering of the expert discourse on international relations and foreign policy of the Slovak Republic;
- creates a favorable environment for the growth of the new generation of the Slovak experts in the field of international relations; and
- stimulates the interest of wider Slovak public in the global events as well as a deeper understanding of the significance of foreign policy and its link to the domestic policy.

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